

GAYTON MCKENZIE

A black and white photograph of a man, likely a detective or investigator, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is also wearing a fedora-style hat. He is looking down at an open book he is holding in his hands. The background is dark and out of focus. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's face and the pages of the book.

A Hustler's Bible

WRITTEN FOR GAYTON BY

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A Hustler's Bible

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Also by Gayton McKenzie

The Choice: The Gayton McKenzie Story

– as told to Charles Cilliers

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By Gayton McKenzie

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Dedication

This book marks the anniversary of exactly ten years out of prison for me. In that time, so many people came my way and helped me to build my life, step by step, day by day, to achieve the many things I had only been able to dream about behind bars.

I would never have made it without all of you.

You know who you are and you know what you mean to me. I dedicate this book to you.

The Hustler's Way

I can't be described adequately. Nobody can be. The word that comes closest to who I am is 'hustler'. That's me. The definition from the Urban Dictionary I like best is:

Being a hustler is about the way one lives one's life. Going out on the streets, or wherever, making money and working hard for it. A hustler is not lazy, he's consistently out earning money. He gets the money by using his smarts and out-cunning everyone out there. A hustler has ambition and a more serious approach to life. He's more mature. It can apply to any race, and it's the way you hold and carry yourself.

Obviously, the word has its associations with street crime and gangsterism. That's not how it's used in this book and that's not how it should be understood. It's not how many young people use it today.

The principles of hustling apply equally well to those trying to make it as honest people who don't have book smarts, but can still outthink, outmanoeuvre and outpace everyone else in the room – regardless of how many degrees or diplomas they may have. That's not to say you shouldn't get an education, but just because you don't have an education doesn't mean you need to think you're stupid, act like you're stupid and assume people who do have an education are smarter than you. Even someone with five PhDs doesn't know everything – but he also doesn't think someone who's studied something he hasn't is smarter than he is.

The important thing is to learn how to think and behave. Fix your attitude, and the rest will follow.

I wrote this book for the guy who doesn't have the luxury of funds or time to go to university right now. I wrote this for the graduate without a job; for guys who don't want to be just anyone, but somebody; for guys who don't know what to say or how to behave when they find themselves in the company of people they admire or want to impress; I wrote this, too, for girls grappling with the questions of family and career. I wrote this for somebody like me, who knows that come rain, sunshine or thunder I will drive the car I love, I will live in a big house, and I will give to charity. I will live the high life, but not beyond my means, and not forgetting my roots.

I never saw this as a sweet, fleeting dream, but as something I was willing to work hard for. And to hustle for.

Most importantly, I wrote this book for the person who is tired of just surviving; for the guy who is fed up with avoiding private numbers because it might just be one of the many institutions he owes money to; I wrote this book for the guys who have long figured out that most of what we are being told about making it in life doesn't really deal with the hurdle of something like living in a township, or being released from prison with no savings, no inheritance to count on and no one to borrow money from; most importantly, I wrote this book for the young people who don't want to go into crime or go back to it, but who don't think they have another choice. I wanted them to read this book to understand that there is a choice, that you can live an honest, productive life no matter your circumstances or your background. If I could do it, then anybody can.

I wrote this book to inspire and to encourage you to choose the best version of yourself you can be, and to live the best version of your life that it is possible to live.

People like me come from a place not known to produce many captains of industry and billionaire-club members; in fact, we supply the workforce for these captains. Our own people are often shocked by and frown at our ambitions to climb the social ladder into positions of authority where we can join elite clubs.

Some, with the best of intentions, try to save us from heartache by discouraging us from following our "impossible dreams", not because they don't believe in us – they just know the scales are heavily stacked against us.

In this book, I will deal with issues many people might deem unnecessary, too simple or less important. For instance, having the right table manners and grooming habits. To many, this is hardly worth writing about, but to the next guy this is precisely the thing that might prove the difference between winning over a possible funder or never hearing back from him again.

This book will, however, also be dealing with deeper issues, such as my personal philosophies as well as practical matters such as the importance of contracts. We'll be touching on whatever I wished someone had told me in my own climb to the top.

Someone once asked me a very important question on Twitter, which made me realise I may well be knowledgeable enough to write a book like this. The question was: what qualifies you to give me advice?

Here's my answer:

I come from a poor family. I joined a gang at an early age. I committed heinous crimes that landed me in jail. I spent around ten years of my life in a maximum-

security prison. I did crime simply because I knew the life of my father was not the kind of life that I wanted to live: that of a semiskilled worker who can only offer his time and his hands without any prospect of any real financial success.

Doing those crimes was a terrible mistake and at some point in prison I finally realised that. I made a vow that I would come out of jail and be even more successful as an honest man than I had ever been as a bank robber. At first I wasn't sure how I would even begin to do that as all I had was a dusty old matric school certificate that no one would care to even look at.

I paid the hard price for my crimes. My whole youth was taken from me. But through a hard-knock life I learned lessons you cannot find in any classroom or book. I used those lessons to assist me in my climb to the top. After jail, I managed to go from a starting salary of R1 000 a month to earning R1.5 million a month.

While most ex-prisoners rightfully complain about not being able to find a job, I rose to become the acting CEO of a mining company listed on both the Johannesburg and London stock exchanges. I built a life for myself, for my family and for many other ex-prisoners desperate for a chance in life. I founded one of the most successful mining consultancy companies in Africa, with the world's fourth-largest gold-producing company as a client.

I did that in spite of my past, in spite of having a criminal record, in spite of never having attended university for a day. This success has earned me numerous enemies who simply cannot accept that someone like me can succeed by not treading the well-worn institutional path with its ivy-clad walls. They consider me an affront against the social order, against the very nature of society. To them, I seem to break the rules – but what they fail to see is that I abide by a very specific code, and a set of rules every bit as instructive as the things you can learn at the Harvard Business Schools and the Cambridge Colleges of the world.

To many, my success should be impossible, but as my hero Muhammad Ali once said: "Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."

And despite all my successes, I continued to take crazy risks that could have lost me everything. And at one stage, I almost did lose everything. But I came through it and I'm still here. I write about that too because I now know, better than most, what works and what doesn't.

You might not agree with some of the things you'll read here. You might be right and maybe I'm wrong – but the risk of being wrong is not going to stop me from

releasing this book. As my friend Kenny Kunene, who you will also read more about in this book, always tells me: “If you don’t want people to criticise you, then you should do nothing. But if you do nothing, you will be nothing. And you will die having achieved nothing.”

If you’re reading this book, the first decision you need to make is that you want to be more than nothing. Much more.

Some of what’s in here is straight, plain advice, told as simply as I can tell it. But the rest of what’s in here are stories from my life, with lessons you will have to interpret and see for yourself, much the same way that I had to when these things first happened to me. Maybe you will take your own lessons from my experiences, maybe you won’t. But, as they say, if you can learn from another guy’s mistakes and successes, then you don’t have to make those same mistakes yourself; you can build on the successful foundation already laid by others. That’s the way real progress happens. And maybe it’ll be you writing your own hustler’s bible some day, with advice that’s a whole lot better than mine.

One thing you will not find in this book is a lot of advice that only applies to someone who is down-and-out. That is just a starting point, but if you read this book, you should accept that there is a long road ahead of you, with much that you need to know and understand on your road to success.

So, really, this book is for anyone, no matter how far along you may already be in your hustle. There will be something in here that will speak to you.

Most of what’s in here is for someone who has started a business or a project and then finds himself in the deep end, unsure of how to think and behave. So you will find a lot about how to run a business, what happens when the big money starts streaming in, how to deal with having staff, business partners and big investors – and a lot more that other business books deal with.

What’s different here, though, is it’s told from my perspective, of having had to face all those things myself, without being prepared for it by my upbringing and my past. The lessons meant double to me because I needed them twice as much as other people.

So yes, this book will mostly speak to people who want to be their own boss, who want to manage other people and be a leader who other people are proud to follow. Because that is what I have tried to be, it’s what I know and can write about. There’s advice in here for those of us who don’t want to be leaders and visionaries, but most of the book is written for those who have a burning desire to lead – not

because they want praise and glory for being the boss, but because they are ready for the responsibility that leadership bestows.

This book was also born partly out of seeing and reading those popular road-to-riches books written by (mostly) Americans who don't know anything about our lives except that we might keep a few wild animals in our back yard. Some, if asked what a township is, might say that it is a ship in town. Soon after you buy these American books you realise the author may as well be speaking about life on another planet. He or she certainly isn't talking to the everyday, down-at-heel African.

I have seen people obsessively clutching books like *The Secret*, *Rich Dad Poor Dad* and *The Instant Millionaire*, but many people who grow up in a township don't even have a dad to begin with. A poor dad would be an improvement.

The advice of something like *The Secret* suggests you must believe and wish for something and if you do this regularly and faithfully enough, then that thing you are visualising and wishing for will eventually be yours thanks to the power of attraction. They also call this the power of the subconscious mind. That may seem to work for some, but for the rest of us, especially where I grew up, there was little else going on except people spending their whole lives wishing for things, but they "attracted" nothing much – nothing much worth writing about anyway.

That's why this book is for the people who know that to get anywhere in life, you have to hustle like crazy for it. I see the same people who were reading these popular self-help books years later, and for many of them I see no visible improvement at all in their lives or their behaviour. These people are serious about having better lives, but it's difficult to improve yourself if a lot of what you're being told to do simply doesn't apply to your realities. Most self-help books have not been written for this economy or the kind of upbringing many in Africa receive.

I will use many examples of well-known people from America because these are people we all know, but I will also speak of a few lesser-known ones from Africa – whose stories we can learn from.

This book is for the person who can't see success as an option but as a necessity – they know that funding for their project will not easily come their way. They are the people who will have to build from the ground up. For them, it could take many years, perhaps even more than one generation – but they do what they have

to do because the only other outcome is failure, and failure is not an option. Many a business book I read always cautions against using your last few cents – they always say that if there is no cash there is no business, but they just don't get that our last cents are sometimes also our first cents: what we have scraped together to start a business. The worst thing you can do is wait too long to start something; people will always give you more reasons not to do something than to do it.

Another favourite line in these American books is that you should try to get an interest-free loan from your parents. Those of us lucky enough to have them, have parents who mostly survived on loans all their lives. They've struggled just to put food on the table, let alone being able to lend you a dime. You can forget about that.

It's very hard to find solutions for places you do not know. One can't provide answers to problems you aren't familiar with, but that's what some of us hope these American books will do. It was Einstein who once said if he were given only an hour to solve the problems of the world, he would spend the first fifty-five minutes trying to properly understand its problems.

along the way. I didn't want to leave out that one paragraph that could be the difference between failure and success, even if just for one grateful reader. So skim over what you think you don't need, but don't think yourself too good to learn (and relearn) new (or old) lessons. There's also so much more I wanted to say, but this is the start of what should be your own personal journey to discovering more and always wanting to know more. No book will ever contain all the answers to all the questions you may have.

So enjoy, learn, interrogate, implement.

Welcome to the hustler's way.

The Dog is Not Dead Yet

For many years, after my release from prison, my life consisted of driving around, with the occasional flight, giving motivational talks. But driving to my speaking engagements was what I did most. I once encountered a hitchhiker. I never usually stop for them but this one caught my attention simply because he was holding a huge bucket and had a strange object next to him. So I stopped more out of curiosity than kindness. The strange object was a dog, and a sick one at that.

I immediately wanted to drive on, but his excitement on seeing me prevented me. The man was on his way to a vet for his sick dog. But when I looked at the dog I immediately knew this poor animal stood no chance. It would be just a matter of hours or even minutes before he would most likely be dead.

I told my new passenger that he was wasting his time. The dog was going to die.

He replied, without thinking: "The dog is not dead yet."

I then said: "I know, but it is going to die soon," to which I got the answer I was still going to get more than ten times during our drive: "Yes. But it is not dead yet."

Reluctantly, I allowed him to put the dog on the back seat on top of a covering of newspapers. I allowed all of this only because it was a rented car.

The poor mutt had foam coming out of his mouth. He looked abject. The man loaded his bucket and cloths into the boot of the car. We played our game of verbal tennis all the way into town, me pointing out the seemingly obvious fact that the dog had no chance and him repeating that the dog was not dead yet.

Tiring of this, I tried to steer the conversation to something more clearly constructive and asked him what he was planning to do with his bucket and cloths.

He replied that he had no money but intended to wash a few cars to use that money to pay for the dog's medical bill. I realised that I was giving a lift to either a total madman or a deeply caring person. Probably both.

He told me he was a worker on a farm that had recently shut down and he survived by doing odd jobs for different people. I also learnt he had never been to school. Because I realised that he had a great love for his dog I kept on reminding him that the dog was going to die – I felt it was important he start to accept the inevitable now instead of try for some impossible cure that would only needlessly cost him money – but he just patiently replied every time that his dog was not dead yet.

He was a man on a mission to find some cars to wash and then pay for his dog's bill. In town, after asking around, we got directions to the animal clinic.

My conscience pricked me and I offered to pay the R1 200 (about \$130) that was required to treat the animal. I gave the man another R200 for a lift back home in case he failed to find another curious driver.

I also told him that I would be heading back on the same route in about four hours anyway, so if he couldn't find a lift he was welcome to wait for me.

I went on to my daily hustle of speaking to school kids and my passenger soon left my mind. Many hours later, in the urgency of rushing back home, I almost forgot about him, but when I got to the town again I remembered that he might still be around so I drove towards picking him up. By this time it wasn't just about curiosity. I also felt empathy for a man who must have just lost the dog that he cared for so deeply. When I got to the medical centre's street the first thing I saw was that my hitchhiker was bouncing a tennis ball and a very not-dead dog was running after it and bringing it back to him. It turned out the dog needed a drip and some antibiotics, but it was going to be just fine.

The dog was jumping up and down, and I still don't know who was happiest in that moment: me, the dog's owner or just the dog.

He gave me back R500. He told me R200 was the transport money I had earlier given him, which he wouldn't need now. Another R200 was because the vet's receptionist had made a mistake by quoting R1 200 when it had actually been only R1 000 and the last R100 was because he had seen two very dirty cars and had simply washed them. One guy berated him for doing so unasked but the other one's owner was a woman who was so happy about it that she gave him R100. And I sped off so that he would not see the rush of my tears. I simply could not hold them any more.

I took so many lessons from my experience that day and the phrase “the dog is not dead yet” has come up in my mind so many times over the years to remind me never to lose hope at times when many others would simply have given up.

I want to return to the many lessons of this story, but first you need to read the rest of my book.

Commitment to Dreams

Upon my release from jail I looked at the different career options available to me. Nothing interested me more than becoming a motivational speaker. Before I could go into business I needed to spend several years rehabilitating my image. I wasn't naive about it – no one just forgives and forgets that you were once a bank robber, and I knew it would take years to turn that around. I accepted that fact and I knew that the sooner I could start my talks and reach as many people as possible, the sooner I could build towards my long-term goal of being seen as a man who is much more than just another ex-gangster from jail.

I knew that just calling myself a motivational speaker would not be enough though. It's a very competitive and a very unusual profession – the people who make it are all dynamic, highly unusual, charismatic and very memorable characters. I knew to say "I'm a motivational speaker" would only have meaning if I was being booked in favour of the top speakers on the circuit in South Africa, for more bookings and for more money.

I knew I had a long way to go. Motivational speakers are like the rock stars of the business world. Unless you've actually seen that world, it's hard to understand it – but if you've ever been part of a talk or a seminar offered by a motivational speaker, then you'll understand a little bit about the kind of world I wanted to be a part of, while not really being the kind of person normally embraced by the speaking circuit.

I suppose you could say Mike Lipkin was one of the first guys in South Africa to make motivational speaking a well-known and even respected profession. While he was doing his "Say yes!" stuff I was in prison, but I knew all about it and there was something about the idea of being a motivational speaker that just took hold for me. It was a small seed and it never stopped growing inside me. While Mike Lipkin was travelling the country, speaking to as many people as he could with his positive "you can do it" messages he was also doing his bit to inspire a country deeply divided by years of apartheid. People were yearning for positive messages in South Africa, which was being bombarded daily with bad-news stories, fear and the constant threat that perhaps our young democracy wouldn't make it.

It's still much like that today – all the more reason for people to need people who truly motivate them.

By the time I came out of jail in 2003, Mike Lipkin had already moved back to Canada, but the motivational speaking circuit was by then already pretty established and companies were willing to set aside significant amounts of their budgets to invite guest speakers to their workplaces to inspire staff with something new and different, while breaking up the humdrum monotony of the daily grind. Many employers noticed that having a motivational speaker address staff could get people more focused and productive for months, so they saw it as a necessary investment in their business – which it is. Employees easily get stuck in a rut and lose sight of the big picture and their bosses are stuck in their own rut. It often takes someone from the outside to inject more energy into a work environment.

It doesn't always work, but a truly exceptional motivational speaker is able to plant seeds among a few members of staff almost everywhere he or she goes, which will blossom and show fruit in some way – sometimes only years later.

The most rewarding part, for me, of ever having been a motivational speaker, has been those moments, many years after I gave a talk somewhere, when someone approached me and told me that I stopped him from committing suicide and he turned his life around. Another would say I gave her the courage, through my own story, to leave her abusive husband and build her own career. Some of the school kids, from the millions I spoke to, looked me up years later to say that they gave up crime and drugs to become young entrepreneurs, lawyers, medical students, race-car drivers – you name it. I heard so many things that both humbled me and made me beam inside with pride. There are also the many, far-less-dramatic stories people have told me about how I simply brightened their day or gave them the most memorable talk in their school career. That mattered to me too. The small victories are as important as the major coups.

That sort of stuff gets what you do to make sense.

In prison, I didn't really understand what the big fuss was about this bald guy, Mike Lipkin, in his yellow T-shirts, but I realised I was also sharp-witted, had a unique personal story and a few terrifying prison ones, I could tell a few jokes and I really believed in the power of following my own dream so much that I wanted to inspire other people to follow theirs. Mike Lipkin didn't have the come-from-nothing life story that I wanted to tell people about – but he was still able to inspire

people on a massive scale, and he had become a household name in the process. I wanted to be able to do what he'd done, but with an even more substantive message. While in prison, it eventually became a huge dream of mine to become one of the best motivational speakers on the speaking circuit. To achieve this, soon after my release I asked Ria De Villiers to help me get started and she put her heart, soul and reputation on the line to see me become a success.

Before she recommended me to anyone, though, she asked me to give an ad hoc speech at the St Andrews School hall in Bloemfontein – just to see if I had any potential at all. Present was Charles, who'd later go on to help me write my life story, and two other teachers.

The plan was that I would give my talk and they would critique it – and man, did they. They told me what had worked for them, and what had been beginner's nonsense – which, according to them, was most of it.

They said I could think it over and perhaps we could try again in a week or so. I was really taken aback. I thought they'd all be blown away by my talk. I'd been thinking about it for months on end – in prison, it was just about the only thing I'd been pondering in my bed, staring up at the ceiling. I'd been convinced I could blow anyone away with my hard-hitting message. But these people just sort of looked through me and tapped their pencils on their notepads.

I asked them for a few minutes, to think it over right there and try again immediately. I tried to leave in and improve on the few things they had liked and I tried to find solutions for the many problems.

They were a bit happier the second time – but I was made to start over, time and again.

In that situation, had I still been thinking like a gangster, that situation would have been somewhat different. No one criticises a gangster; no one makes a gangster go back and redo anything. A gangster takes that kind of thing personally. By the third round of criticism I would have probably just taken out a gun, made them all hand over their wallets and jewellery and left. Maybe I'd have shot Charles, whose criticisms were particularly annoying, in the knee – but if I'd let my ego dictate my response that day I would have been utterly lost.

Those people were honestly trying to help me. The best thing I ever did for myself was not going into that hall (or any of the thousands I went into after that)

with an inflated ego and a don't-you-mess-with-me kind of mentality that so many youngsters always have.

I went in there as I was: a person badly in need of the kind of help and advice that would bridge the enormous gap between being an ex-con with a dream and a motivational speaker with an action plan.

I was willing to do anything required of me. Many of us ask for help, but then lose our way. We sit in classrooms and instead of paying attention and absorbing valuable lessons, we try to show off or become the teacher ourselves. My internship as a motivational speaker was probably about as tough as it gets. I started with high school kids – and believe me, there is no tougher crowd than a room packed with more than a thousand noisy teenagers, who are all out to prove how generally unimpressed they are with everything.

My first talk went reasonably well but there were many mini-disasters in the beginning.

At Eunice Girls' High, for some reason I decided to play a recording of I Believe I Can Fly by R Kelly – in the middle of my talk – as if this was a song only I had ever heard before. But the sound was terrible and my CD had already been played to death so much in my car that the track started jumping. Then we couldn't get the damn thing to stop playing until someone had the good sense to switch off the entire PA system and reboot it.

I recovered what little dignity I could scrape together and finished my talk. Fortunately the girls seemed to love it anyway and were queuing up to take photos with me afterwards (so I couldn't have been that bad), but it taught me a lesson that stayed with me for the rest of my career. I never used any technical gimmicks ever again.

I developed a set of talks that never needed any CD player, laptop, PowerPoint projector or even a microphone. I could deliver my talk, projecting my voice across the dusty fields of a township school's soccer field with the same impact as I could deliver it to a group of twenty directors in a seminar hall at a research institute in London. I learned how to read any group, get their attention within the first minute of standing up in front of them, and deliver a talk that would appeal to them in a way it wouldn't to someone else – I didn't always get it right, but I almost never got it wrong – and that was all thanks to year after year, day in and out, speaking to school kids – and in the beginning for no money at all.

To most of the people who'd always known me, trying to figure out what the hell I was doing, I was a freak who had lost his mind. I was ridiculed daily by the gangsters who'd once rolled with me, who now would point at my broke ass in my community as a warning to the other kids about how the mighty fall when they think they're better than everybody else.

But I didn't care. I ignored them because they didn't know my goals. They ridiculed what they failed to understand. I stayed focused. I spoke at places where the audiences were at first not the least bit interested in what I had to say, and I learned that you have the first sixty seconds to turn that around – I figured out how to get that right.

I was asked the most brutal questions by school children and I learnt how to field almost anything and everything. Chubb gave me my first opportunity, but I never took anything for granted. I worked my butt off, sometimes doing five schools in one morning, a business and its staff in the afternoon and everyone from the community's parent-teacher association that night. I lived off lozenges and TCP, and I would speak no matter how sick I felt, no matter how bad my flu was, no matter my mood or my migraine. For five years I didn't take a single day off and I spent my evenings reading books about the greatest speeches and speakers in history. I endlessly watched videos and listened to recordings. It completely consumed me, because I understood that it's not enough to just be good at something. It only really matters when you are absolutely bloody amazing at it.

Putting in those hard yards with the school kids finally began to pay off. Those kids all had parents and some of those parents had businesses – some of them owned entire industries. I started hearing from Chubb that some people were inviting me to speak at their businesses because their kids simply wouldn't shut up about me. At first I'd charge R2 000 a talk. Then we got braver and it went to R5 000. It just kept getting more expensive all the time. At some talks, I later earned R50 000 an hour, and the main reason I could charge that was that some companies were willing to pay that. Had I started out thinking I would earn R50 000 an hour I'd still be at home dreaming about it (though I don't think I would really have believed it possible). I started out doing it for free, but I built up momentum steadily. The snowball effect is as true today as when it was first mentioned. If you roll a small snowball down a snowy mountainside, by the time it gets to the bottom it might be as big as a car. Or so I'm told – I'm yet to find myself on a snowy mountainside.

The point is, just start and you'll collect all the substance you need along the way to grow, improve and become unstoppable.

As a speaker, it wasn't even that long before I was fully booked. New Beginnings, a company that specialises in motivational speaking, chose me as their best speaker for three years in a row. I built a mini fortune from speaking engagements because I started being booked internationally, travelling first to Greece for my debut international appearance, then to London and so on. Along the way, I met the most unbelievable people and business contacts who are still an integral part of what I do today.

I gave everything I had for my dream. I wanted to be sure that if I failed, I wouldn't be able to retrace my steps and analyse what went wrong to conclude that my failure was due somehow to my not having tried hard enough, having been single-minded enough or obsessed enough. If you were to ask me under what circumstances I would have been able to accept my failure, I honestly don't know if I could give you an answer. I don't think I could ever have accepted failure.

I gave up partying and worrying about trivial stuff, because I saw all my free time as time I could be using to better my craft. I trained for hours in front of the mirror. That mirror became my most critical audience – no one was harder on me than I was. I didn't take any shortcuts, because I didn't want to rob myself of the lessons that the full road has to offer.

Most of us think we can achieve by following our dreams part-time. We think we can somehow cheat the full process, but the result of that for most people is that they do the ordinary thing and then become, or remain, the ordinary person. They are ordinary people in the first instance, and will still be ordinary people in the last instance. To become extraordinary you have to put in the extra effort. Few reach their dreams, because few are willing to do massively more than what's required. Be committed, be resolute, and be present at all times. The only evidence of the true respect you have for your dream can be found in the amount of time and effort that you put into it.

Remember Us

Most people simply aren't well off. There's a reason the world is divided between the one percent who seem to own almost everything and the ninety-nine percent who have to make do with everything else, and the ninety-nine percent who have to make do with everything else, and even that is shared unequally.

Chances are that you are starting at zero or close to it, with no money – no nothing. It's a very hard place to be. And maybe you feel like giving up hope.

Most people look at other people's possessions and status and tell themselves, judging by their own present circumstances, that they will never reach that level and can't even imagine how to do it. And, of course, because they're saying that, they're bound to be right.

As the old saying by Henry Ford goes: if you think you can, or if you think you can't – you're right.

Some people start believing maybe the good life wasn't meant for them or their kind. It's easy to come up with a million reasons for why you can't make it. And it's easier to come up with all those reasons (and they're probably all true) instead of believing in one reason (which should also be true, but still more powerful than all those other reasons combined) for why you must make it.

Every successful venture I completed was, for me, a step further away from the doors of prison, and believe me, I don't say that casually.

More than eighty percent of released prisoners return to prison. That's almost everyone. I always wonder about that less than twenty percent who don't go back. Probably, many of them have some kind of life already waiting for them outside of prison anyway: money, a job, a family with means, connections. I – like most other ex-cons – had none of that. But I knew I wasn't going back. I needed to build and grow all of those things from the ground up.

Every time I turned out to be successful in something or the other, and even if one journalist wrote a positive story, the South African media could invariably be

counted on to question what was happening and return to the fact that I was “nothing but an ex-con”. How could an ex-prisoner be given such opportunities? That question was always asked – as if I was sitting at home and it had all just landed in my lap. As if people with millions had gone to great lengths to find me and write cheques out in my name, perhaps to beg me not to go back to robbing banks. Life doesn’t work that way.

The truth is that there are few successful people in this country who had to work as hard as Kenny and I had to to get to the kind of levels of success we achieved.

Whatever you’re facing, however down you’re feeling, no matter how scared you are to start your business because of how tough it is to start at zero, remember the two of us. We didn’t start with nothing – we started with less than nothing.

It wasn’t just because of our past, our long criminal records, a hostile media and a society that doesn’t believe an ex-prisoner should ever be allowed to sit at the helm of something in the corporate world. Our reputation preceded us long before we encountered anyone who came our way. Every time we met someone we had to first prove we weren’t still criminals and we could indeed be trusted – and only then could we move on and start behaving normally with anyone.

Every time, every day, we weren’t just starting on a clean slate with anyone we met. We first had to try to wipe that slate clean. Naturally, this was no one’s fault but our own, and we accepted that. People were right to be wary. It was up to us to prove ourselves, regardless of how humbling or wearying that process is when you’ve had to do it as many times as we had to. But we didn’t fight the reality. We understood it, and we worked with it. We knew what it was going to take. We accepted it. We knew what we had to do, and because we did it so often we got so good at earning acceptance that it became very easy to befriend almost everyone we met, and we could eventually do it quickly, in a natural, honest and lasting way.

What had started as our handicap finally became our biggest advantage, because we had a hundred jokes and anecdotes about being ex-cons, about life in jail and about teasing people whose initial prejudices were only natural. And because we were upfront and easy-going about ourselves, people warmed to us.

In a way, the people we met ended up liking and admiring us all the more, not because we came from jail but because of the way we dealt with the fact that everyone knew we came from jail. We were very good at turning our pain into champagne (which is what the next chapter is about) and that only becomes

possible when you stop feeling sorry for yourself and your situation and turn it into something that drives you.

Those jail doors receding from me in the theatre of my mind was the thing driving me. Everyone has their own prison they are trying to escape from. Be determined to get out of your prison, and stay out of it.

Always – and I mean always – think of us. We were these two guys who really have no special, out-of-this-world skill along with what should have been an absolutely crippling past. Then think of yourself, especially if you don't have any criminal history. What is holding you back?

You'll know the answers to that – you'll have your million reasons for sure.

But then think of us.

Pain into Champagne

People find refuge in the past, no matter how bad it might have been. In fact, if it has been particularly bad, they will use it even more as a shield to guard against being accused of underachieving or lacking motivation. It becomes their excuse for all too many things. Their shield is, mostly, poverty.

“We were so poor and my parents couldn’t afford to pay for this or that.”

People like to collect everything that wasn’t cool about their past and then offer it up in defence of their sorry situation.

Now if you’ve had a bad start in life, or experienced heavy setbacks or traumas, it naturally means you will have much more to overcome to be successful than the person born with a silver spoon, or who’s had a pretty easy life. But no one always has it easy – to show me one person who’s never had a bad day in his life, we’d have to go to a maternity ward.

Your background may be tough, but when you do succeed you will have built the kind of strength and willpower that people who have had it easier will never develop. You will always be stronger, tougher and more appreciative of every moment of your life.

I have a friend called Tegla Loroupe, who comes from a little village in Kenya. She has 24 brothers and sisters. You can’t meet poorer people. All she knew when she was a little girl of five was that she needed to attend school, but none of the elders in her village, including her own parents, had any intention of sending her to the nearest one, more than 10km away. But she heard about school and was determined to go.

So one morning, instead of looking after the goats as she was meant to, she stole off and ran the equivalent of an Olympic 10K to announce herself at the little school. There were already strict rules in Kenya about school attendance and once Tegla got herself registered as a pupil, her family would be breaking the law if she

didn't keep showing up for class. Half the school year had already elapsed, but Tegla attended class every day from then on, running barefoot across the valleys and hills of Kenya, every morning and afternoon. She caught up and passed Grade 1 that same year.

Most importantly, when she and other kids from her village all ran to school together, she realised she could outrun kids much older.

Years later, she was refused permission to be part of the Kenyan running association. They explained that her build was too small. But, after coming 17th at her first major competition, the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, she went on to beat every last female runner in the Kenyan stable. In 1994, she became the first woman from Africa to win the New York marathon, and she did it again the year after that. She earned three world records in long-distance running.

She went back to Kenya to build a school and became such a legend in her country that when she challenged the men in warring factions in Kenya to put down their guns for one day and run with her, down to the last man, they did. It created such a feeling of camaraderie that hundreds of these men struggled to pick up arms against one another again. Tegla's runs have now become a regular feature of peace efforts around the world. She became a UN ambassador for sport along with Roger Federer and other legends of sport.

Tegla is a perfect example of somebody who started out way poorer than you could ever have been. But she turned her pain into champagne.

Turn your story around, there is always a way. It's not easy but it's more than worthwhile. The next time you feel like referring to your poor upbringing, think about Tegla who ran without shoes from a village in the east of Africa to hitting the victory tape in the New York marathon and claiming gold at half marathon championships all over the world.

Could you imagine yourself running a half marathon every day, just to get to school and back? Most of us would have dropped out or, at the very least, complained. But this difficult challenge and obstacle standing between her and an education was the very thing that built her to become one of the greatest long-distance runners of her generation and to inspire a nation to embrace peace.

And even if running a marathon to school is not possible, you can still teach yourself at home. A poor girl called Maud Chifamba, who grew up in the Hunters

resettlement area in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe, lost her father at the age of five, and later lost her mother too. Being an orphan was not even a strange or exceptional circumstance in her area, like rural areas in general. Most of the kids in the area where Maud lived couldn't afford school fees. But Maud didn't just sit at home feeling sorry for herself. Don't ask me how she pulled it off, but at the age of ten she somehow managed to write her Grade 7 exams, after teaching herself at home. She took two years to complete her ordinary level before writing her A-level at the age of fourteen.

Her brother Gilbert said at times they thought she was going to lose her mind, but she kept it up and became the youngest student in southern Africa to enrol at university last year, at just fourteen years old. She is studying towards a bachelor of accountancy degree at the University of Zimbabwe and was voted by Forbes as one of the twenty youngest power women in Africa. She said the death of her parents affected her by motivating her to work harder because there was no one to take care of her in the future but her.

It is very rare to find such maturity at such a young age, but Maud is an example to all of us from rural areas who may choose to blame our failures on our tough circumstances.

Where you are now is only your present location, not your destination. Small towns have produced the greatest personalities. Use nothing as an excuse not to achieve. Use what might hold others back as your biggest motivator. Your present circumstances are your biggest indicator of how hard you still have to work. We who have little should still cover much ground. Dedication and discipline are the only tools we really need.

That's what it means to turn your pain into champagne. You use your problems to become stronger.

Brick By Brick

I grew up in a township in Bloemfontein called Heidedal. Five-hundred metres from my house was a brick factory owned by Corobrik. Next to that was a piece of open veldt. Many would-be schoolboy entrepreneurs frequented that bit of veldt because it was a useful source of extra pocket money. Corobrik used that land to dump their reject stock they would never be able to sell. That field was like a fairground horror show of freakish bricks that good tax-paying society did not want to know about.

There were half bricks, deformed bricks, brittle bricks and oversized bricks. There were bricks there that not even a homeless man could love. But there were also a few pretty good bricks in there, with barely a flaw.

Kids from my community would spend ages searching through all that rubbish to pick out the best of the bad lot and sell them on to people only too happy to be able to build with cheaper materials. Never one to miss out on an opportunity, I also worked with the brick-gang children for as many hours as I could, sifting through the piles and sorting out the good bricks and the bricks with potential from the ones that no child could save. One of my regular buyers was an “uncle” called Ralph. He paid better than most of the other buyers, because he wanted to be sure we would always keep the best bricks for him. We all thought Ralph was a foolish guy. He stacked all those bricks in his back yard. For years Ralph just collected our bricks. We thought maybe it was just his hobby or something.

He continued doing this even long after I outgrew the half-bricks business. I found Ralph buying and I left him buying. When I went to prison for ten years, Ralph was still buying bricks.

A few years after my release, my PA Liezl told me that some construction mogul was at my office waiting to see me. When I walked in, there was Ralph. What an incredible lesson that was for me. That’s when I realised how big dreams can sometimes start with very modest steps. Such steps are ones that others may see as beneath them. We took a drive and Ralph showed me all the huge contracts he was working on. He had started by buying bricks on the cheap, then used them to build

affordable little houses that he made profits on each time. All this was going on while we were selling him our bricks, and we'd never had any idea how far and wide our finds were actually travelling. We just saw bricks stacking up in Ralph's back yard, but we lacked the vision to see his grand plan and his dream.

By the time he had saved up enough money from building small houses, he bought his own brickmaking machinery, and started selling real bricks – perfect, beautiful ones. He kept up the tradition of keeping his less-than-perfect bricks to build affordable homes for people who were only too happy to live in any kind of brick-built home – they didn't care what the shape of those bricks might be.

The rest, quite incredibly, is history.

The world is full of stories like Ralph's. Every day, young people come to see me with million-dollar proposals but they look like barely half a cent themselves. I remember one of my business associates once telling me a story of a woman who came to see him about wanting a few million from Kenny and me to start a chrome mine on land that she owned, and which she'd recently been granted a mining right for. The chrome was apparently so good that it was cropping out on the surface, meaning that you could actually see one end of the deposit on the surface, right there. You could touch the ore with your bare hands. In mining circles, this is considered the best kind of mineral find.

So my associate asked her: "But why do you want so much money to start a chrome mine?"

She answered, perfectly reasonably: "So that we can buy bulldozers, excavators, tipper trucks, a washing plant and so on. We want to make big money."

So then he asked her: "Do you by any chance own a one-ton bakkie?"

She said that she did.

"Do you by any chance own a pickaxe and a spade?"

This, too, she owned.

There was a healthy, strong, young man with her – her nephew – and so my associate turned to them and said: "You already have everything you need. Really.

If you just fill that bakkie with one ton of chrome every day for the next year, and save the money, by the time your ore body gets too deep you'll have more than enough money saved to buy your own excavator and trucks. And you won't owe anyone a cent."

At that time, Kenny and I weren't investing in any other businesses, or he would never have told her this.

When he told me the story, he said that she had left looking crestfallen and disappointed. He just shrugged and said: "You know, I probably gave that lady the best advice she's ever heard, but she'll probably still be looking for an investor ten years from now." That's probably true – and it's sad. People think too big. They think you need to be a millionaire before you can think of saving and investing money. But even just saving R500 a month, thanks to the power of compound interest at just a ten percent interest rate, can make you a millionaire in thirty years' time. Thirty years sounds like a lot, but it goes by quickly and that's a million bucks built up humbly with the "bricks" of just R500 a month.

This kind of lesson applies to almost anything worth doing in life. Ten years ago, when I was released from jail if you had told me I would ever write a book I would have said you're possessed. Me? Write a book? Books seem huge and intimidating, but no one writes a book in one day. I wrote this one over about two years by tapping away on my iPad whenever I had an idea and a little bit of time. I only needed half an hour sometimes in between my hectic schedule, but I made the time and made my notes. When people hear I wrote the whole thing on an iPad they struggle to believe me. "Surely you'd need a full computer and a keyboard?" Well, I rarely had that around, so I worked with what I had. If I'd just had a notebook and a pen, I would have used that.

By just writing a few hundred words a day, anyone can write a book. And my next book will be better and easier to do, because I'll have had some practice.

That's my simple point.

Dreams can become big no matter how humble you start out. If you just set yourself the goal to double your income from your business every year, you'll be a billionaire in twenty years or even less. There is no better example than my old neighbourhood uncle Ralph's to understand the saying: "Work with what you've got." Some of the world's greatest sports stars started out as kids by tying paint

cans to poles, filling them with rocks, and lifting their homemade equipment until their arms were ready to fall off.

Dreaming big doesn't mean getting carried away. I am confronted daily with business proposals that require millions dollars. Sure, some are great, but most are nonsense.

When I meet and interrogate the owners of these different business plans I'm usually driven to tears: tears of laughter, because in their plan provision has been made for cars, houses, clothing, etc. Don't get me wrong, the actual words 'cars' and 'houses' are never written into the plan but it comes out when you do the ruler assessment and take every item they've budgeted for line by line.

Usually the person seeking investment has got a viable business idea, but with all the added bells and whistles it soon makes an experienced investor lose confidence.

We all want nice cars. We all want nice houses. But the owners of these have paid their dues or are suffering every month under the instalments. If you hustle hard and smart, money is sure to follow and money will get you all that nice stuff, though you shouldn't get too caught up in acting like a show-off. You want money to give you options and a secure life. You shouldn't be doing it to show off to anyone, because what people think of you counts for little. As sure as the cart follows the horse, money will follow hard and smart work.

Another guy I know, who started out without a single cent, is another clear example of how you don't need millions to start a multimillion-rand business. He planned his way to the top with military precision and discipline and he planned his project, step by step, adding expertise steadily.

His first big insight was that the locals in his area were spending considerable time and money going to another part of town to buy groceries and clothing. It was obvious to him that his area needed a shopping centre and he also knew the correct spot to build it.

His only major hurdle was that he was stone broke, but even that didn't stop him.

First of all, he approached an architect and told him that he had first option to purchase the prime land and he gave the architect an offer the man found very attractive.

Now, he didn't own the land and he hadn't even spoken to its owner yet, but he wasn't exactly lying. No one else seemed interested in buying the land, so technically he probably did have first option on it.

The offer was to become a ten percent owner of the shopping centre once it was finished. They agreed, signed a contract, and the plans and drawings were finished in record time. Armed with the drawings he approached the big-name tenants first, because once you have a Pick n Pay, a Woolworths or a Checkers in your centre, then news gets around and other big-name tenants want to get space to sell their products. The next thing you've got a bank or two, then the cellphone shops, then a few restaurants. Within just a few months, he had memorandums of understanding signed with several major retailers, and had a clear business plan set out, including how much money it would take to build the mall and how long. Armed with his plans and his list of guaranteed tenants, he finally approached the owner of the land, who was blown away by how real the project already looked. At this point, the land owner could have just stolen the whole project, but it would have turned into a very complex, time-consuming and expensive legal battle because my hustler friend had so many contracts signed agreed with him and his architect friend's company that the landowner simply went along with it.

By now he already had a waiting list of tenants. He "bought" the land without spending a cent. He offered the landowner twenty-five percent of the centre and an additional percentage after twenty-five years.

Next, he approached the big construction companies, to whom he signed away another fifty percent of the project.

Another five percent of equity in the centre was signed away for other expenses, and the shopping centre became a reality exactly four years after he had started his plan and, in all that time, he'd never had to approach the bank for a loan and he didn't have to spend a single cent. At the start, he owned one-hundred percent of nothing, but today he owns ten percent of a very profitable shopping centre in his community. And I'm sure he will be part of future development projects elsewhere. More people would be as successful today if they understood the powerful truth that it's always better to own a percentage of something instead of one-hundred percent of nothing.

The business world is flooded with rags-to-riches stories. Learn from them. Just as there are positive stories, so there are stories of businesspeople who wanted the

car and the houses before they wanted to do the hard work. Most, if not all of them, are relegated to the dustbin of business history. Bankrupt and angry, some still don't get angry about their own silly decisions. They blame everything else. Some learn through their mistakes and find the courage to climb back to where they were or better.

Most South Africans say that one learns through one's mistakes, but the Chinese have a better saying, which is that you learn through the mistakes of others. I might add that the Chinese also learn through the successes of others – or we wouldn't have so many amazing fake copies of every great brand ever made.

Lessons From an Eight-Year-Old

When I was a youngster, just eight years old, I picked up a wallet that had a hundred rand in it, and back then that was a lot of money. My friends and I spent it together. For a week, the three of us experienced what we thought must have been how rich kids lived. Man, we had the time of our life with that hundred bucks.

Teachers and students alike wondered how the brats from Poorville had hit it so big. Our spree soon ended as abruptly as it had begun. When the questions about it grew louder, news of our windfall reached the ears of the money's former owner. As luck would have it, he was the most brutal, most sadistic bully in school. His older brother was feared even more than him.

Those brothers beat the living daylights out of us. No eight-year-old should ever get a beating like that. We were then given a week to return the money, or else. We assumed that if what we'd just experienced wasn't as bad as it could get (and it wasn't) we had better get the money back or we would all be dead.

A week, though, seemed like an impossibly short amount of time to make a hundred bucks, so I bravely took the risk to ask for at least a month, which was granted.

Of our earlier massive haul, we just had four rand left between us. But, more importantly, we had the sort of strong will to make back the money that can come only from the fear of death. We were about to experience our first taste of entrepreneurship.

We knew that asking anyone we knew for that kind of money would be an exercise in futility. With our primary school swagger, we had also not made many friends by acting like spoilt brats during our brief flirtation with riches. No one was going to help us out on this one.

We worked out that four rand could buy us one big pack of sweets, and if we then resold those sweets individually we would make back our four rand with a profit of two rand. We didn't need a calculator to work out that we had to eventually sell fifty big packets of sweets. That, from the outset, seemed like mission impossible –

but remembering our beating, we set out manfully to try. We started to sell our first few sweets. For the next four weeks, sweets dominated our lives. After selling our first packet we went back and bought another one. When we graduated to our second packet we started to feel a glimmer of hope. By our fourth packet we were high-fiving each other. It was a slow, gruelling process. There were many setbacks, too many to mention.

But we knew that whatever happened, turning back was not an option. We slaved on, selling sweet after sweet, packet after packet. Everywhere we went we'd have our sweets with us. Everyone we saw, we tried to sell a sweet to. When we finally reached the eighty-bucks mark we decided to add cheese curls to our offering. We lived, slept, dreamt (but never ate) sweets and cheese curls.

Somewhere in the middle of all this, the first month came and went. We were granted more time by our brutal taskmasters, because they had heard all about our hustling and bustling with the sweets, so they realised killing us would be premature. They could see we were on track. It took us two months to make back that hundred bucks (in a mountain of coins). We had achieved something at the age of eight that most adults in our township would not have even tried to do. We had personally conceded that what we were trying to do was probably an impossible task, but we had to try because we didn't want to die.

We never had any time to go to the river for a swim, play soccer with the other kids, all the stuff everyone else our age was occupied with. We went to soccer, rugby and cricket events in the city only to sell sweets.

We didn't listen to the laughter of other kids who found our selling of sweets funny. We didn't listen to the mockery of those who found our desperate selling of the sweets a sign of being low class. We certainly didn't see selling sweets as being beneath us. We couldn't afford the luxury of having any pride. We'd simply wait for people to finish laughing and then ask them: "So are you going to buy a sweet or not?"

Even at that young age we learned to crush the opposition, because we saw it as a matter of life and death. While most other kids were laughing at us, there were a few bright ones who could see that we were making money, and they tried to hustle in on our sweet-selling racket. But the moment there was another seller we would follow him and wherever he tried to sell his sweets we'd lower our price until he either started working for us or lost interest.

We dreamt about reaching that hundred-rand mark every single night. When we were together, it was all we spoke about. It utterly consumed us, drove us and became the only thing that we cared about. If you had asked any of us during those two months what we wished for most on earth we would have answered, without hesitation, as one: “To raise one-hundred bucks!” We made many mistakes along the way. Sometimes we had less money by the evening than we had started out with in the morning. Some days we’d end up losing all that day’s money, or that day’s sweets or both because we became a target for robbers or were just careless.

All the same, we never considered quitting for a second.

We soldiered on bravely, sometimes stupidly, sometimes hesitantly but soldier on we did – relentlessly.

The best piece of advice I could ever give is: be relentless.

We didn’t stop. Along the way we had sold sweets, fruit and cheese curls. Along the way we learnt about bulk buying. We learnt about waiting to buy according to expiry dates because if we bought stuff in the week before it expired we could get it for half price.

But the main thing we learnt was that we could achieve the improbable. And that is a lesson that’s never left me. So what’s the point of that story?

Nearly all young people who come up with brilliant business plans will never find funding for their ideas. But then if you think about the determination of a few eight-year-olds who sold nothing but sweets and turned R4 into R100, you should see that it doesn’t really matter.

Bono, U2’s lead singer, once made a comment, upon seeing what the people of Lesotho were doing in their fight against HIV. Roughly, he said that however commendable and heart wrenching what they were doing was, it broke his heart even more to know that, deep down, their actions had no chance of beating the epidemic.

They had some brilliant ideas and they were doing some fantastic stuff, but they simply didn’t have the funding needed to really make a difference.

No matter how good your plan is, most people will not give money to a young businessperson – not while there are so many tried-and-tested old dogs out there.

Even the people who are willing to invest in the youth can only do so much. Just like Bono, it often breaks my heart to see all the energy, drive and effort of young people, while knowing that for many of them the sad reality is that in the near future all of that will be replaced with despair and disbelief.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Sometimes one has to park the big plan to build a smaller one that gradually takes you towards achieving the big one. I can easily list many things that prevent people from becoming rich, but nothing is as common and as destructive as impatience. Money and impatience are enemies. Impatient people should play the lottery.

If you read that story about the sweets and say, as my cousin did when I told him that story, that you don't have time to sell small crap, then my answer will remain a question. What other choice do you have?

When I was in that situation, I couldn't think of another choice. If you can, then have at it. Do whatever you think will get you there. But don't avoid doing something you know will work just because it's hard work in favour of something that has an outside chance of working just because it's easy.

This next simple story made me who I am today and taught me so much. It taught me patience, endurance, strategy, conquering fear, and everything I ever needed to learn about ignoring rumours and hearsay.

Most importantly, it taught me that there is nothing you can't do if you put your mind to it.

Highway to Gold

When Charles and I decided to write my life story he was just a young guy, twenty-four years old (though everyone said he looked more like eighteen). He was working at a little publishing company and still studying. He was renting a small back room in an old house in Bloemfontein from a cancer patient who was eighty-seven years old and hiring the room out cheaply. Charles had never published a book before but when he met me and heard about my story he was totally convinced it would make a great book. I could see his youthful enthusiasm and when I read some of his writing I was quite impressed. For the first time I could see how my experiences and life story could become a book that would touch people.

Charles had a very old motorbike that he used to ride over to my place after work every day, with his tape recorder in hand. Often, after a session of interviewing when it was time for him to go home, he needed me to help push him out of the driveway before it would start. We spent days talking and working but it was really tough for him because he was still working on his master's degree and had a full time job. The months turned into a year compiling this book. We had no budget or time estimation for any of it and neither of us had much money.

He had even told me at one point, probably because he seemed to think he was so much better off than I was, that he would just let me have the completed manuscript of the book one day and he didn't want any of the money from the sales of the book. To him, he said, it would be his way of thanking me for allowing him to hear and write my story and to help me get ahead in life and not end up back in jail. As he put it, he didn't have any money to help me out, but he had his writing talent and he was happy to share that with me.

I, however, just knew that, like the sweets I had sold as an eight-year-old, this book of ours would be our way out.

In the middle of it all, Charles took a job overseas because it meant more money. He'd always wanted to go work in London and he'd filled in all the paperwork long before. He was awarded his working visa and had a job waiting for him. Sure, it was good news because that was what he had wanted, but it was bad news

because we both were worried about our unborn baby. We worried if our book would survive him leaving. He promised me, though, that we'd finish writing the book over the phone. He regularly bought Worldcall cards in London and called me, at a time when I was hardly ever in the same place two nights in a row.

Only someone who has finished writing a book will be able to grasp what we had to endure writing a book over the phone. It was nightmarish, frustrating and demotivating, especially for Charles, but we soldiered on.

I remember at one point, Charles felt he just wasn't giving our project the attention it deserved – and I think he had serious doubts about his own ability to write a good book and get it published – so I'll never forget how he phoned me and said he'd been thinking about it and that he realised my career as a motivational speaker was really starting to pick up and he was just holding me back. He told me he would be more than willing to just send me everything he'd written (which was quite substantial by then) and just let me take it to one of the professional writers I knew – because by then I'd met several more writers and many of them were very keen to write a book with me. Charles even said they could change everything he'd done and put their name on the final book, because that might just be the best thing for me.

I refused to hear a word of it. I told him: “Charlie, you have become like my little brother. I know how passionate you are deep down about this project, and you are going to write this book and it's going to be a bestseller.”

It was just the push he needed and we worked harder than ever. Charles even got back on a plane and returned to South Africa with only one goal: to finish our book and get it published.

He returned with an old, sickly laptop that fell ill at the worst of times and its battery never lasted long. Especially if we were working on car journeys, I had to talk fast and he had to type even faster for us to get a fair amount of work in.

I nicknamed his laptop “ICU”, after the intensive care units in hospitals. That damn thing always knew exactly when we were on a roll so that it could go on a go-slow or just totally shut down. We didn't have the money to replace it. I suspect the computer was aware of that too. Charles went everywhere with me, across just about the whole of South Africa as I did my school talks and some of the corporate talks in between.

In not too long, we had a finished manuscript – and it was a great book. Charles had outdone himself. We were ready to have publishing houses fighting over our book, and we could already see the words “bestseller” written in lights. We had appointments with all of the big publishers.

Charles couldn't afford a ticket for both of us to go to Cape Town, so we decided I would go alone. I left with so much hope and excitement at the thought of publishers fighting over this manuscript and offering us crazy percentages for the rights.

How wrong we both were. Instead of sitting at long tables with leather couches discussing percentages in boardrooms, I was simply told to dump our manuscript in some bin that strongly resembled a dustbin. It was already overflowing with other manuscripts. I encountered this at every publishing house, except at Struik, where I met a lady who was polite enough to sit with me and explain the whole process. Even if we succeeded with the outside chance of getting a publishing deal, she said we would be lucky to see our book on a shelf within a year.

She really took the time to patiently explain the whole process of publishing to me, but the more she spoke the more dejected I felt.

When I left there, hope had become a foreign concept. I felt like a sock dipped in mud. I was angry and dejected. It felt like three years, and an insane amount of effort had been in vain. I couldn't even bring myself to share the bad news with Charles, who by then must have left a million text messages on my phone. I managed to type back one word, “good”, in answer to one of his questions about how it had gone. What possessed me to say that I don't know. Maybe it was a hunger for what I so badly needed at that moment.

While I was in the plane on the way back to Joburg, I remembered the words of my schoolteacher, Mr Oliphant. He taught me that the moment you panic is the moment of your downfall.

I had jumped on that plane feeling as low as an ant, but by the time I jumped off that plane I was as high as a kite. During that flight I realised that the run-around I'd been given by the publishing industry was probably the best thing that could ever have happened to us. Even if we had been offered the best deal in the history of South African publishing, it would still never make us rich. My chat with the editor at Struik had made that abundantly clear. You're lucky to get a five percent

royalty from these guys and your book just ends up being one of hundreds of titles they churn out every year, hoping for a hit.

I realised that not only could we do this whole thing on our own, but we would do it despite not knowing jack about publishing. Not knowing was probably the one thing that would help us push the boundaries because we didn't even know what the boundaries were.

I sold this whole idea to Charles as if it was entirely my choice. I told him we'd been offered a deal for our book that was even better than the deal Nelson Mandela had been given for *Long Walk to Freedom*. Of course, I was just sucking it out of my thumb, and Charles probably suspected I was just making it all up. Or maybe he also wanted to believe. He'd given up his whole life to finish this project and we had no choice. It had to work. We knew our manuscript would never be subjected to the hopelessness inside those horrible baskets at the publishing houses.

Charles had some savings from his job in London, and I had a bit too, but it wasn't enough to launch our own publishing company, but it was enough to pay the deposit for the printing to get the book out there. Then we would have a month or two to pay for the other half of the printing.

Since we couldn't afford any professional services, Charles taught himself how to do all the typesetting. He edited his own work as well as he could and his dad – whose only formal qualification was being a blacksmith on a coalmine – did the proofreading. Charles' artist friend designed the cover.

I made an appointment with the printers, who advised me to keep within a modest budget and print only a thousand books. I put away thirty percent of whatever I made from my speaking gigs and Charles threw in what was left of his savings from the UK. We saved up and printed ten-thousand copies.

We met another hurdle because no bookshop wanted to place a single order for it as they have a buy-back principle and the only way that works is if the company they're buying from operates professionally, with trained staff. If the book didn't sell we couldn't put up the necessary financial guarantees. I met a guy called Frans Cronje, who had self-published the successful book about his late brother Hansie. He had a strong relationship with all the bookstores. We offered him a percentage of the sales to become our distributor. So, finally, our book saw the inside of a bookshop.

South Africa's biggest newspaper, The Sunday Times, printed an excerpt from the book one week before it was made available. Readers loved it so much they requested a second excerpt, which ran the week after, something I was told is very rare for Sunday papers to do. That alone drove demand for our book dizzy. Charles and I appeared in different media, sometimes together, sometimes on our own, both as writer and subject. We found ourselves needing to print another 40 000 copies of our book after I appeared on 3 Talk with Noeleen.

Within a week, we had made the Sunday Times bestseller list. We even topped that list for a couple of weeks. I remember how Charles and I stood for a photograph next to our book on the shelf in CNA, smiling as our baby stood on the number one spot on the non-fiction bestseller shelf.

The book became so popular we immediately started work on a kiddies' version of my story, which also enjoyed success. We sold books everywhere. I found myself at airports handing out books to famous people as they passed so that people could see that the who's who was reading our book. We hoped celebs would talk about it on TV or on the radio or be seen reading it somewhere.

Best of all, we sold books at each of my motivational talks – sometimes hundreds in a day. We sold it everywhere.

Kenny was in charge of sales, and we sold our book from the boot of cars; we did marketing at airports, taxi ranks, schools, anywhere with people. We were utterly shameless in our marketing drive. We spared no place: churches, funerals, prayer groups. We lived for selling this book, and we eventually reached the million-rand mark. We then took our money and bought a few trucks, a few refrigerators and several tons of fish and chicken, which we sold and marketed by roping in the willing labour of dozens of ex-convicts who no one else was willing to give a job, but were only too willing to work.

We marketed our frozen fish and chicken no less obsessively than we had our book. It was a difficult business to succeed in. There are a lot of established players in the food business, but we were determined. We didn't give up.

Kenny was also managing my motivational speaking career that, thanks to the added publicity the book had given me, was blossoming. Our book sales continued to do well. So did our fish and chicken business.

Life improved and we even published another two books.

Thanks to all the people we met and friends we made in the corporate world through our books, my speaking career and all the publicity we were getting, we realised it was finally time to park our small car – our small-time preoccupations – and enter the mining industry.

Money and Oxygen

All of us have heard the words: “Money is the root of all evil.” But let me set that straight. Money is not the root of all evil, the lack of it is. This idea of money as “evil” tends to come from people who equate virtue with poverty – it’s just how they’re raised, particularly if they’re from a strongly conservative religious family. It’s true that the blind pursuit of money at the expense of everything else can be evil, but poverty is one of the greatest evils in the world.

I’m still to hear a very wealthy person saying money is the root of all evil. It’s not because they themselves are evil, but daily they see what money makes possible. For a poor person to come to the conclusion that money isn’t good is a curious thing, because if you think about it, they’ve probably never had money – so how do they really know? And it’s only poor people saying it.

As a hustler, it is your duty to strive for riches. It may not sound poetic to put it this way, but money should be your daily inspiration. Money even buys life – anybody saying money can’t buy life or health is so uninformed it’s not worth arguing with them. Just send them to the nearest government hospital where there are endless reports of people dying simply because they had to wait on medical care. State doctors there are heavily overworked – and, in any occupation, that’s not good. But in an occupation that is daily a matter of life and death, it’s the last thing you need.

In the event of a car accident it’s crucial to be attended to speedily. How often have we heard of people dying on their way to hospital while being stuck in traffic, but the rich guy gets airlifted? And please don’t tell me about that if it’s your time it’s your time. Are you seriously saying that the guys who can’t afford dialysis machines should just accept that it’s their time to die?

How many in Africa have and are still dying because they can’t afford a mosquito net, which costs just one dollar? Thanks to the international community, they’ve delivered 382.5 million nets in the past three years. But somebody had to pay for that – and it came from people in the developed world who know that the lack of money is the root of all evil.

Later, I will go into why we shouldn't need the international community to donate mosquito nets, or anything else for that matter, to Africa – but for now the point remains that without money even more avoidable deaths would not be avoided.

Every day, tens of thousands of people are still dying – not only because of disease, famine and war. Sure, those are the things killing them directly, but poverty is behind it.

Even if you save someone from HIV/Aids he's probably still broke. So even if the Aids doesn't kill him he might still just die of hunger. As former president Thabo Mbeki rightly said, poverty is Africa's biggest problem.

A quarter of the world's population still doesn't get nearly enough to eat. Go to places like Somalia, Djibouti or Ethiopia and come back and then let's see if you can still talk about philosophical defeatisms like “it is just your time” and “money is evil”. I have touched on the medical issue – but the other examples I could give are literally endless.

How many people who can't afford ransom money after being kidnapped by rebels around the world are killed – often simply for the pirates or the warlords to make a point – while the rich guy walks? When it comes to money, issues of right or wrong often come second to issues of who can pay most.

It's not fair – but it's how the world works. And the sooner you wise up to the fact that money is power because money gives you options, the sooner you will start to grasp the hustler's way.

Here's the strongest argument I can put for respecting the value of money – it equals freedom itself. Because the more money you have, the more options will be available to you. And the more options you have to choose from, the greater your freedom of choice becomes. You might still choose incorrectly or badly. But at least you'll be making a choice that is entirely your own, without having to ask for anyone's blessing. Because it's your money. And people with their own money get to live their own lives on their own terms.

You may be telling yourself that all of what I'm saying here is pretty obvious, and it should be – but I am constantly astounded by the delusions of people everywhere who just don't prize the accumulation of wealth as strongly as they should.

So I'm mentioning this as a serious concern because money is a serious matter. Money, for me, is right up there with the likes of oxygen as a basic requirement for survival.

I must also add, though, that if you had met me a few years ago I would probably have told you that money is everything. I used to make the analogy to counter the old saying that "money doesn't buy you happiness" by saying: "I'd rather be crying in my Rolls Royce than smiling in my Corolla." I don't feel the same way any more. I certainly no longer think money is everything, and I definitely am no longer so shallow as to think that success equals money and money equals success. I know that money alone is not the measure of a person and you can only be judged by the commitment you have to your own goals and your dedication to achieving them – whether money plays a role in that or not.

But if someone is suffering in poverty, it's no use comforting oneself with the loser's rationalisation that money is not important. Such people are welcome to go on believing whatever they want, but don't allow them to stone us true believers. We believe in the power and the necessity of money.

And that will be the case until some genius invents a different way to run the world. And when that happens, the hustler will adapt his hustle to that world too. But until then, respect what money can do. The guy who preaches differently is either delusional or trying to make you feel better in the worst possible way.

Money and Honour

The biggest business deals are often signed over a handshake. Most of the deals that matter and really change things are also clinched long before the lawyers arrive on the scene to come and formalise everything.

Every businessperson has a story to tell about how he or she got screwed at some point in his or her career.

A guy will always be quick to tell you about how some guy wronged him. He will rarely admit that he played a significant part in being screwed – simply by allowing himself to think that everyone out there acts in good faith, as the honourable business guy would. I have seen both sides of this coin, I've been the lamb sometimes, but I've also been the lion. I've been screwed, but I've also screwed a few people. I also told myself that this is just how the game is played and has to be played.

Until I met a Ukrainian billionaire and we became good friends. A few months into our friendship he approached me to do consultancy work for him in Africa. We agreed on a six-month contract worth \$100 000 per month. Within the first month of our contract I saw how everything we had set out to achieve just wasn't materialising. We didn't get the specific farming land he'd been planning to purchase. The other deals he was envisaging putting together didn't happen either, due to circumstances beyond his and my control.

In spite of all this, I still received my cheque every month. During month three I decided to call a meeting with him to relieve him of his promise to pay me every month. I am just not the type of guy who can sit back and relax while getting paid the sort of money one should get either for working very hard and smart, for offering superior skills or knowledge or for putting together one-of-a-kind deals.

At our meeting, I admitted that despite my best efforts I had not been able to achieve anything for him thus far. I told him I would not be able to continue like this. After my rather long speech about how I had not earned, nor was I worthy of his regular retainer payments, he asked me one question.

He said: “Why are you making this about you? It’s not your fault if there is no work for you. I am to blame. I will keep on paying you because that’s what we shook on.”

I didn’t know what to say. So I was silent.

He told me that he and his best friend had never signed a contract. From the start, and over all their years working together, they had continued operating only on handshakes.

Now, before you tell me that you and your best friend also don’t have contracts between you, ask yourself if you and your friend have ever agreed on billion-dollar deals?

That’s what impressed me most: his sense of honour. Most of us can have honour until the money appears – and then the honour disappears, to be replaced by arrogance and greed.

I always tell my friends that you only really see what a man is like after he makes his first million or two. It’s easy to be a bleeding-heart liberal when you really have no way of really changing the world anyway.

But when you can change things – because money changes things – it’s then that one gets to see what a person’s real values are, and what they are willing to invest their richer availability of time and resources into. And if they actually do respect people, then they will continue to respect people, the way my Ukrainian friend respected me. He could have just told me to take a hike. I opened the door for him to do that. I hadn’t done enough for him to think he could get anything out of me or that I could still offer him anything. But he still respected me. And a true hustler never forgets that. You need to respect and treat people well even if you think they can do nothing for you. Today they need you. One day you will need them.

You can’t change people by telling them things – you change them by making them admire you and want to be more like you. It’s like what any sensible parent will tell you: it doesn’t matter what you tell your kids – it matters who you are. Your kids will respect you not for telling them to be honourable, strong and self-reliant. They’ll respect you if you are honourable, strong and self-reliant. And by watching how you do it, they will easily see and learn how to do it too.

If you aren't that, no amount of talking to them will make an ounce of difference.

My billionaire friend didn't just show me honour. In a way, he changed me and turned me into him a little bit. At the time I owed people money, and I already knew I was not going to pay them. But after spending time with my rich friend, I went back, recommitted to them and started paying them. Whenever I was confronted by a situation where I knew how easy it would be to get out of a prior commitment, I would think about this Ukrainian investor and how he lives, bound by his words.

With me, he had all the reason in the world to walk away from our agreement, but he stuck to it because his words had chained him to that commitment. A hustler understands that his reputation is his number-one asset, so he does not commit to doing anything without thinking about it carefully – and then a hustler sticks to what he said he'd do.

Money vs Will

I love sport, but I couldn't help but feel let down by the SA Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (Sascoc) immediately after South Africa's Olympic achievements at London 2012. Our athletes brought back six medals between them, four of them gold. Sascoc said that to achieve more at Brazil in 2016 we need more money – not more willpower, not more heart. No, we need more money.

Money is a key factor for success in all areas of life, but saying that not having enough of it is the reason you haven't done better is not the best excuse in the world. No doubt, with loads more money thrown at the various sports in South Africa, there will be more people doing a variety of sports, more often, and in more places.

Of course that could easily translate into more medals. In fact, it would be weird if it didn't, but it's not guaranteed. There are some things money can't buy, and not even a black, platinum or diamond Mastercard will buy you a gold Olympic medal unless you can find a way to use it to bribe the two-hundred other athletes trying to win that medal against you.

But don't count on it.

Keep in mind that the US soccer team has, for years, been the best-funded national football squad in the world, and yet no one's expecting them to win a Fifa World Cup any time soon, unlike some of the many great heroes of Brazilian football through history, who grew up dead poor, kicking balls with holes in them in the backstreets of Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo.

Sascoc didn't get the medals they wanted, but it was not primarily because of lack of money. It's mainly because of their attitude – which is our country's attitude towards winning in general. A thousand kids who hear the “we-need-more-money” speech will now also start to believe that they need more money to achieve or to compete, but whatever happened to making the most of what you've got?

Few people outside of America know this, but the US Olympic team gets no funding from their government. At every Olympics, the US always sends over one of the biggest teams and they usually go back with the most medals. But the US team relies on donations, sponsorships and the income generated from selling TV and media rights – they don't get a single tax dollar.

The US Olympic Committee funds teams in forty-five different sports using less money than one of their baseball teams, the New York Yankees, spends on salaries alone. They have less money for their entire team than many, much smaller European nations with much smaller teams. American canoeists get about ten percent of the funding that British, French, German or Hungarian canoeists get. But despite this, Americans win medals by the truckload every four years.

Colm O'Connell, one of my heroes, is an Irish missionary in Kenya, who arrived there thirty-six years ago. He had no coaching background, but he had a hand, directly, in coaching twenty-five students who have gone on to become world athletics champions. Four of them won Olympic gold medals. Some countries have never won a single medal.

This man never instilled the idea in his students that the reason they wouldn't perform was because they lacked cash. He and his students had the heart and the will to win, despite having next to nothing.

The type of thinking displayed by Sascoc is, of course, not limited to them. Most of us, at one point or the other, have advanced our lack of money as the reason for why we can't do something while somewhere in the world someone is managing to do exactly that, without money. We should not fall into the "I-need-money" trap for everything.

Money, as I have said before and will say repeatedly, is very important, but there are still innumerable things that matter more than money. Money can't buy willpower, heart, endurance and an I'm-gonna-make-it attitude. But if you have enough of those things, and a little bit of luck, eventually you'll make enough money to fill up a bank or two.

While I was writing this I couldn't help but think of how Chelsea FC had fired yet another coach, Roberto Di Matteo, for non-performance. Two weeks later Mamelodi Sundowns also fired their coach, Johan Neeskens, for the same reason. Sundowns, unbelievably, was languishing at the bottom of the log. The richest men

own both teams, respectively, in their leagues. They pay their players more than anyone else in their leagues.

But for all their money, they were not able to buy the magic ingredient that takes competitors from being talented and full of potential, to being conquerors.

Even snails cover distances. Don't let the fact that you don't have access to cash make you think there are no other ways to get going, and keep going. Hustlers make a way where there is none.

Make a Start

I can easily show you an endless list of people who are always complaining that “there are no jobs”. I heard that same refrain when I was growing up and I’m hearing it just as much today. You’re probably thinking there’s no mystery why. The stats say a quarter of our people are formally unemployed and if you add people who don’t have a job and have given up even trying to find one it’s well over two-thirds of our people.

So I’m not saying that there are jobs galore out there, but I do have some question about joblessness here in South Africa.

Foreigners are constantly flooding into our country, and they not only don’t have jobs when they rock up here – most have nothing at all, just the shoes on their feet and the rags on their backs. Others are a little luckier and might have a bit of money tucked away in a secret compartment in a suitcase to start a small business.

Many of them, against often ridiculous odds, within a few years manage to open shops in our back yards. Yes, in our own back yards they end up dominating the restaurant industry, club industry, security industry, parking attendant industry, street-vending industry, spaza-shops and more.

It’s not hard to find examples of immigrants who came here with no command of or a very poor command of our languages. They had to learn about our currency, our culture, our laws – everything, and sometimes in the hostile face of serious xenophobia.

What many of these foreigners have, at base, is the iron will to make it whatever it takes, whatever needs to be sacrificed.

It sometimes seems that not enough of our home-grown boys and girls possess such fearsome determination. It gets lost somewhere along the way between being a child with the sparkle of hope in his eyes to becoming another skinny protester in the street holding a knobkerrie, blaming government for all his problems. I’m not

saying government shouldn't be doing more for the people, but no foreigner expects any hand-outs. They know they have to make it on their own, and somehow they do. Foreigners not only end up making enough money to survive but almost all of them send money home for family members to survive. I can already hear some of you saying: "But they are just selling drugs."

First of all, South Africans like to act as if drugs were never sold prior to the arrival of Nigerians or whoever else gets given the "blame for the game" these days. Secondly, of course the drug dealers are here, and of course some of them are foreigners. But that will always just make up a handful of the total.

Most foreigners have never committed a crime but our prejudices make us think differently. Even in a country as desperate for employment as ours, foreigners will still find the work that no one else wants to do.

What makes the rise of a foreign immigrant not just spectacular, but mind-boggling, is how guys like the Bangladeshi spaza-shop owners in townships, who consistently offer better service, at lower prices than locally owned spaza shops, do what they do. People spread hate about them and so the very same people who'll be back in two weeks to buy soap and tobacco attack them and their shops. Throw as many rocks as you like at their shops, but their service is still more reliable and their prices are better. No one can argue that.

These guys believe in the power of numbers. They have none of the "pull-him-down syndrome" that you see many of our people getting trapped in.

So this is the standard argument: your locally born shop owner in a township likes to complain that his foreign competitors must be selling drugs and they're just using their spaza shops as fronts to launder money. He can't think of any other explanation for why his competitors can be selling exactly the same products so much cheaper. He'll say the margin on the foreign guy's goods is so low that there can't possibly be any honest profit, so the money must be coming from crime. But what they fail to understand is that all these foreigners pool their money and club together to buy their stock on a certain date. They send a council that represents them with the big traders and they buy, for instance, for R2 million. That way, they get the same products for fifteen percent less. And that's where their profit lies.

While your South African trader thinks small and works alone – he will arrive at the wholesaler and buy at the standard rate for just R2 000 worth of stock every day. Before the goods reach either the foreigner or the South African's store, the

foreigner already has a fifteen percent advantage. South Africans may have been in the trade for years, but they never figured this basic strategy out. But it's not even a secret. TV shows have been made about it, the newspapers have run big spreads. And yet, even armed with this knowledge of how to get a more competitive edge, it's still far too hard for local guys to look beyond their own petty interests and work together to offer a better service to their clients.

When it's time for xenophobic attacks, then suddenly we can all stand as one. When it's time to find someone else to blame, then you see a united front.

But working your ass off to achieve something worthwhile collectively is a talent we're yet to master. The example of our immigrant brothers and sisters is a trend that's hard to copy. But we must copy it or locally owned spaza shops will continue to be a dying breed.

People from townships would rather pay extra to buy the same item in malls in places like Sandton, even if the same product is being offered on their doorstep.

It's obvious we could prosper more as a group, but we are willing to perish as individuals.

I personally have seen foreigners teaching their compatriots how to be barmen, waiters or how to guard cars. But local guys don't have time for "petty stuff" like that and would rather advise each other on how to get a grant or a tender, unlikely as that is for most of us, and it doesn't matter how black you are. Many of our immigrant brothers are hustlers of the highest order. You can learn a great deal from them. They teach us that when you are surrounded by lazy people anywhere you should rejoice, because it means that with hard work and initiative, you are bound to succeed.

Everywhere one goes one is forced to listen to dreams and stories by friends and family, which we all know don't have much of a chance of coming true, not because the dream is impossible but the person with this dream doesn't want to do the possible and get off his or her rear end and start doing more than just talking out of that rear end.

If funding is what you're waiting for then surely a part of your brain should register that if no funding comes through then your dream might not come through, which means you are basically left with two choices: you wait, wish and complain, or you start something much smaller, which will eventually take you slowly to

your dream no matter how long it takes, no matter what it takes. A guy I know wanted, with all his heart, to become a musician. He used to clean the studios of a well-known musician, Chicco Twala. While cleaning he would listen and steal with his eyes and ears. He saw how Chicco operated and was able to use that experience to nurture his own talent. Today he is a musician with hit after hit his to name. His name is M'du Masilela and he was willing to start right at the bottom.

There are many stories just like his. Oskido, the owner of the very successful music label Kalawa, started out by selling boerewors in front of Razz Matazz night club. Today he is a property and music mogul. The world is full of people who did what they needed to do in order to slowly create the opportunity to do what they wanted to do. Lady Gaga was waiting tables in New York. Justin Bieber, who you may point to as one of the world's youngest successes, nevertheless played on pavements before anyone saw him on YouTube. That's how he got good enough to stay successful even as a kid.

If such stars were willing to do the jobs most would consider beneath them who in the hell are you? Do what you have to do to put food on the table. Don't forget about your dreams but be realistic. The truth of the matter is that we have to eat while we dream and eating costs money and money needs work – not all hustlers have trust funds.

I was sitting in a hotel lobby in Argentina and started chatting to the waiter. It took me a few seconds to realise that I was speaking to a person with way-above-average intelligence and wit. I later learned that he was a qualified hotel manager who was struggling to find a job as a hotel manager. I didn't believe him, so down he went to the parking lot to return with his papers, proving his claim. I was anxious to know more about him and soon realised that this guy was a real hustler with serious ambition. He was busy with his interim plan, which was part of reaching his grand plan.

Naturally, many of us want to do what we have been trained to do, but we might not find a position available in what we trained for. As a result, we end up saying we are jobless instead of, more truthfully, saying that we can't find a job in what we have been trained to do. We see taking another kind of job as beneath us. This is not necessarily a bad thing, it could actually be a very positive thing if you use it to stay focused. No matter how you might reason on this one, it's still better than just calling yourself "jobless".

A real hustler knows very well that they have to do what they have to do in order to do what they want to do one day. I'm not saying for a moment that there are not real jobless people, but I'm saying that not all unemployed people are really jobless.

I started in my post-crime career by speaking to school kids. I might add that this can be rude, brutal and downright irritating. The best kids among them, though, always make up for the bad ones – tenfold. I moved on, years later, to speaking to corporate clients and then moved on from there to speaking to my own staff. Hustlers don't sit and wait for the perfect opportunity. Do the crappy job if you think there's a chance it will take you to the perfect job. If you wait for that perfect job, you might just wait forever.

I managed to speak to one of my contacts who owns hotels to give this young hotel manager a chance and today he is an assistant manager at my friend's hotel in Ukraine. If he had been waiting for an opening while sitting at home, he never would have met me and would probably still not have a job. When I saw him again during my visit to Ukraine to watch the European Football Championship, I asked him if any positive job offers had ever come through after he met me via the "usual channels". And, of course, you guess correctly, there had been nothing.

Before foreigners arrived in this country, I too believed that finding a job is next-to-impossible. But, time and again, their ongoing presence and survival proves that must be a lie. What the foreigners prove is that our jobless lot simply have too much pride to do the rubbish jobs that foreigners start with. But that same foreigner who was cleaning toilets five years ago, when you see him again, he owns a shop and has a little car. He got started somewhere and he kept on going.

What about the local guy with his pride? Well, maybe he still has his pride. Maybe – if that's what he's happy to keep on calling it. But maybe it's just laziness.

Luck

Good luck is what will come your way while you are busy with your hustle. Some people say you create your own luck, some that luck doesn't exist – but of course it does exist. I don't believe that you create your luck – but you can create your own opportunities and you can prepare yourself for whatever good will come your way.

That's why I believe that not everybody is ready for their luck. All of us receive luck, just as all of us have to face being unlucky. But, for many, they miss their luck because they are either sleepwalking or are totally blind to a lucky opportunity.

After my release, I helped a group of ex-cons to start running a vegetable stand. We would buy our produce at the local market every day and we did very well from the start because the community was happy to support guys who wanted to turn their lives around.

One day we were sitting in a restaurant and watching rugby, and a white guy joined our table. We watched the game together and the beers were flowing. We had a good time. During half-time he answered his phone and spoke to someone about vegetables and how he sells his products to the market. My partners just kept on talking and drinking without realising that luck had perhaps just visited us. This guy was selling to the very people we were buying our stuff from.

Luck had just given us an opportunity to cut out the middleman.

I took his number and we improved our business model overnight. Because of this gentleman we became a mini-wholesaler ourselves.

Everyone, no matter who you are, gets an opportunity in life. Sadly, few use it as they should.

Perhaps you were just walking past the bookshop to buy a coffee and this book caught your eye and you bought it on a whim. Maybe it'll inspire you to do something great. That's luck too. Luck does visit us sometimes, but it's not always

in the most obvious form. For us that day, luck was dressed as a white man downing beers with us. Some people want luck to stare them so deeply in the face or to actually transfer the money straight into their bank accounts without them doing anything. But luck is an opportunity appearing out of the blue. Luck only matters if you are prepared and organised enough to use the opportunities that come your way.

Choosing the winning lottery numbers is luck. Misplacing the lottery ticket and never even getting a chance to check if you may have won is not bad luck – it's you not being prepared to receive your luck.

Bad luck is what people tend to focus on more, because bad luck is obvious. Unlike good luck, when bad luck stares you in the face you have no choice but to notice it. If you get hit by a bus, you'll not stop thinking about that for the rest of your miserable life. If the bus misses you by two centimetres, you may find yourself heaving a sigh of relief but you'll probably never think about it again.

Every day, I promise you, if you are open to it, luck can come your way. You will meet people full of opportunities for you. You will notice endless social and welfare programmes – some of them international and looking, perhaps, for someone just like you – that are available to help people to improve themselves. You will discover gaps in markets that no one else has noticed. You'll think of inventions we all haven't even realised we need yet.

Bad luck will come, and it's not because God or the universe is against you. Bad things just sometimes happen to good people, just as they happen to all people. The trick is to be determined to expect and prepare for whatever bad luck may come your way, so that it has the least possible chance of wiping you out when it does come – while you continue to hope for the best, and try to find the best, all the time.

Luck is alive, but it requires us to have open eyes and to be ready to pounce on it in the fleeting moment that it comes and goes. Luck, on that day, in the form of a vegetable farmer, would have passed my partners by without even being noticed – just as luck does with most people. If you are not well-prepared for the opportunities that life wants to send your way, believe me that those opportunities will drive right past you without even stopping to look.

I was sitting with a billionaire once prior to him having a meeting with a group of Zimbabweans who wanted him to help them finish building their platinum mine.

He asked me to sit in to help him decipher if they were telling the truth about their political connections and the situation for their business in Zimbabwe.

They told us in detail about their mining operations. They had maps and geological reports, satellite printouts, the works. Then the billionaire asked to see a picture of their mine because he would leave it to his experts to look at the maps. He just wanted to see what the thing looked like to the regular, naked human eye. They asked each other for a picture but in the end they all just shrugged. All the investor wanted to see was a picture on a phone or a computer – a simple picture of something that was supposed to make them all rich. But none of them could find that picture anywhere.

He asked them what they drove and who their girlfriends or wives were. They answered all his questions. When he asked them to show him pictures of their cars and their girlfriends they all eagerly obliged. They should have seen what was coming, but they walked right into it.

He told them: “Gentlemen, you have pictures of your girlfriends on your phone, which shows me they mean a lot to you. You even have pictures of your cars. But you don’t have pictures of a mine that’s supposed to be worth millions of dollars. To you, evidently, your mine is not as important as a car.”

What to some was just a trivial detail, ended up being an early deal breaker. I walked out of there having learnt the important lesson that whenever one gets an opportunity to see an investor you need to be one hundred percent prepared. Leave nothing to chance. It’s possible my investor friend was right and those guys were just taking a chance, trying to mine him instead of mining any platinum – but if they really had a good investment opportunity, they let it slip by being caught out for not showing a single-minded dedication and determination to their project. If they did, they would have had a picture of their mine in their wallets, right there next to the wife and kids.

I think they were indeed very unlucky that day – but they were also quite obviously underprepared.

Never say: “Oh, don’t worry about that. They’ll never ask about that.” It’s like studying for an exam. You learn everything, even though you know they will only ask you about some of it. If the main question in your exam happens to concern the only chapter you did not study in the entire textbook then that is still not just bad luck for you – it’s you having been underprepared.

As in fashion, it's always better to be overdressed than underdressed. Go prepared for any eventuality. We were once looking for a photographer at ZAR and, on the day of the interview, twelve people rocked up. Before we started to interview them I already had a pretty good idea of who was going to get the job. There was only one guy there with a camera around his neck. I had a glance through his portfolio, which was impressive enough, but it took one question from me and then I handed him the job. I asked him why he had come with his camera and he said it was in case he got the job and we wanted him to start immediately. He wanted to be ready and not have to fail at the first request.

You might say he was lucky. I would say he was ready to receive his luck.

A good hustler sees himself as life's version of the Swiss Army knife. He tries to equip himself for every eventuality that he can reasonably expect to face wherever it is he is planning to go. He is ready to respond to any pertinent question and even if he hasn't pondered the solution to a challenge before it hits him, a hustler can think on his feet. He's prepared for the unexpected and he will give finding an ad hoc solution a pretty good shot.

He knows that bad luck will always come knocking on his door – but he never willingly opens for it. When good luck comes knocking, he doesn't have to scramble through the house, frantically looking for the key to let that welcome visitor in. He keeps it on a string around his neck – but he also has his Swiss Army knife in his pocket in case that visitor turns out to be bad luck masquerading as good luck.

Kenny Kunene

There's always going to be speculation about the kind of man my famous friend Kenny is and how he managed to make something of his life. Everyone's going to have their own view, and that's fine, but the experiences I have had of my friend have also shaped my life and left me with nothing but respect for him.

It's true that he wasn't a straight arrow before he went to prison, but his life since prison has been exactly what I wish many ex-prisoners would learn from: he wasn't impatient, he had a plan and a dream, and he was willing to do whatever it took to prove he was a better man.

Kenny was raised by his grandmother. Like most grandmothers in her era, she made sacrifices and worked her skin to the bone. Kenny's grandfather was given a sick pension and spent his final years at home. He left Kenny, though, with something that was to stay with him for the rest of his life and define him: his sense of style.

Don't laugh. Kenny's grandfather used to sit at home like dozens of other old men just like him. But unlike all the other old guys sitting at home, he was always dressed as if he was on his way to a fashion show. Not a day passed without him being dressed immaculately, suit and all.

Kenny was absolutely no different during his days as a criminal. Even in prison he found a way to add a certain pizzazz to his prison uniform. When he was released, like me he was stone broke, but rich in his determination to make it big.

Unlike me, Kenny has a teaching degree and he was offered a job as a teacher for R3 000 a month. For a man who had once been found guilty of fraud for a few million rand that was a ridiculous amount to accept, but he took the job because he said it would help to restore his dignity and prove to himself and others he really had turned the corner.

He was absolutely sure other opportunities would come from it somehow. At the least he could become the school's principal someday. Money was not the first and only consideration in his accepting the job, just as it should never be for anyone in any job. He made a bit of extra money on the side by helping a friend out with the marketing for his nightclub.

Kenny often took half his little salary to trawl through shops like Meltz, which sells expensive labels that have a hardly noticeable defect, such as a bad stitch or a button not sewn on properly. He would spend a lot of time bargain hunting like this. Despite being the lowest-paid worker at his school he was always the best dressed.

Kenny, for all his lowly status at that school in the Free State, worked hard and was respected and liked by the kids and his fellow staff. He became the man to go to if there was a discipline problem at school. And he became Mr Event Planner. Even his haters started changing their minds about him.

Much later, long after he'd teamed up with me, I visited his school. The teachers, principal, labourers and students all told me not a single day goes by without Kenny being mentioned. As I left the school, at the office doors I saw a photo of all the teachers in the year he was there. He wasn't even in the picture. It hit me that he must have been such a nobody there, he wasn't even considered for the staff photo. It's not our faces people remember, but the mark we make on the world. I could see the marks of my friend, partner and confidant all over Calculus School.

When Kenny and I joined up again, he was basically just another ex-prisoner among many to me, at a time when I was spending a lot of time on trying to help other ex-prisoners. My life story had just been published, so I invited him, along with two-dozen other ex-prisoners, to my house to offer them the opportunity of selling my book as an additional source of income.

"You can get half the profits," I promised them. All these guys were happy to eat the meat at the braai and drink the beers, but the next day when it was time to come back to my house for a box of books to sell, Kenny was the only one who actually showed up to collect a box of sixty books. The day after that, he came back with all the money from all the books he'd sold.

And he took another box. It was the start of one of the most unexpected and strongest friendships of my life. We had already been good friends in jail, where

we met, but in prison I'd had no idea this man would go on to be my most loyal and lasting friend on the outside – to be truly the brother I'd never had. I got to know a man who was almost always in good spirits, full of jokes and good advice, unshakeable loyalty and a philosophy on life that I can confidently say is entirely his own.

I don't think I'll ever meet anyone like him ever again if I lived another hundred years. Kenny can happily keep company with kings and paupers, and he has lived like both of these himself. He'll buy and drink Ace of Spades champagne with Timbaland and Ciara on a Saturday night at ZAR Lounge, but still be right back in Kutlwanong township on Monday afternoon, eating tripe with his elders.

Before all this, though, he was just another struggling ex-con. If I think back on it, all the other guys I had been trying to help were always just thinking about what was in it for them. They wanted my success seemingly without wanting to work for it and they seemed to think that just because they weren't doing crime any more the world owed them a favour.

Well, it doesn't work that way. There was many a time that Kenny told me he'd rather stay home than go out, saying: "G, I don't even have a car, I can't be going to any parties, but my time will come."

He kept saying that and believing it. I couldn't believe it one day when I saw him take a picture of an Audi A4 Convertible from his back pocket and look at it. That picture looked so old and careworn and he told me he'd been walking around with it for two years. He wasn't sure how he was going to buy such a car, but he knew that one day, somehow, he would.

Fortunately, the book did well. I made him my agent and he, despite my protests, managed to move my average speaking fee from R5 000 an hour, to R25 000 an hour – and by the time I was ending my time on the speaking circuit, he had me getting bookings for R50 000 an hour. He convinced me I was worth that and, as a result, I was.

There's not a person who paid Kenny's rates who ever said they got a raw deal, because over the months and years Kenny was a hard taskmaster. In the beginning, especially, we relied on the sale of books, and Kenny would have his table in the back of the room with the books piled high, and if the books didn't sell he'd let me know it in the car as we left. "Hey G, that was a shit talk you gave man. I only sold two books!"

I was never allowed to protest that it was a tough crowd of Afrikaner farmers or mostly five-year-olds who can't even read – he just told me to try harder and to find a way. Their teacher could have at least bought a book. By the end of it, he had pushed me to become the best speaker I could be.

So we had some money – we invested some of it in a frozen food business and I can show you the photos of us loading tons of frozen fish and chickens from the back of a truck into our freezer room. Kenny sold fish from the boot of a VW Golf. He would sell frozen chickens to everyone from school headmasters to people getting into taxis.

I should probably say his success and his fame today should come as no surprise to me. I'd always known how honest, charming and likeable he was, but I'm still a little amazed at just how famous and well loved my brother Kenny is today. But I shouldn't be. Some people are born to be stars – it just took Kenny a little longer to get there.

When we were in France in 2007 to watch the Rugby World Cup, a film crew found him standing outside the Stade de France stadium, chatting and joking with a group of strangers. They started interviewing him and then couldn't get enough. They completely dropped filming anyone else, and just followed Kenny wherever he wandered. He started interviewing other people on their behalf.

The film crew arranged to meet with him again after the game and then followed us back to our hotel on the train, with Kenny regaling us all the way. He made it onto global news and was shown on the eight o'clock news in South Africa.

Everyone who'd ever known him was given a foretaste, right then, of the Kenny who'd break all expectations for South African television with his reality show a few years later.

When, through our talks and the books, I got an opportunity to do consulting work for Central Rand Gold, Kenny accompanied me every day to work – and he was dressed better than anyone there. He would help out at the mine's office however he could. He would chat to the directors, the CEO, the CFO, the company secretary, the IT guy, the head of HR, simply everyone, and within a month I'm sure there was hardly a person there who thought he didn't work for the company as some kind of overpaid consultant big shot. But he was just absorbing a world he badly wanted to join.

Almost everyone, especially me, asked for his advice and they trusted the level-headed words he gave them. He was always one of the first to arrive each day and he did so for three months without a salary. Finally, one day, the company had a problem that literally no one had a solution for. Kenny took out his phone and said: “Hang on, I know a few people who can help.”

We all laughed and thought, whatever.

But sure enough, the company received a call from a senior official later that day and the problem was well on its way to being solved.

When the mine made Kenny a job offer, they also offered him three months’ back pay for all the days he’d been there for free. That’s the day Kenny could take the old picture of the Audi out of his wallet and throw it away. He wasn’t just dreaming about driving that car any more.

He bought a brand new, S-Line A4 Convertible. I told him to buy an RS4 and he just told me: “Let’s not get too carried away just yet.” That’s Kenny. He was a hustler with not just a dream, but a long-term plan. I have learnt so much from him and can honestly say that without him – one of life’s true friends – I would be the poorer man today. Poorer in spirit, poorer in pocket and poorer in experience. And much poorer in notoriety and fame – two things that all big-time hustlers around the world are never shy to embrace.

Appearance Matters

One of the first acts a good mother will perform is to teach you to be clean. They teach us the importance of brushing our teeth and combing our hair, particularly if our hair is problematic. We are told countless of the importance of being clean. You might wonder what the purpose is of even mentioning something so obvious this in this book, but I simply must talk about personal hygiene and presentation because I think some of us have forgotten the lessons from our childhood. People only expect those in lowly positions to have bad hygiene, but that is far from the truth. Hygiene knows no position.

I have seen construction workers washing themselves in makeshift basins before they knock off. I have seen miners taking showers after work and nobody sitting next to them will even guess this person had worked for nine hours in the unbearably hot belly of the earth shortly before. I have also met executives with breath so bad you'd think they'd swallowed a dead horse. I have been told the great Steve Jobs, when he was nineteen, was asked to work the night shift at the gaming company Atari because he was going through a scruffy phase and didn't wash much, prompting complaints from co-workers that he smelled awful.

I was told the story about a certain judge with very bad hygiene who attended some conference as a speaker. His driver was always impeccably dressed and when they reached the venue the students mistook the driver for the judge. When the driver corrected them, the students still could not help asking, in the presence of the judge, if it was some kind of joke. That's the impression our clothes and our appearance make. We should never underestimate it, and don't let something as elementary as your failure to get up half an hour earlier to take a shower, clip nails, shave, brush, floss, use mouthwash, underarm roll-on and a bit of aftershave be the difference between success and failure. Because if you fail to take care of those things, that could very well cause your failure.

When I was working at Central Rand Gold the chairman of the board insisted I fly with him to Cape Town. He was supposed to fly with another executive, and I was puzzled about it and so was the executive. On the flight he told me that he wasn't feeling well and couldn't dare risk sitting next to a man who had last brushed his teeth when he was five years old.

Our previous CEO at ZAR Empire who has now passed on, Mr Nkrumah, was always the cleanest, neatest and most well-dressed gentleman at the table. At his funeral, speaker after speaker mentioned his impeccable dress sense and outstanding attention to personal hygiene.

I realised that day how people indeed look at everything about you when meeting you. It is hard to take a dirty person seriously, so be impeccable at all times.

Clothes have caused many people to lose deals or opportunities. Clothes have made people fortunes and lost them fortunes. And often they haven't even realised why. Your clothes are your first skin. Your clothes are what people see before they hear your voice. Your clothes make a statement, good or bad, long before you can.

Many personal assistants scrutinise whoever has come to see their boss. Before you're admitted to his or her office they take the coffee order and could already have a name for you like "the bee is here to see you" because you're wearing colours that are too bright. Or "Michael Jackson is here" because your socks are white and your trousers don't cover your ankles. Or "it's the undertaker" because you're all in black like someone in mourning.

Believe me, your average PA is a very vigilant gossip. They look at everything so they can have a laugh at your expense or, if you look good, to compliment or copy your sense of style.

PA's will also be quick to ask you where you got your nice outfit or where you had your hair done, especially if you're a black woman with extensions. They are brutally honest and can often assist you with getting their boss to like you because bosses and their assistants chat all the time about everything – especially other people. My PA, and every PA I've ever had, had something to say about whoever came to see me. Sometimes good, sometimes bad, but no comment at all was rare.

From hair to nails to how you smell, everything plays a role. By smelling nice I don't mean you should pile on the perfume or aftershave so strongly that you leave your smell in the boss's office when you leave. Just put on enough to get a

compliment or leave an impression, especially a subconscious one. Usually it's very difficult to achieve that with cheap perfume.

If you have no time to groom yourself how will you have time to look after my or your business? It's a fair question. Psychiatrists and other doctors always say that when someone is heading for a mental or physical breakdown in health, their personal grooming is the first thing to go. The last thing you want to do is leave the impression that you're not entirely well or perfectly composed to face the challenges of life.

There's some everyday advice that you should dress for the job you want to have, not the one you have. You should dress to kill, not to clean. Dressing well and looking good is as important for your own sense of self as it is for others to get the best possible impression of you. The confidence that looking and feeling good will give you will shine out of you and will tilt the scales in your favour.

When you look in the mirror you should see the best possible version of yourself, the person you most want to see yourself being, looking back at you. That will make it easier for you to actually be that man or woman when you walk out the door.

It will show people that you respect yourself, and it will make it much harder for them to disrespect you.

Good style is an individual thing. There's no clear rule about what's best. But take a look at the kind of industry you're getting involved with and there's usually some kind of uniform that matches it. Journalists very rarely run about in three-piece suits and accountants hardly ever rock up at work in Metallica T-shirts. Try to take your cues from what other hustlers in your field look like and put a bit of an individual spin on it, but nothing weird. Whatever you do, don't come across as a weirdo.

And it really won't matter if you are dressed in Louis Vuitton or Gucci from head to toe if your shirts are creased, your shoes are scuffed, your jacket is two sizes too big or small and there's a stain of something on your trousers. It's better to be wearing something without labels that you bought from the charity shop if it's clean, in good condition and fits you perfectly.

There are bosses that don't give a damn about how anyone looks as long as the quality of their work matches the challenge at hand. Those kinds of industries and those kinds of bosses are rare. And the problem with that is you won't know until it's too late. Rather always play it safe and always look your best, like Kenny does, even when you're not heading to a proposal or a job interview.

That one day you decide to allow yourself to look like something the cat dragged in will inevitably be the one day you run into the guy you have been praying will invest in your business. Don't give Murphy the chance to use his Law on you. One way or the other you are always being watched and judged by everyone around you.

Manners

The mere fact that you got whoever you want to talk to to have dinner with you is already a coup and a strong indication that he or she wants to hear more. So don't let something like cluelessness at the dinner table mess up your prospects. Most successful people understand the value of manners in all things in life. If you're from a less privileged background people will expect you to be unrefined but if you prove that wrong you'll make a lasting impression and, ironically, this gives the hustler an advantage over guys who come from Crawford College. Everyone simply expects them to know how to mind their ps and qs. If you, on the other hand, can show you know a few etiquette rules, you'll already win hearts by wordlessly demonstrating how you have risen above the stereotype of "people like you". And if you can rise above that basic limitation of your "breeding" then it's implicitly understood that you've probably done so in other things that matter too.

Before I was released from prison I was very concerned that I might unknowingly behave like a wild animal on the outside, because prison is not the place to send a guy if you want to teach him good manners. I got hold of etiquette books and read men's magazines like they were religious texts, just to ensure I could hold myself in a certain way, with a kind of style and grace, on the outside.

Too few hustlers make the effort to perfect themselves in this way. It's not just about the clothes you wear or how you style your hair. It's about how you shake hands (not too firmly, not too weakly, just one hand at a time, not two like a politician). It's about giving a small, brief smile and looking someone in the eye as you do it. It's about remembering people's names.

The rules of etiquette and good manners are a book all on their own. Some of that advice is just old-fashioned and silly, so don't read all those books and then try to act as if you're the fifth Earl of Rochester. If you act too affectedly, people will actually not be charmed by your manners, but seriously turned off because no one likes a faker. Just be yourself, but read up on manners and etiquette so that you can turn yourself into the best version of yourself you can be. Showing class and manners does not make a guy "less gangster". You're not proving anything by

insisting on eating everything with your hands and then wiping your fingers on your jeans – except that you should know better in some company.

It really doesn't matter what you do when you're at home on your own or with an old friend or family member or someone who really couldn't care less how loudly you suck the marrow out of a bone, how noisily you snort and spit in the yard or how obviously far you can stick your finger up your own nose or your ear in their company. It matters when you're meeting new people and you want to leave them with a good impression of you. You want to make them feel comfortable with perhaps introducing you to their whole network of friends later.

Manners and etiquette only matter if they improve the experience of being around you. If the advice you get doesn't make it more pleasant for people to spend time with you, then feel free to ignore whatever that advice is. In the meantime, though, here's some advice on table manners that I see many guys getting wrong. There are many other things. These are just things I've made a point of thinking about and they're not what most people would tell you, probably because if you know it already you'll take it as too obvious.

Know the menu – even if it means paying a waiter to teach you what you don't understand before your dinner meeting. Know what is best on the menu, and remember that what's good at one restaurant might not be good at another. Pronounce the food names correctly. Your guest may ask you what you suggest. If you just say “lamb chops” without knowing why, you might end up with the worst thing on the menu.

Never ask the waiter what's good because he'll either just point out the most expensive item on the menu (which might also be the most exotic and least edible thing – and you don't want to spend the night fighting with a crab's exoskeleton, perhaps cutting yourself and spraying sauce and blood all over yourself and everyone near you in the process). The waiter may also not know the difference between what's good and what's on special. If he recommends a “discount-special” and you take that he'll just be making you look cheap.

Also, try not to order the exact same thing the other person is ordering, unless the menu is small or you really want to recommend a particular dish and you know it will go down well. Then order the same so you can be sure it is up to the standard it was the last time you were there. If it isn't, then you can tell your guest it isn't – perhaps the chef was replaced.

Secondly, don't overlook what I call the "Pretty Woman" Julia Roberts rules, to know what the different cutlery utensils are for. You should know which knife, spoon and fork are meant for which meal. It's not as easy as you think. Once you know the difference between a fish knife and a steak knife, you'll never forget it. It might sound easy, but if you grew up eating with your hands it will be quite an adjustment to go from using no cutlery to having seven different kinds of cutlery lined up next to your plate. The general rule, which almost always works, is start from the outside and work your way in, especially if there are multiple courses and a set menu. All top restaurants will also replace your cutlery set after you order to match whatever you'll be eating next. If in doubt, just take a quick look at what some of the older patrons are doing.

With all of this also come the usual table manners. Stand up when your guest arrives; pull the chair out for a lady. Don't speak with food in your mouth and don't take such huge bites that if someone asks you a question it will take you a long time to answer, while, embarrassingly, everyone is watching you chew and swallow with great effort. Keep your napkin on your lap and use it to dab at your lips before drinking from whatever glass you have. Ugly, greasy smudges all over your glass' rim or where your hands have touched it is something only school children should be allowed to do. Keep an eye on everyone else's glass and keep topping up their water and wine unless they ask you to stop. Then politely smile and only offer them more wine or whatever they were drinking after a fair amount of time has passed.

Leave your phone switched off unless you have an emergency and then explain that you might be expecting an urgent call before it happens – that way it will be no big deal if it does come. Leave the table and go outside to answer it, and keep that conversation brief.

If you and your guest smoke, then no problem, you can smoke together. If your guest doesn't smoke though, then try not to think about it if there's no one else there to keep him company, or just have a quick smoke break, with his permission, if you absolutely have to.

And obviously: no burping. But if one just comes unexpectedly then apologise immediately and try to make a jolly joke or two about it. But don't try that only after the third burp in the hope that no one noticed the first two. The same counts for unexpected sneezing (always into your arm, if you have to). You might get a "bless you" after the first two sneezes but don't look for a third bless you, because you'll just be irritating everyone. Get yourself under control. If you have allergies,

keep your antihistamine pills handy. If you're coming down with bronchial pneumonia you should have done the civilised thing and cancelled the dinner.

You should really only be interacting with people when you're feeling well and, preferably, at your best. And infecting an entire restaurant, and all your guests, with some new strain of swine flu you just brought back from Hong Kong is not good manners at all.

Thirdly, never, never and I mean never invite anybody for dinner if you are not going to pay the bill. No matter how much the other person may be insisting on paying it, when you are absolutely sure nobody will order another thing from the menu, cunningly ask to be excused as if you are going to the bathroom – then discreetly go and pay the bill. Tip the waiter well and tell him to come back to the table to thank you in front of your guests for the generous tip. Your guest will want to protest and say that he wanted to pay, but politely tell him you cannot pay enough for his good company and the many lessons you learnt during your dinner.

Just avoid all the arguments over who will pay the bill because it's a fight nobody can win. If he insists and you give in, you will look like a cheap skate. If you pay after he clearly wanted to then you have won a battle that makes someone you want to get to like you feel like a loser.

You do not want to win in the bill contest but in the deal contest.

Lastly, if he is there with his wife or other people try to sway the conversation away from only business and don't ignore her or the other people. It won't make you seem like less of a man if you have interests in issues and topics that she cares about too. Compliment her more than her husband. One bad word from her and all your hard work will come to naught. If you're a female hustler, all the same rules apply, but remember that if you're trying to get ahead in a man's world you could do worse than try to keep up with topics that interest men, like sport. Sport is the universal language and if you know something about soccer it will hold you in good stead globally. Everybody watches the English Premier League everywhere in the world and, while you don't have to know the names and shirt numbers of every single Liverpool or Manchester United player, men will accept you faster if you know more about Wayne Rooney than just the fact that he once had hair implants put in.

Making conversation is also an important part of manners in general. You don't need to major in topics to make an impression when discussing a topic. Know

enough about general topics that you can handle yourself to some extent in anyone's company – and if you've met someone who knows a lot more about something than you do, then take note of what they're saying and don't try to outshine them, or you'll just look like a fool. Read as much as you can. Do research, and use Google, which nowadays is available even on the average phone, to equip yourself with knowledge. One guy I know, who invariably impresses people with his general knowledge, simply has a tactful way of steering conversations onto topics that he knows very well – but he's also happy to let other people shine. If you hog topics and conversations, especially if you're not funny, you'll just be remembered as a giant bore.

Don't talk about somebody unless you know something worth knowing about that person.

Your chit-chat and your appearance are what make that valuable first impression. Know what's happening in the world.

People will mostly discuss current affairs, because that's what's fresh on everyone's mind, but don't make the newspapers your only source of learning. Everyone else is doing that and it won't make you stand out. I remember a very embarrassing incident once when a group of us were discussing space travel and one guy mentioned how he'd heard that Neil Armstrong had passed on. Another guy then said that was indeed sad because he was the world's best cyclist. After an awkward silence, we corrected him. We meant the first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong, not the cyclist Lance Armstrong. It would have passed as an innocent mistake were it not for his second blunder. In keeping with our discussion about space we spoke about Curiosity, the robotic rover on mars. Our friend then said that he always knew Range Rovers could go on any surface. If you fear you may be stupid and ignorant, don't be loud about it. Keep quiet and become a student of life for a few years to give your brain a chance to catch up with your mouth.

I was sitting at a dinner table once and we were discussing art. We spoke about Picasso until the conversation moved to an artist who everyone around the table seemed to know but me. Because I'd impressed them with my knowledge of Picasso everybody was eager to know what I thought about this other artist. I realised if I admitted my ignorance I'd immediately go down in everyone's estimation, so I had to say something. Gambling a bit, I played my get-out-of-jail card by saying that it was such a pity so fine an artist could never admit he was gay. It was a good gambit, because for any artist to admit he was gay more than a

hundred years ago was pretty rare and there's always speculation about all artists' sexual orientation, rightly or wrongly so.

The topic instantly changed and concentrated on the artist's gayness and nobody could tell I had made it up – because there is just no way to tell.

Always listen carefully when people speak so you can say: "I agree with the previous speaker" and you can just embellish a little on what was said before, using a little creative licence if you like. No matter how much rubbish the previous person may have been speaking you'll be able to gauge if people were taking him or her seriously. Remember that if two people say the same thing in polite company it is taken as fact, even if it's patently wrong.

The golden rule is that you need to always try to walk the fine line between being a smartarse and avoiding being seen as a dumbass. And if you pepper your answers and comments with liberal doses of humour you can get away with almost anything.

The wonderful thing about people laughing is that they rarely remember anything a funny person actually said. They just remember that whoever it was, he made them feel good for a while and they really like him.

To learn the skill of being a funny, engaging speaker, try to watch lots of interviews with movie celebrities and comedians. There are endless examples of this on YouTube. These people have years of experience in perfecting comic timing, making fun of themselves in charming ways and knowing how to poke fun at the people around them in a way that isn't offensive, but really friendly. That's part of why they're such big stars and you can learn priceless tips as a hustler from them – because Hollywood and the world of big entertainment is one of the biggest places where only great hustlers rise and survive. Being beautiful and talented is not enough. There are thousands and thousands of beautiful, talented people out there. The ones who really make it are the people who have had their big breaks along the way, but they've mostly had to really hustle their way to box office glory.

Manners, though, extend to much deeper things than how you hold a knife and fork. They're there in how you react to glory and defeat and how you carry yourself at all times.

Whenever you have defeated anyone in the boardroom or in a business deal don't act like a soccer player who just scored a goal. Whenever you have been defeated or your idea has not seen the light don't act like you have been robbed of a clear penalty. No matter the situation be gracious and humble. Do most of your celebrating in your heart. Do your hating and venting just as quietly. Being able to keep an even temperament is more important than you may imagine. Take the example of the tennis player, Roger Federer. I've been told that he is one of the world's most popular human beings. He's not just a popular tennis player. The main reason for that is his humility and his even temperament. He is gracious in victory and defeat. Even when things don't go his way on court, he keeps his cool and won't scream at the umpire or even at himself. The few times he has lost his cool, there really was something badly wrong.

He shows that although he is obsessed with tennis and no one loves the sport more than he does, and no one has won more in the sport than he has, and no one still wants to keep winning more than he does, he is aware that there are still more important things in life than tennis and always winning every match. Everyone says he's the greatest player who ever lived, but whenever anyone says that to him, he just smiles and tries to subtly change the subject.

That guy holds himself like a true king, and I'm sure most people would be far more excited to bring home a photo of them with Roger Federer than with any actual monarch alive today. There are many tennis players who have achieved things almost as great as Federer, but only true tennis fans adore them.

Federer made people who had otherwise never watched tennis start to watch the sport. He made them his fans, and they became fans of the sport later. That sort of thing is a rare achievement, but a true star can make that kind of thing happen. It's part of why David Beckham was paid so much money to play football in America. People hoped he'd attract more Americans to watching Major League Soccer.

No matter the situation, no matter your feelings, don't act the asshole. I once had a journalist calling me all sorts of names, writing a lot of rubbish about me.

What he wrote affected my business and my relationship with many other businesspeople. He changed the way most people viewed Kenny and me with his endless barrage of slanderous writing. I have never come across a person hating the mere presence of an ex-prisoner in the corporate world as much as him. His prejudice on the subject shone through in his articles about me.

He found all sorts of pretexts to write about me, but his only major gripe, as the foundation of all his determined work on me, was the indisputable fact that I was an ex-con, and hence must be up to no good – and can never be expected to do any good.

One day we were invited to debate with one another on Metro FM. He found me waiting outside the studio. He didn't greet me. He walked right past me. I have been taught that when you find people in a room, then the onus is on you to greet them, but obviously that wasn't his style.

We had a heated debate. After the show, I walked up to him and shook his hand and left. It wasn't an easy thing to do but it is what I mean when I say "don't be an asshole". A friend of mine who later heard him talking about that exact incident at a book launch told me that this journalist had mentioned the whole exchange – and he interpreted it as that he had won the debate and that I was suddenly the guy's biggest fan. Why else would I have shook his hand and been polite?

He could understand my courtesy only as his victory – but that's okay. It doesn't matter if people misinterpret you – keep your manners, be respectful even at times when you feel terribly disrespected. Don't act in the manner in which you are being provoked to act, just confirming the point being made about you. If I had slapped that guy down to the ground, his point about all ex-cons being impossible to rehabilitate, that they are all just thugs to the end, would have been made abundantly, and with my full cooperation.

So never raise your voice and act like a guy who's about to lose his mind. This is easier said than done, but if you make the decision to live your life in this way, then you can achieve it. Be civil, be in control of yourself and your points in all situations. Don't act the way people expect you to. Stay calm even if you're furious. Act civilised, even when you're at your angriest. The most successful people know how to pull this off unfailingly, and in the end it's never possible for anyone to lay a finger of blame on them, even in the most difficult of situations. Don't let your points get lost in all the screaming. Do whatever you have to do, just never become the ass.

Congratulate whoever beat you, praise whomever you have beaten. It's very easy to be an ass. Rather choose the difficult road of being noble.

Book Smarts vs Street Smarts

Kenny and I wanted to build the sort of businesses that we knew need employees with proper book education. The plan was to mix that with our “street education”, and create something with a unique edge. Street education simply doesn’t get valued as much as book education, though, and of course it’s understandable why. As a less educated guy you just have to accept that and do your thing anyway.

The beauty of it in our case was that the guys with book education would have no choice but to work and listen to us, because we paid their salaries. But it became a partnership forged in hell. Every day we would hear from junior staff how our senior staff were discussing our stupidity; how we should have done this instead of that; how our decisions made no business sense; how we would never succeed. We came to hear about all the things we were doing wrong while these apparently very informed employees conveniently forgot how the same idiots they were putting down were the same idiots paying them salaries every month.

Often, these people never needed to say anything – it was all plainly there in their looks and demeanour. I learnt an important lesson during this. Respecting your boss can be the equivalent of respecting your future. Because some of them I just fired on the spot. I couldn’t take it sometimes.

We were very fortunate in that we didn’t have to beg anyone for our ideas to see the light of day. We instructed people to carry it out and, whether they liked it or not, they would do it. So yes, at the start we had this “it’s-our-way-or-the-highway” approach, but we eventually realised it is little use giving someone an instruction when his or her heart is not in it. So we switched tack by adopting a more gentle, persuasive approach. We made an effort to explain the logic behind our instructions. The employees who still resisted we eventually had to ask to move on. The ones who made an effort to understand our way, to mix or adapt it to

their way of doing things, eventually helped us to create a better way. And that's what we had wanted from the start, we just didn't realise our earlier attitude of not allowing everyone to be open about their opinions, to express it freely without fear was just holding us back.

When you have the kind of history that guys like Kenny and I do, it's easy to take people's gossip and putdowns behind your back personally and then lash out against it. But, really, that kind of thin-skinned attitude won't get you far as a hustler. It's not that people are just out to put you down or disrespect you, they may actually have a valid concern. Never tolerate brazen disrespect, but don't surround yourself with yes-men either. Pick people and surround yourself with people who are hugely better than you at almost everything. You should be that guy who puts all of that together, makes sense of it and makes the final decision.

A lot of those with book-smarts know what they're talking about, so you need to let them feel comfortable enough to share their concerns with you openly and directly. It's still up to you to make the final decision about if you are going to take any of their ideas on board – don't allow anyone else to become your boss – but the more good advice and information you have to choose from, the stronger you will be.

Kenny and I couldn't have gotten to where we are without the book-smart guys.

Know what you can do in your work, but acknowledge when you need help. Get help and make those people understand your way of thinking – but not before you come to understand their way of thinking too. Constantly fighting and setting up avoidable conflicts will just make the whole business venture suffer.

And if the business suffers, everyone's future goes with it.

It was this lesson that helped me greatly in one of the biggest challenges of my life, later.

Many a senior guy, when newly appointed, moves into his new office and arrives with his new suit and briefcase, full of ideas. They rightly just want to get on with things and hit the ground running. Many a time they dish out endless new instructions and they just expect people to lap it up and, if they don't like it, to suck it up.

But no one wants to feel as though they are being treated like machines. A machine doesn't ask questions. It doesn't debate with you. It just does what you want it to. Senior managers often wish for the same from staff.

All the talk of having an open-door policy your staff members can use to discuss their issues whenever they need to is usually just said to make people feel safe and listened to, but really the boss is just hoping you're going to pass on whatever bit of information he needs to stay ahead of the pack.

When I was appointed to lead the Gold Fields mining licence application, I requested getting full access to all the company's staff who could be of any assistance in our application. I started by dishing out instructions left and right, but I soon realised I was making no headway with the Gold Fields staff.

Instead of complaining to the CEO I decided to call a meeting with most of the guys I needed to have on board if this was going to be successful.

I started with what I thought they all needed to hear, which was that I was not there to take their jobs. I was a consultant who had never failed before in this type of thing and that I was actually there to ensure their company got what it required to continue to do business and continue to provide them with jobs. I made them understand that they had a big problem at their company with their license application, and I explained that if there had been no problem I wouldn't have been called.

Without going into all the detail of what I intended to do and how I would do it, I explained that I had a good strategy, but that I truly would never be able to do it without them – not in a company that big and complex. I also assured them that my involvement had nothing whatsoever to do with my having a greater intellect or ability than any of them – I merely had some experience and the sort of attitude that was required to achieve the granting of the licence conversion. But in every other aspect of the mining right application I was, in fact, hopeless without them. They were the ones who had all the information and could do all the tough groundwork that was required to get all the paperwork in order.

I ended by telling them that the best among us sometimes need help and all I was there to do was to offer the kind of help that would save their mine. It was up to them to take or refuse my help.

I saw an instant change and I was given even more help than what I'd hoped for initially. Some of the Gold Fields staff even joined us on weekends to work on the project without asking for overtime.

You will always get the best out of people if you explain yourself and your plans to the extent that they feel part of the bigger picture and have a sense of ownership of the result. I'm not saying you should lay out all your cards and offer way more information than is required (keeping people on a need-to-know basis is still the best and only way to marshal your troops) – but providing a broad vision, while showing the humility that acknowledges that the leader is only there to put together the work of a big group of people. Each person's work, on its own, is priceless, and the whole will fall apart if its parts don't contribute to the working of the whole.

That's what I mean. Don't ever just dish out orders to people who don't understand how highly you value their contribution and that you would be a failure without them.

Do not act as if you're leading a bunch of blind people around. The more people understand and know, the more willing they will be to warn you about possible potholes and pitfalls along the way. You are never too big to explain yourself and what you are about.

Though as I've said: I've come across many people with book smarts who are just impossible to work with, despite trying everything, and I've tried to think about why that is.

University degrees are one of those things that, if you criticise them, you'll be seen as a madman. It's up there with the best of the untouchable subjects because having a degree has propelled many forward in life. That's what they're meant to do, but a degree can also serve as a bed for some. They comfortably lie in it and expect it to take them forward. I have seen too many people becoming their degree. They expect promotions to be bestowed on them simply because they have a qualification or two. They don't even glance at an opportunity that they haven't studied towards despite the world being full of achievers who have excelled in fields they never studied.

A classic case in South Africa is the chief operating officer of the SABC, Hlaudi Motsoeneng. Whatever you may think of his loyalty to the ANC, it is virtually impossible to read an article about him without mention being made of the fact that he does not even have matric. We are bombarded with stories of him being

uneducated and people with degrees at the SABC are shocked that they have been overlooked for this person with no qualifications. We aren't told what someone does or has to do to make it despite not being educated.

What does one say about Richard Branson, Bill Gates and many other achievers who don't have any degrees? I have seen how people hang their degrees on the wall and actually spend their free time admiring and showing it off to guests who visit them in their office. The problem is that their degree doesn't have to do the work. They do.

I have many theories as to why people without book smarts excel, but the most important one is that what they lack in qualifications they make up for in truckloads of hard work and going the extra mile.

Obviously, you may say I'm biased against degrees because I only have matric along with a criminal record, but I'm not biased at all. I wish I had a degree or ten. It would have opened up a lot of doors for me a lot sooner than it happened. Many doors remain closed to me for this same reason. I know I had to work triple as hard to be recognised on the same level as someone with a degree. I have also seen how guys await a promotion, in vain, simply because they have a degree and the other applicant doesn't have one. The moment they don't get the job all hell breaks loose.

One of my requirements in my will is for all my kids to obtain a degree before they can lay their hands on any of their inheritance. With a degree they stand a better chance to achieve greatness, but I'm under no illusion that they will reach the top or be successful simply because they have a degree. That's a lie you will hear over and over again. Success is decided inwardly. Education is merely one of the many tools needed after you have made the decision that you want to be successful and the people without the tool called a degree understand and know that they have to pick up other, heavier, tools to make it. Such people will still be better off than those who don't even want to touch any other tool, simply because they possess one tool called a degree.

I like the way one of my closest friends put it to me the other day, when we were talking about this topic. He has four degrees, in various things, and he said that he was already pretty good at and well schooled (basically by teaching himself) in many of the things he went to university to learn more about. Even if he hadn't gone to university, his deep interest in his chosen areas of learning and skill would have meant he'd have learnt as much as there was to don't show signs of a proper work ethic, deep knowledge or well-honed skills, people are going to question the

value of your degree. In the end, it's not the degree that will make you more respectable – it's you who will bring respect to your degree.

When I say I have “street smarts” and not “book smarts” I'm not saying I don't love to read. In prison, I must have read hundreds of books and I still read as much as I can about everything I can today. Hustlers should call books their best friends – if you don't read then you will always lag behind the man or woman who does – but what I'm actually cautioning against is the attitude of people who get too caught up in the fact that they have some sort of qualification.

In Africa, particularly, there's this false belief that if you can speak English perfectly then you must be very smart. People get very caught up in using bombastic language to “prove” that they are so much better educated and smarter than everyone else. That may earn them some respect in the academic world, but the business world has less time and patience for that sort of thing. People in the business world want you to get straight to the point. An investor once asked a friend of mine if he is married and he started off by saying: “Well, that depends on how you define –” but then the rich investor just cut him off and said: “I didn't ask you for a thesis, just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’.”

I once heard one black guy asking another black guy how he is doing and the other guy replied with: “I am cosponderating in the atmospheric cosmogeny of the universe, my brother! And how are you?”

I'll write about this again later in a chapter called Stay in Your Lane, but I can't tell you how embarrassing I find this phenomenon of wanting to outspoke the queen at her own language. When I get an email and the second paragraph starts with “Pursuant to what I have stated above with regards to ...” I groan inwardly. There are a few “overeducated” white people who are also too grandiloquent, but black guys are most guilty, most often. You also find them everywhere on social networks, correcting other people's language and showing off. As a hustler, just be cool. Don't be scared to keep things straight, sweet and simple.

It's sad to say, but there are many people who got their qualifications by luck, a drop in standards or just plain bribing someone. Just having a degree is not enough any more. There are more than half a million South Africans with degrees who can't even find their first job, and many more who are not working in fields that they studied towards. They would have been better off learning a trade or being mentored in a business.

The ones who do find work in what they love make that degree work for them – and just like anything in life, it's not about what you've got in life, it's how you use it.

We live in a world with a so many facts and so much information readily available that people can make all sorts of predictions, many of them accurate. But these statistics, forecasts and endless categories can easily put you in a box, such as being defined by your degree or your lack of one. Too many of us are only too willing to allow this to happen. As a hustler, you should never be comfortable in a box, especially if it means becoming a stereotype.

If you're told you're a certain type of person, then you're also told what your potential is and what your limits are. You're told that you are person A and you will never get past point D. Unfortunately, people rarely disappoint these predictions. Some even come to see it as their destiny and so they make it happen, whether they mean it to or not. Because some of us are told this is all they can become, they strive towards that and not a centimetre past it.

When I was released from jail, my uncle asked his son, who was a sales representative for Coca-Cola, to ask around for me to get a job as a truck boy. Those are the delivery guys on the lowest rung at logistics companies. Their job is just to carry crates of drinks into shops and then carry empty crates back out of the shop, back onto the truck. My uncle meant no disrespect to me. He just wanted to help his brother's son to get started by doing some sort of honest work. In his mind, and the minds of millions of people, there is only so much that an uneducated, formerly violent ex-prisoner can do or achieve. I politely told my uncle that I wasn't really interested. I was very close to telling him that I could not accept the sort of job where it's only possible to rise up the ranks if somebody dies first. Before a delivery guy gets a chance to become the truck driver, the driver has to die first. And even then, it's not guaranteed.

I went about my business of hustling. Family members called me arrogant behind my back. When they asked me what I was doing for a living I told them I was working on my motivational-speaking career. I may as well have told them I was running to become president. They just shook their heads, convinced I was mad.

I then became a successful businessman by first selling the books, then fish and chicken. I achieved milestones on the public-speaking circuit before eventually joining a mining company where I became an executive. There I eventually negotiated a salary of R260 000 a month. Not even the CEO was paid that. At that

point, I would always look at Coke trucks passing me and think that my salary could cover the cost of running a few of those trucks and every guy on them, including the drivers.

I'm telling you this story so that you understand how you should never allow anybody to tell you what you should become according to the box they have put you into.

It doesn't matter what your past is. It doesn't matter what your qualifications are. I acted as the CEO many times in the absence of the CEO. At the time, I was surrounded by many graduates and seriously educated guys who had no trouble deferring to my judgement and letting me steer the company's day-to-day affairs.

You, and only you, are the person who clearly understands the level of your ambitions. So you, and only you, should be making the decision about how high you want to fly. It's your life. You're given the same amount of time in your day as everyone else. There's no reason you can't use it to fly high, so you may as well fly high, especially if the world expects you to wallow in the mud.

Fellow Hustlers and Leadership

The best way to describe the partners you have in the same hustle as you is how a canoeing champion once described his sport to me: you are all pushing to do your very best. And you do it for each other. You may be tired as hell but you keep going. Your arms may feel like they are about to break but you swing them through yet another stroke as if you are dancing to your favourite song.

You don't need to look at your partners to know that they are feeling exactly the same. You are not only tired together, you are not only pushing together – you are of one heart, mind and spirit. Your loss is everyone's loss, your win is theirs and their victory is yours.

A few years ago I went to get my sports car washed at a drive-thru carwash. There were five cars ahead of me, and the four guys employed to wash the cars were very efficient. They had a huge box with, written in bold letters, “tip box”. Every guy who was getting his car cleaned ahead of me put a R20 tip into the box, which was met with smiles and thumbs up from the guys. As I got closer I saw something that immediately brought tears to my eyes. There was a guy I used to commit robberies with, washing cars. I felt so many emotions, but chief among them was pride.

Here was a person I hadn't seen for more than fifteen years and, for all I'd known, he was dead.

Seeing him trying to eke out a living doing something that every other gangster would have seen as beneath himself made me extra proud.

I cannot truly capture in words how much respect I had for him in that moment.

I also felt a little guilty for being at this car wash. I didn't want him to feel like a failure by looking at my sports car.

It was too late for that though. All the guys came to admire my car and, of course, my old comrade immediately recognised me. It was like two long-lost brothers hugging and laughing with each other. We wouldn't have noticed a bomb going off by the way we were so absorbed by swapping histories as quickly as we could.

When it was my turn to wash I jumped in the car to drive it through. I called my former gangster buddy over and gave him R10 000. The other car wash guys saw this. He asked me to hang onto his money and what happened next was like a microcosm of what happens with so many of us who have been struggling along with a group of people for a long time, but then suddenly come into money.

The guy started an argument with his fellow workers that grew so heated that, within minutes, he was telling them that he wants nothing more to do with them, including their money in the tip box.

He basically told them to go hang themselves.

I handed him the money and left with a promise that I would call him, which I knew I would never do. of a lazy, unwilling or two-faced partner along with you.

Choosing who to work with is even more important than the journey or the venture you may embark on together. Don't roll with wimps who finish all the food for the journey half way into it. Don't roll with weaklings who, on a long and hard journey, eat just because they are hungry. They should eat when they absolutely have to. Don't roll with those who will not finish the last of your shared water until all of you have reached a well, and seen the water at the bottom of it.

Roll with the brothers and sisters who know the real meaning of "team" and respect the word "leader". They understand that a leader should be the least important person in terms of the hierarchy because a true leader understands that leadership is just a nice word for being the servant of the group – he is a glorified driver who is in charge of getting us all to our destination. A leader that doesn't understand that should be replaced by one who does – because the failure of one member of a group can often be the failure of his leadership. It's not always the case, but a great leader picks the right people to do the right job – and everyone has a skill, no matter who they are, and if they're being asked to do something they can't do, then that's a failure of leadership.

A leader also understands that in return for the trust and honour bestowed on him by the group, he will have to hide his emotions. His people should never see when

he is feeling down or when he is filled with doubt. That's the price he must pay for the prestige of leadership the group has entrusted him with.

Anyone who knows me will tell you that I've always surrounded myself with people. It happens so naturally, and it always has, that I barely think about it any more – but while I was writing this book, someone asked me about it and wanted to know why it is I always seemed able to get so many people to follow me, into the gates of hell if it comes to that. While I was running my gangs as a robber that's exactly what it was. I led many a man to a life of crime and too many of them to early graves.

It's a question of leadership. The reasons why people follow others, almost without question, is one that many great minds still grapple with today. Personally, I've never been able to live my life by thinking about only myself and my own welfare.

My father was the kind of man who shared just about everything he had with his friends. I remember when I was growing up, he'd sometimes give away all the meat in our fridge to the neighbours, and when it was time to cook dinner, my mum thought we'd been robbed. We often went without, because my father was unable to stop himself from sharing whatever he had. His generosity of spirit defined his character completely. It was a deep part of who he was and he left this world deeply loved and admired by the people who knew him for the selfless soul he'd been. Charles read a poem about him at his funeral and said that if my dad had been a billionaire, then everyone on his street would have been millionaires – and I still think of that as one of the truest things anyone has ever said about my dad.

That's the difficult decision you have to make as a hustler. It's possible to be the kind of hustler who thinks of himself alone, and achieving only his own dreams, and I'm sure there's nothing wrong with that and you'll find a lot of books to help you in that respect. Hopefully you'll even find this book helpful, even though I simply can't see things the same way. To me, like those canoeists pulling as one, if I make it one day, on my own, it will feel empty and meaningless without people to share it with.

So the reason people will follow you and align their dreams and ambitions with yours is if you offer them hope. You may not even know if you'll be able to help them achieve their dream, too, but if you're a leader you will find a way to offer them hope. If, like me, you are an avid movie lover you will appreciate that, unlike in business or life, in the world of movies they don't only recognise the star actor

but also pay homage to the director, best supporting actor, screenwriter, soundtrack and so on. They recognise the whole package.

In business it's mostly the CEO who gets the credit. Take the example of Jack Welch, the guy who was at the helm of General Motors. I'm not saying he didn't play the biggest role in the development of his company, nor will I dispute that he is one hell of a leader – but what I am saying is he had a team and I know a few people who can mention at least one name of someone else on his team.

A team has surrounded every great name we hear and read about in the corporate world. The best leaders ensured they have a team far better than they are and that's exactly what you should be doing.

You do not need to become a General Motors or some big shot company before you practice the above advice. My biggest mistake, which most of us who come from the 'hood make is also something that's taken me many years to face up to, understand and accept. I was always put off by the arrogance associated with it, but it's not arrogant if it's the truth. Snoop Dogg articulated it so well when he said: "I told my guys we've made it. I took criminals, gangsters, people I grew up with, with me. The truth is that we didn't make it – I made it."

The truth of that statement cannot be understood in words alone. It must be lived. I feel emotional just writing this and it's not something we who come from the 'hood want to know or hear. We tell ourselves our homies are everything, but in truth they are not. Snoop Dogg and many others from the 'hood will tell you how much further ahead they could have been if they hadn't tried to take their homeboys along.

You cannot understand a blessing if it is not yours. How far you go with your own blessing totally depends on the team that surrounds you, and how blessed each of these people are, individually, in your team. I have seen the greatest artists going down not because their singing became worse, but because their support team does not match the artist's talent. When we first attain a bit of success the tendency is to surround ourselves with those who have been next to us all the way. In so doing, we can give positions to people who have no experience. We think we are paying them back but we are only paying for our own downfall.

On the flip side, I have seen mediocre artists excel because they understood the principle of surrounding yourself with people who are better than you. These are great, experienced people, who have a reputation to protect, who know they are

only as good as their last job. They are not homeboys who know all their mistakes will be forgiven by the bond you share with them.

So many positions in government are awarded for the wrong reasons, which is why today the whole state is run by consultants behind the scenes, people who charge triple to do the work that someone actually has a job to do, but can't. It's holding the whole country back, but don't make the same mistakes in your personal and work life.

If it's business, surround yourself with people you can fire. Work with people you can set targets for and who lose sleep if they aren't going to make that target. And they should be people that you won't lose sleep over if you do have to fire or retrench them.

I once read that a coach got fired on the same day he led his team to promotion. I couldn't understand that then, but now I do. I've had to make similarly tough decisions in my own business. No matter how much you may have helped me to reach the next stage, when that stage requires a much bigger personality, unfortunately your arse may have to become grass. That's business, it requires unpopular decisions sometimes, because real business is very unforgiving and requires you to do what needs to be done no matter the feelings involved.

If your friends and family truly love you their only interest should be in seeing you soar, even if they play no role in it. It is crucial to surround yourself with great people, and it's not only about managers but lawyers, accountants, PAs and drivers. Turn your operation into something that doesn't operate only on instructions but moves like a well-oiled machine, even when you're nowhere near. Everyone should know what is expected of them and should execute on that expectation without orders needing to be barked out.

A good leader doesn't meet people and try to change them. He gets to know them, what they're like and what they want out of life. Often, you will find that you both want different things, but you can work together to help one another achieve your individual goals. When I met Charles all he wanted was to be a writer and all I wanted was to be a motivational speaker. Part of the reason why I turned down so many of the other, established writers who wanted to write my story is that I wouldn't have been able to help any of those guys achieve a lifelong ambition of publishing their first book – but I could help a young guy called Charles. And our book was a runaway bestseller. Charles told me that I'd saved him from a pact he'd made with himself to jump off a building if he hadn't published his first book by

the age of thirty. That sounds a bit extreme, and Charlie (or Chakes as I now call him) would probably have changed his mind by the age of thirty anyway, book or no book. But still, it told me that I had been able to help another guy, while helping myself.

Your hustle will always be infinitely stronger, infinitely better off, the more people you can take with you in your quest to attain your dreams.

You should look at people and work out what it is they want most in life – and if you can find a way to offer that to them by joining your hustle, then you'll share something with them that's far stronger than just offering someone a salary. It's part of the reason why when I was sinking financially, after making millions, there were still so many people who never left.

I didn't begrudge those who did leave. They weren't rats leaving a sinking ship, which is a chapter I'll discuss on its own. They were doing their own hustle and making sure they could keep on supporting themselves and their families during a difficult time. But there were and are so many people who stuck it out with me during the most difficult of times. I paid them fractions of what they deserved sometimes – we were just surviving through the lean patch together, but I could see that they truly believed that we would get out of the tough times and that they would be there with me when that day came.

Don't for one moment think that you're being given advice by somebody who has already "made it". I, too, just like you, am still in the game. Still looking for opportunities and looking to achieve more of my dreams. And I still have a long way to go.

I'd love to say that my friends, my partners, my staff and my colleagues stuck with me out of nothing but love, loyalty and respect (which I'm sure they did do too) but I also know that, deep down, they still believed that I would make good on the many promises I had made them that one day we will achieve our dreams together. I think the closest modern example on a large scale that I can think of for this kind of thing is the first election campaign of Barack Obama. Ordinary people were swept up in a wave of hope that by supporting this man their lives, too, would be better. That's part of why more than half of Obama's election funds came from small donations by lots of ordinary people, not big businesses or millionaires and billionaires alone. People realised that here was a man who would perhaps also listen to their hopes and dreams and bring about change in their lives.

That is a very powerful thing – and if you are a hustler who can also work tirelessly to improve the lives of everyone around you while you are improving your own life, then you are building something that will last and which will be tough to take away from you.

That's part of the reason I think there will always be fellow hustlers with me, pulling in the same direction. Some of them are just there to use me and screw me in the end – but there will always be betrayal. The benefits you will have by building an army around you will always outweigh the risk of a few wayward soldiers or double agents who aren't there for the right reasons.

So share your successes and build a hustle with the kind of massive momentum that no man alive will have the power to stop.

It's Not Just About the Salary

At Chubb, I was introduced to a guy called Clinton Lemmer who was a senior marketing manager at the company. He interviewed me about a possible job speaking to school kids. I wanted Chubb to pay me a full-time salary for that. In turn, Chubb would get the marketing mileage, as there was still huge media interest in me.

He was very taken with my proposal but apologised that he only had a marketing budget, for something like what I was proposing, worth R12 000. He had to stretch this for the whole year. So we decided that I would receive R1 000 per talk and that I would only do one school a month.

That, of course, was laughably impractical, because the first school I went to would speak to other schools about my talk and word of mouth spread my popularity. That one-school-a-month deal soon became fifteen schools a month. I couldn't just say no to the other schools with the excuse I wasn't being paid to do it. I had a deeper obligation to share my story with young people if they wanted to hear it. And they did. I was still being paid only R1 000 a month. There was no pressure from Chubb to either do the extra schools or stick to just doing one.

I felt optimistic about life, though. After meeting many of the employees at Chubb I soon realised that if I simply stayed in the company long enough I was bound to overtake most of the people in it – not because I was better qualified, knew more or had any better connections – but so many of them were incredibly lazy and, like employees everywhere, they always liked to talk crap about the company. I worked for eight months for that R1 000 a month. I could see how it pained Clinton to see me work so hard yet earn so little.

I tried to reassure him that it was not nearly that bad for me, simply because there were lots of people out there with no criminal records who were still looking for a job and every ex-prisoner I knew was also looking, but couldn't find a job. At least I had made a start. I could proudly tell people I had a job working for one of the

world's biggest security companies – with employees who had once been my enemies you nowhere and trying to defend it from people's desperate attacks against it is like trying to stop people from scratching a beautiful sports car that has no engine. Even if you save your ego, it still can't take you anywhere.

Their dissatisfaction was always obvious. I had gone from being a mere ex-con and then a Chubb “mascot” – a corporate curiosity funded by a few corporate social investment funds – to being the company's most recognisable face. I was generating so much new business for the company that its biggest rival offered me a contract to switch over to work for them instead, for even more money. I turned that down.

Many of my colleagues came from a police or army background, naturally drawn to a security company like Chubb. For them to see an ex-criminal succeeding in private law-enforcement must have been a heavy thing to bear. I understood that, but I couldn't let their prejudice hold me back. They believed all their gossip about me being an ex-con could somehow hurt me, but I did what every real hustler should do. If you have skeletons in your past, don't try to deny it. Own it. Figure it out. Make it work for you before somebody finds a way to use it to work you over.

I responded to all the rumours by getting the personal registration for my car that said “X CON GP”. I wasn't proud of being an ex-con, but I was proud of not trying to hide it.

That helped to silence them.

Truthfully, my rise in the company baffled even me.

But all was made clear during a speech by one of my bosses, Sydney Mbele.

He described me as the guy who had always smiled, never complained, and had wanted to know more about what others were doing while executing his own task flawlessly. I could always be seen helping others and I always carried the company name proudly.

I eventually left Chubb because I knew that my criminal record would prevent me from becoming CEO of Chubb. But it wouldn't prevent me from running any of my own businesses.

So off I went to start them.

Thicken Your Skin

When he was managing my speaking career in the early years, Kenny would phone the rich schools and have a way of making them feel they were missing out on something huge because they had never had me as a guest speaker.

Every time we won an invitation to speak at a rich government or private school, it was already cause for celebration. These schools were part of our long-term plan.

While none of these schools ever paid for my talks at their school assemblies, after my book was released the schools were a fantastic place to market the book and create some strong word of mouth. Kids would go home or chat to their parents on the phone and tell their whole families about what an inspirational talk they had enjoyed earlier that day. Most people are connected to a school child in this country one way or the other – be it their parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents – everyone knows a school kid, and after years of touring schools I was getting to the point where all of those school kids knew me.

More importantly, as far as Kenny was concerned, there was much more direct money to be made through the schools. At rich schools, in particular, Kenny knew there was no shortage of money in the back pockets of any of those kids. They often bought not only a copy for themselves, but they'd get additional copies for the whole family or a brother in London. At poor schools we were often forced by conscience to make donations of books to the library. Because you could make so much money at the rich schools Kenny and I made sure we visited them as frequently as possible (I say that without shame, we were hustling).

It was during one of these visits that Charles commented, for some reason, on how clean the toilets were. Later, Kenny asked one teacher for directions to the bathroom, but the teacher pointed him in the opposite direction to where he'd sent Charles. We thought maybe there was just another set of toilets. But Kenny was shown to the toilets normally used by the cleaning staff. Kenny came back spitting mad. He was storming about, looking for that "racist" teacher like a raging bull. Charles tried to calm Kenny down but he was hearing none of it. I ran over to him

and said: “Kenny, why are we here? For nice toilets, or to make some cash with our message and our books?”

Thankfully, he calmed down. Without another word we proceeded with the work of the day. We slotted back into our routine. I gave my talk and Kenny sold the books.

We sold a record number of books that day. I don’t think we have ever surpassed it. We also got the most referrals for corporate engagements. The parents of kids in that school were serious business owners and captains of industry.

It’s easy to forget, along the way, why you’ve gone somewhere. There’s always going to be some distraction along the way and it’s all too easy to get caught up in things that will pay you nothing and will stop you from getting paid later. Too many people worry about who said what about us, who is the racist and who we need to teach a lesson. That puts no money in your pocket and saps your energy.

It doesn’t matter where you work, or where your work sends you. You are going to face disrespect, pettiness, prejudice, even racism. Remember that you are working. You’re there to get the job done. You’re not there to be admired by everyone you meet, to become friends with everyone you meet or to have the best day of your life.

You’re there to learn or to work. Everything else is just a bonus. If you don’t get the bonus, forget about it and move on.

The bottom line was that we had to get used to facing prejudice of every kind and just get on with our hustle.

People who see our success sometimes – or most of the time – overlook the real implications that we are from jail. They forget that we still have criminal records longer than we are. A criminal record is a hundred times worse than being blacklisted. Companies have terminated the services of someone they once considered their best worker because they later discovered he has a criminal record and didn’t tell anyone about it.

Try getting a visa to travel with a criminal record. Every time I went to a consulate or an embassy I had a stone in my belly.

A criminal record is the worst thing you could possibly have if you want any company or person to trust you. Any prisoner who's been released from jail will complain about not being trusted on the outside.

Kenny and I had long decided that we would not let our history stand in our way at all. Our history would instead be part of our motivation to survive. We decided we couldn't just be as good as people on the outside. We had to be twice as good, while accepting we would always be treated half as well.

Along the way, doors were literally shut in our faces. Confirmed meetings were cancelled with out the reason being stated. Calls that we received regularly would suddenly stop. We sometimes found ourselves at dinner tables, hearing comments expressing the view that all criminals must either be shot or should never be released from jail.

We were often asked bluntly: "How dare you even think of doing this or that type of business with a past like yours?" People are often not shy, in a country as hard-hit by crime as ours is, to let you know exactly how they feel. This is not a place for a thin skin if you've ever been to jail. Believe me.

We were even regularly reported to the police. Neighbours and acquaintances would watch our comings and goings with mounting suspicion. They'd become convinced that we had to, once again, be busy with some scheme or the other. I suppose none of this is very surprising, but it's a lot of prejudice to try to overcome.

On our visits to companies, before we had even reached the car park after enjoying a successful meeting, ten staff members would have run to the CEO's office to tell him who he was really dealing with.

Even success does not deflect from our past – it only enhances it. It doesn't matter which task we undertake, what project we manage or what our intentions may be, everything will always be seen through the prism of our criminal history. An investigative story run on Carte Blanche nine years after my release from prison was incapable of asking what work we might have been put in to achieve a successful mining right application for Gold Fields. Instead, the only question that was allowed to remain hanging was about what kind of society we are becoming if only convicts can obtain mining rights for companies. The conclusion was simply that we must have been using our criminal ways to subvert the system. They didn't even have the grace to call us "ex-convicts", it was just "convicts". No matter

what, we were still convicts and any association with us by nature sullied everything we touched. When we opened a nightclub, the immediate conclusion the media came to was that we were doing it to launder money. Nothing we could do or say could counter these assumptions. Journalists could never bring themselves to believe we were capable of doing any honest business. They wrote and reported daily on how we were so openly enjoying our proceeds from crime. For us, it was an ordinary week to be front page of a daily paper, for reasons justified or not. By the evening, on some show, you'd hear endless chatter on TV or on radio about what we might really be up to.

Sure, we had our fans – perhaps millions of them – but the overall taste left in the mouth by all this was a bitter one.

But, of course, we are used to all this. We've more or less accepted it is just part of the burden one must carry if you have a past as shameful as ours. It's no good trying to gainsay it. Just shoulder the truth and soldier on. While all of this was happening, as angry as we were on the inside we always had no choice but to return to our hustle, with a smile and a joke every day.

We never hid our faces from the public. We never turned back.

We all have shit on our doorstep. The wise ones keep shovelling it clear every time it gets left there. The others just moan and point at it. And not only does the shit simply remain, it just piles up, bigger and bigger. So keep shovelling it away and keep stepping out the door.

Don't have the silly belief that you have to respond to every attack, every bit of gossip about you, every rumour or, worst of all, every tweet you come across about you on anything and everything.

Real hustlers know that time is everything, so use your time wisely and profitably. Never waste it on things and people who don't appreciate you and don't benefit you in some way. Whenever you think about retaliating against something said or done to you, ask yourself if it really is worth it. It might not actually be damaging to you. Most of the time, you're better off just using the time you would have wasted arguing with someone to make money or further your plans.

Gossipmongers and haters are like snakes. Some (very few though) are venomous and need to be chased relentlessly and dealt with mercilessly. But most haters are harmless, just like most snakes. You can tolerate them best by completely ignoring

them. Just let them be. They'll eventually get tired of picking on you and find someone more interesting and more easily goaded. Because they get their kicks out of making you react.

As I've always said: just because someone calls me a dog, does not mean I have to start barking. Let there be no insult that someone can throw your way that you think matters – because, in the end, if you care what they say or think about you, you're only telling them that you think their opinion matters.

Rich People Who Know You

Ask yourself, who is the richest person who knows you – not who you know.

People always namedrop the rich or famous people they claim to know, but that really means nothing much. If you don't answer my calls or even know who I am then I shouldn't be telling people that I know you.

True hustlers know and understand that always asking for favours or money from rich and well-known people is the surest way to kill that relationship. The lessons you can learn from a rich friend is the true wealth, because wealth is not just about money in the bank, property, trust funds or collections of art. Wealth is a state of mind, a way of carrying yourself, an extension of your character. If you can start thinking, acting and reacting like a rich man or woman, then you are well on your way to becoming a wealthy person yourself.

It sounds easy, but believe me it is the greatest challenge you will ever face. And you could use all the help you can get.

Nurturing a good relationship with wealthy and successful people is a critical skill every hustler needs. That strong friendship is going to last much longer than any amount of money he or she could ever give you. Always remember that rich people distinguish people between the people in their lives who ask them for things and the ones who never ask.

When a rich guy's phone rings, before he answers he ponders what this call might entail. If your name is associated with the possibility that he might soon have to part with money, chances are that he's not going to pick up. And asking for a favour is no different from asking for money. Do, however, ensure that you always get invited to your rich friend's functions by, firstly, becoming close to his PA or his event organiser – usually it's the same person. When you crack an invite you will be surrounded by rich people and it's in those situations that the jackpot lies. Your rich friend may know that you aren't very rich (he may in fact know that

you're stone broke), but few in his social circle will have any idea of that. They'll associate you with wealth simply because you know their rich pal.

And you can't afford to ever give away the truth about how pitifully flat your wallet really is. So the number one rule is: don't act poor. Never act poor. Hustlers know when it is only their A-game that will suffice. You will fall flat during the most challenging moments if you lack BMT (big match temperament).

When you run with the bulldogs you can't piss like a puppy, which is a saying I like to use that when you are in certain company you can't stand out as a wimp. You should blend in as if you were born for it. We sometimes find our selves in places we never thought possible, but you simply can't allow yourself to feel overwhelmed by that fact. Don't seem too happy or overjoyed about it (though inside you may be), because being perceived as a wet-behind-the-ears naive fan boy should never be the reason you don't get invited back.

Many hustlers mistake working the room to becoming the worker in the room.

So don't offer to bring everybody a drink – instead try to be so gracious, funny, and fun to talk to that you are the one being offered the drinks. Never get drunk – sip your drink, don't gulp it, you don't want to be remembered as the party drunk but as a person of sober mind and thought.

And don't try to speak to everyone. If you try to make a good impression on everyone you'll be remembered by no one. Handle advances tactfully and socialise intelligently. Distinguish between who are primarily just there to ask for a helping hand or socialise and the ones who can actually lend a helping hand and want to. Stay away from the beggars of the party or you'll just be lumped in with the others losers. You may also need a hand but you want yours to be shaken in a deal, not to remain outstretched forever, waiting for a hand-out.

Avoid talking to the “beggars” because a party is no place to be exchanging begging notes.

A sure winner at these events is that you should always tell the best jokes (make sure that you have loads stored up) but don't do it in a clowny sort of way. Tell a few good ones and then give other people a chance. I repeat, whatever you do, don't become the party clown.

If telling good jokes is not your thing then don't attempt it. Rich people are often brutally honest and will probably tell you that telling jokes is not your thing. At that point, you'll have lost face and it will be hard to recover.

So you can play the flip side of the same coin. Instead of telling jokes, just be sure to laugh the hardest (really crack up) at another guy's joke, even if it's a bit of a dry joke. If the wealthy teller of such a joke thought it was good enough to tell and you pretend it's good enough to laugh at then you have his attention and he's bound to like you. The drunker he gets the dryer his jokes are likely to become, but just keep on laughing. Use his "excellent" sense of humour as your passport to getting his number and future invites – because he's going to throw a few parties of his own and you want to make sure you're there too.

He might not be a good joker, but he is rich and that means you can learn a lot from him – even if it's how not to tell a joke. But he's got a lot of other things going for him and if you pay attention you'll come to understand how it's possible someone so unfunny became so unpoor.

You're there to show respect to people that, in one way or the other, should deserve your respect. If they don't deserve your respect, then get the hell out of there.

But there is nothing to learn at a "pity party" where a bunch of poor guys will get together to talk about how unfair life is towards them. Rich guys mostly talk about trends: what is new on the markets, what are good and bad businesses to invest in. You'll get to hear about their mistakes too, which is good. And even better, you'll get to hear about all their successes, which is motivating.

It's easy to tell yourself that all rich people were just born into rich families. They always had money. They don't know what it's like to be poor. But then when you really start meeting with and talking to rich people you'll soon understand that there are many more ways to be and become rich than there are to be and become poor. Poverty is such a great leveller and poor people are so similar in so many ways. But rich people are part of a diverse ecosystem of ideas, skills, backgrounds, stories and ambitions. Theirs is a world that focuses on the abundance of life, not the scarcity of survival.

If you hang around such people for long enough you'll start to see which aspects of your own character are exceptional and can contribute to the exceptional world of which rich people are a part. You do have something to offer. As the saying

goes: “A winner is a loser who never gave up.” If you meet enough winners, you’ll realise they are just people who lost much more often than the real losers, who probably didn’t even try. And definitely didn’t try often enough.

And if that doesn’t inspire you, then you can’t be inspired. You may as well close this book and go watch some more mindless TV.

I think I first really understood this lesson when I was on a boat on Lake Kariba having fun with a bunch of wealthy friends. We had many conversations. There were twelve of us. Four of the guys were very very wealthy. While I was listening to their life stories it hit me that none of them had been born rich. I found it incredible. Not one of them was even born middle class. To a man, they had been born dirt poor, with barely a cent to their families’ names.

It made me think of other rich people I’d met, and the more I reflected on it the more I realised that most of the rich people I know also come from poor households. I know this is probably not a general rule, and I honestly I don’t know what the general rule is, but this was my experience. While I was listening to their different stories, one gentleman, Nigel, said something I found deeply profound. It is so deep and so true that it will go down as one the most inspirational sentences I have ever heard.

He said that being born poor was his greatest advantage in life. He explained that when he looked at all the rich kids he’d known at school, most of them had ended up swallowing and choking on their “silver spoons”.

I wanted to take a picture of those words to frame them and hang them in the sky for every poor person to read. I realised these guys had risen above poverty because they didn’t despise their position and lot in life. They were certain in the knowledge that just as the sun will rise, they would make their way out of poverty. And stay out of it.

They didn’t, like many poor people I know, wait for someone to come along to make them rich. They didn’t see a welfare grant as something to be happy about. They understood that it is ultimately your own responsibility to pull yourself out of poverty; no matter how difficult and impossible it might look.

It took one of these guys forty years to make it big. I cannot start to imagine the focus it took, the continual willpower and gritty determination. He had a mentality

of “it might take me a long time to get there, but I will get there – or die trying”.

The information age has made many new billionaires overnight. Like the princes and kings of Silicon Valley, we all wish to become rich overnight, but the reality for most of us is that we are probably not gifted in the kinds of fields that make overnight billionaires, nor are we the happy beneficiaries of provident circumstance (which means being in the right place at the right time).

So instead of cursing yourself, get busy getting busy in the field that may some day make you a millionaire. Lastly, remember not to swallow your silver spoon, even if you had to buy yours instead of inheriting it – because money is the most democratic and fair commodity in life. It doesn't care what your race, age, gender, political persuasion or religious conviction may be. Money only looks after the people who are looking after it.

What You Lose on the Swings You Gain on the Roundabout

Government devised a clever method of changing how they give out tenders for construction. They decided to share projects that would usually have gone to one company among four or five.

The idea was that it would not only broaden empowerment for new, up-and-coming black businesses but would create fiercer competition and better quality standards in the long run. Companies that received a portion of a tender's allocation could then constantly keep tabs on each other. It also meant that it would lower the risk for government. If you only give the contract to one company and it underperforms then the whole project stands still. If one or two companies don't meet the grade then you can replace them with a different one or give their portion of the responsibilities to the ones that do. The idea is that the project wins in the end.

Acquaintances of mine received such an allocation along with five other companies. The tender was for building houses. They were all excited and saw their dream of becoming construction moguls coming true. But after the initial euphoria of getting the tender died down and the hard work had to begin they faced all sorts of difficulties.

They first had issues with the initial payment of fifty percent upfront, which government was supposed to give them. They eventually got only ten percent of that. They were, of course, not alone in this predicament. Everybody that got part of that allocation of houses faced a similar situation.

They soldiered on, though, determined to prove their worth for this and future business. They borrowed from whoever cared enough to help, but were giving away part of their profits because of the interest attached to the loans. All of this meant that, together with all the other builders, they were lagging behind

dramatically on delivery. When the full allocation of funds was eventually paid they were already nearing their handover dates, when all the houses were meant to be finished. It seemed like mission impossible. No one thought those houses would be finished on time. Most of the other building companies, quite rightly, blamed the inefficiency of government bureaucracy for causing them to miss deadline. My acquaintances, on the other hand, realised that if they did not reach the deadline it would have a negative impact on their reputation. It would scupper their chances to do other big projects that were about to be announced.

They took a decision then that was viewed as stupid, naive and laughable by everyone who knew the facts. They subcontracted the services of two bigger companies, which would help them to finish the project on time. This decision completely wiped out all their profits. From their point of view, they had now been through all that frustration and done all that hard work for free. They made zero money –but they did finish on time.

Their competitors faced no penalties for not finishing on time and it was hard for my friends to later see them driving the latest cars and living a champagne lifestyle. Some of them hadn't even finished the project yet but were enjoying the if you want anything done to budget and on time then these are your boys. They were offered so much work that, in the end, only a percentage of it came from government. When other construction firms went out of business, they absorbed their workforces by offering the sorts of pay packages that other, smaller companies could not compete with. Today they are still growing their business and are well on their way to becoming one of the big boys.

The moral of this story should be obvious. It doesn't matter what people tell you, or what your peers or competitors might be doing. You need to hold yourself accountable to the highest standard. In business, immediate gain is not always good for your reputation. Government may have been the opportunity to get started, but my friends proved that they could be taken seriously in their own right.

In the long run that sort of attitude will keep you in business when times get tough. When you're starting out, it's hard to get business, but success leads to success – and sooner or later you're going to have so much work offered to you that you'll be able to pick the projects you want to work on. That's why when you're starting out you need to be like my friends: deliver, whatever it takes. Show you can be trusted. Karma will sort out the rest.

The Meaning of Success

Success has got less to do with the zeroes on your pay cheque than you may think. There is a difference between success and riches. Some people define success by how much money they have in the bank and that's fine. But success is very personal. I have met many poor people who are also, in fact, very successful.

When I was five years old I could read and write words that most five-year-olds can't, but not because I was a whizz kid. No, I was very far from that. I could only do those things because my older sister was extremely passionate about teaching. She would have taught a tree if there was no one around to teach. She even bribed stranger's kids with food just to have the opportunity to teach them. She wanted to know what the best way might be for them to learn certain things the fastest. All the games we played at home sooner or later ended with being in the "classroom.

Teaching was what fulfilled her. Becoming a teacher was the only thing that made any sense to her. She finished her matric, but my parents couldn't afford to pay for her university studies. She took a job at the local OK supermarket to save so she could pay her own way. Luckily, fate intervened and she was accepted at a teaching college in Kimberley. It must have been the happiest day of her life and the proudest day ever for my parents. Personally, at the time I didn't give a damn about education but even I was proud of her.

When she finished her studies there were no teaching posts available in our area. While most of her fellow graduates complained, she took a job at a school in Jacobsdal, which was several hours away by car. It's a wine-growing district on the banks of the Orange River. Before she went there, no one in our family had ever heard of the place. My uncles tended to drink beer or the harder stuff, certainly not Sauvignon Blanc.

My sister is still a teacher. She's been given numerous invites to join my business, but she wouldn't dream of it. I have never seen anybody, except maybe Michael Jackson, so happy to just be around kids.

Success is getting paid for something you would have been willing to do for free. Success is becoming what you dreamed about when you were younger. Success is about being able to whistle on your way to work. Success is not determined by how people from the outside see you. Only you define it.

Another of my friends is one of the most successful people I know. When we were younger, he dreamed about being a soldier. That's all he spoke about. He played soldier games and was a soldier in his mind long before he became one. When he stepped into that uniform almost nothing on earth could get him out of it again. We stopped being embarrassed about him wearing his uniform almost everywhere.

Today he is still a soldier and has a long and successful career still ahead of him in the military. For all we know, he will retire as a general. He would not exchange doing what he loves for all the money in the world. You are only truly successful if the money comes as a consequence of doing what you enjoy. Some people like making money for the sake of making money. Personally, I'll try anything if there's a buck in it. That's part of the joy for me. I revel in being an entrepreneur and pushing through with ideas and projects that could deliver mind-blowing results. I personally do define some of my own success by the money I am making. That's fine for me. That's the hustle I like, which gives my life meaning. It allows me to make a difference in the lives of so many people around me and do the kinds of things that people who don't have a lot of money would struggle to do. But deciding that mine is a shoe that should fit everyone on this earth is very narrow-minded. If everyone alive were just like me, well then this world would be in big trouble.

But the attitude of seeking success should be the same. Whatever your goal is, don't let people deter you from it, even if they don't think it's a good enough goal to aim for. Life will always throw up obstacles against being able to do what you dream of. Use your intelligence and your hard work to solve the problems and overcome the obstacles.

A professor once said that when his students come to him and asked him: "What should I do with my life?" he always tries to give them the same answer, by asking them: "What do you love?"

Most people love something or the other and, fortunately, people are different enough that the answer is not repeated very often. He'll then say: "Go and do something that keeps you closest to what you love."

I agree with his advice. If you just do something because you must do something because you need the money to survive, then it may be difficult to avoid ending up as someone who will always be working just to survive. So sure, you'll be surviving, but you're only doing that so that you can continue doing more of what you don't like doing. And you're going to spend your life being rewarded with more of what you will increasingly hate doing. Eventually you're just going to hate your life. If you, however, start out doing something you love, even if there's not a lot of money in it, the more you do it the better you're going to become at it. And if you get really good at it then someone is bound to start paying you for it or you can find a way to turn it into a business – which will be bound to succeed because it's built on your love for it. You would have done it for free after all. Chances are you would have been doing that thing part time anyway, just to give your life some meaning.

I'm not judging people who are strong and do horrible jobs to support their families. They too are dreaming of a day when their day-to-day life isn't so tough. But the fact is that nobody would swap with those guys if given half a chance and you should do everything in your power to avoid becoming someone who looks at what he's doing every day, and looks back on a life of missed opportunities, only to ask himself: how did this happen? What became of me? As long as there's breath in your body, there is still time to start to follow your passion. There'll always be another guy to lug the coal up the mineshaft. And maybe he'll love doing that.

So even if you are forced into taking a job you hate, use that time after work and on weekends to focus on your passion and make that your reason for living. As long as you keep at it and don't let your love for it die, then it can someday take you out of the endless cycle of just-plain-surviving that so many people are stuck in.

It may seem like a sacrifice to not go out drinking with your colleagues after work. It may seem like a sacrifice to not have fun every weekend with everyone else. But if you have a master plan then you need to use every minute and every second you can to work on it because no one is going to achieve your dreams on your behalf.

Later, when I write about prostitutes, you'll see that I understand the need for toughing it out and sticking with doing a job when you don't have another choice. But try to use that job to get you to the next thing. Save money. Hoard your free time. Use every moment in the job you hate as part of your personal pact to get out of it. Even if it has to take thirty years to do it, getting through those thirty years with your sanity intact will only be possible if you keep on telling yourself that one day you will be free.

Too many of us only have financial success in mind. We think growing big and strong financially is the only growth that's needed. Money may indeed be the most important thing you need to grow but it isn't the only thing you need to grow. We need to grow, for instance, in our humanity, humility, maturity and in not worrying about what others think about us.

All of these things play a role in our success and in staying successful. The best example I can always give is "the curse of the child star". Most child stars are nobodies today. So many of them don't even have any money to show for the millions they may have made before they even turned sixteen. They simply weren't ready for their blessings. That's why the amount of money you may be making certainly isn't everything. A man who earns R2 000 a month and saves R300 a month is still infinitely richer than the man who earns a million rand a month, but spends one-and-a-half million that same month.

That is a lesson I learned the hard way. The hard, hard way.

The hustle is not won by the man who takes home the biggest paycheque, who drives the fastest car, who lives in the biggest house, who has the most lavish holidays abroad and who walks with the most beautiful women on his arm. The hustle is won by the man who uses whatever he's got to build something that lasts. If you can do that while spending like there's no tomorrow, then power to you. But few of us can make that happen. The true hustler buys the sports car because he can sell that Ferrari for even more than he paid for it later; he buys the big mansion because he picked it up for a steal on auction after some other big spender couldn't make the payments (everything the true hustler buys is an investment, his money always works for him, it hustles even while he is asleep); he has the lavish holiday abroad because he's worked his fingers off all year and needs to recharge his batteries to do it all again for another year.

Nothing plays a more important role in keeping your money than also being mature in other areas. If you are immature in too many areas your money will be

but a fleeting visitor. Immature people go on the most childish spending sprees. They buy not because they want or like something but because someone else has got it. They go out and buy the even bigger, faster or shinier version of it. Immature people still think you can buy loyalty with money. They spoil those they think are loyal to them. They buy affection. Maturity will teach you that as soon as the money dries up the affection dries up. Maturity understands that loyalty is born out of respect and love and doesn't involve currency.

Being mature and having lasting success go hand in hand.

If you are not continually growing in your humanity you will not know how to treat people. You will be an arrogant fool. Important customers will avoid supporting you. Strategic businesspeople will have no dealings with you because they will fear that people may think them arrogant too, by association with you.

There's nothing that impresses me more than a wealthy man who acts humble. One of the most successful men I know, Gavin Varejes, never fails to make everyone who surrounds him feel special, important and noticed. I've never not seen him stand and acknowledge someone in a friendly way if they walk into the room he's in. He asks you how you are and he's truly interested in what you have to say.

This is a guy who owns a private jet, but you'd never guess by the humble way he carries himself. He is an inspiration to me and I aspire continually to be more like him.

When you're rich, you don't need to put on airs and graces. If you're not rich, you particularly don't want to start doing that. But I've met hundreds of men who walk with an arrogant swagger because they just bought a second-hand VW Polo with custom rims. If you're poor or just middle class, you have even less of a reason to be arrogant than the rich man. Learn from the examples I've seen.

To me there is nothing more beautiful, sexy and attractive than a gorgeous woman who just acts normally, as if she has no idea how stunning she is.

Maturity understands the concept of ubuntu. It knows that I may be the one washing feet today but if life needs my feet to be washed then I shall not want. Maturity teaches you respect, not only for others but for yourself, respecting your possessions by taking good care of them – respecting property and other people's money, which has been left in your care for safekeeping and growth.

All of this is part of the meaning of true success.

Don't Judge in Ignorance

My youngest son Cruz was once hospitalised for pneumonia. Parents are encouraged to stay with their toddlers because most of them can become hysterical when they realise they are in a foreign environment without their parents.

Mothers and fathers usually take turns to be with their sick kid. In my case, my boy's mother and the nanny would alternate. I would pop in whenever I could, any time during the day.

On the third day, I couldn't help but notice one kid who never seemed to be with a parent or a visitor. I started talking to the child and started feeling a bit protective of him.

I remember thinking how some parents must really be heartless to rely so completely only on the nurses. I made it a habit to always bring that kid something. It was always just something small: a chocolate or a toy. I thought I may as well, seeing as his own parents clearly didn't give a damn.

I was sitting with Cruz one day when a couple came up to me to thank me profusely for the little toys and sweets. My first reaction was to tell them that, since they didn't seem to care, somebody had to do it. I've never been able to just shut up if something is bothering me, so I asked them why it was that there was never anybody with their kid. The moment I asked the question, though, I regretted it.

Both parents' eyes filled with tears. They told me that they came from a small town. After their child got cancer, the father found a new job in Gauteng to be near his child. They sold both their cars and were using public transport. The mother, who had never worked before, also got a job in the city. They both did waitering jobs after hours and only got to sleep for about three hours a day.

They had long ago exhausted their medical aid.

Their story was so heartbreaking that I almost cried with them right there. I walked out of that hospital having found new heroes. They had been forced to make the choice between spending time with their kid all the time or rarely seeing him, while working to get their child the best medical assistance money can buy.

There are so many examples I could give where judging in ignorance simply shows that you're on an ego trip. Before you can understand what other people do, you need to at least try to ask yourself how you would act in exactly the same situation. But first you need to find out and understand what the situation is.

On many occasions I have fallen flat on my face because of rushing to conclusions. I now try never to judge without first learning the full story. I still fail at that terribly, but I at least know that's what I should be doing – and I try. We hustlers get judged all the time without people knowing our story. It is all part of being a hustler. But that doesn't mean we should be rushing off to do the same.

The bottom line is that judging is easy. Understanding is hard.

Stay in Your Lane

We have a very successful mentee programme we run in our business. The group of people we are mentoring will do everything to impress us. We often find that life and society is mirrored very interestingly in our group. Some have joined the programme thinking that through it they are going to make a quick buck. Some have joined because there are hot girls or boys there. Some are there because they truly believe our programme can teach them valuable lessons that they can take with them to achieve their dreams.

Some of the young people, because they are mostly already better educated than we are, spend time asking questions littered with corporate or academic language that we don't even understand. They're hoping to impress us and even perhaps make us think they must be very intelligent. I wrote about this earlier, but it's worth repeating.

You can be sitting there listening to the young mentee start his question, but he gets so caught up in trying to include big, fancy words in his "phraseology" that by the time he gets towards the end of his question he's almost forgotten what he wanted to ask in the first place. I'm continually telling them that one of the key things in life is just to keep things as simple as possible – life is complicated enough without trying to sneak the word 'heuristic' into every conversation. Say what you have to say as simply as you can and the same goes – doubly so – for anything you are writing. Impress people with your ideas, your proposals and your solutions, not with your complicated syntax and words that you found in the thesaurus. Speak to everyone you meet in the same way you would speak to an old friend from high school that you happen to bump into in a supermarket. Write the way you speak too – to the point, clearly and simply.

True genius is about making life simpler and easier. You don't have to prove to anyone that you've studied for three years.

Some of our mentees will go to such extreme levels to impress us, though, that it stops being funny and just becomes downright irritating. For example, several businesspeople carry two cell phones for whatever reason. Mostly it's because they have a private one and a more public one. I'm no different. One of the mentees sent me the following message on my private number: "Sir, I think I'm just what you need. I basically want to hang with you over weekends. I'm very good. Me getting your private number is evidence of that."

I wasn't impressed, I was furious. Not only had he invaded my private space, but he also saw it as some kind of achievement.

We sometimes think that by doing something extra we must be winning. But sometimes making yourself stand out too much is not a good thing. A good hustler gets noticed not because he or she has an attention-seeking "look-at-me" syndrome, but because he or she is going about their business and doing it well. If that business requires doing it quietly, then they do it quietly. If it requires making a noise, then the top hustler will be screaming as loudly as possible. More often than not, though, getting ahead just requires you to fly under the radar and get things done. Our mentee program taught me that just having patience and doing what is asked of you when it is asked of you can be more than enough, particularly when you've already got your opportunity and are in the middle of working through it.

Corporate graveyards are littered with smartasses. You just have to irritate the wrong person once and you may never even know you did it. Stay in your lane and don't try tricks unless you are one-hundred percent sure you will be willing to live with the consequences if it backfires. And if you can't see that a prank, a trick or an attention-grabbing stunt could backfire then good luck to you.

Maybe you should consider a career in breakfast radio or something.

The bottom line of all of this is that you will always be better served by not trying to act cleverer than you are or being one of those exhausting "too-much" people.

One of life's great ironies about trying to impress people is that often the harder you try to impress, the less impressed people will be. It's those of us just getting on with our hustle in our own way, and in the best way we can, who end up winning over the people around us.

Be relaxed. Be easy to understand and easy-going. But be unstoppable in achieving the tasks you are set.

Everyday Hustlers

The window washer at the robot

Love them or hate them, window washers rarely get it wrong when they are busy executing their task of washing your window while you're waiting for the traffic light to change. Those chaps know what they're doing. For one, they will never choose a car whose owner looks like he should be working alongside them. They also rarely start washing anyone's window as the light is about to turn green. Not only that, but they will never finish exactly when it does turn green. No no no. They will leave five to ten seconds to allow them to come around to your window to collect some change. They never leave the job half done or the window dirtier than when they found it. Well, not in my experience anyway, although I've heard some people saying differently.

There are so many lessons to be learned from these guys.

Firstly, don't start a job you know you can't finish. Don't be like guys who accept jobs and then ders knowing full well it's impossible to finish in the allocated time. Car washers will let some cars pass, but some businesspeople simply can't allow opportunities to slip through their fingers. They don't consider that all they may be doing is inviting their own participation in expensive legal battles in the future.

Secondly, they finish well ahead of the moment of handing over. How many times have you seen people given their houses while it still smells of paint? The cement is still soft in some places. Window washers finish the job and still leave time for payment. An editor friend of mine says that people who finish articles or books without giving themselves enough time to correct things and go over them again always make terrible mistakes that others have to fix later. It's not professional and shows that you're unable to manage your time, don't really

prioritise your work or have completely overestimated your own ability to get the job done properly.

Thirdly, there are many things you can criticise them for, but in my experience leaving the window dirty is not one of them. How many times have we seen houses or even bridges built shoddily, but payment is still expected?

The most important lesson I learnt from car washers is that they don't give a damn about insults or rejection. They may be small-time, but they are true hustlers. They know and understand that you can't win 'em all. They live by what Sir Richard Branson once said. Business opportunities are like busses. There will always be the next one.

The street seller

Street sellers have become part of daily life here in South Africa. They sell whatever is not too heavy to carry while they run after cars. Street sellers are used to selling a different item every week if they have to. They get the same treatment daily from motorists and the police. They will sometimes make enough from what they are selling, sometimes not. They have truly impressed me many times over, but never as much as during the World Cup in 2010. The tournament was a bonanza time for them and they had to be on top of their game. And man, were they. They always seemed to know which gear to sell on every match day and the whole week leading up to any of the games.

They knew what would be needed and where. They were either figuring it out for themselves or a very streetwise entrepreneur was managing them – but either way it was true hustling.

There was a time during the World Cup where most, if not all, the shops ran out of soccer shirts. But the street sellers still had them. Sure, they were all fakes, but few people cared about that. They just wanted to rock up to the games wearing yellow outfits, or whatever the colours were of the country they were rooting for.

Unlike those of many shop owners, the street sellers' prices hardly ever changed. They knew they had a limited time to make hay and they were determined to cash in before the sunshine was gone. In the words of one the sellers, when I asked him "why are you guys so cheap?", he said: "We need to get rid of stock before Bafana Bafana get knocked out." He didn't run his business on patriotism or misguided

hope. They seemed far more realistic than many of the official suppliers. After Bafana were indeed knocked out in the group stages, the shops were suddenly overflowing with yellow shirts they could not give away if they tried.

Another eye-opener for me was when I discovered that my friend from England had been made to pay more for their shirts. His South African girlfriend paid less to buy from the same trader. When they asked why, the street trader told them foreigners had not come here for bargains. They had come to watch soccer and were not as likely to simply go to the next trader for a better deal, as a South African would. Turns out he was right. So he knew his market.

If you're a dedicated hustler, always on the lookout for how other hustlers do their thing, then watching how these guys were operating was pure poetry. Looking at these guys remains a marvel for me because there are boundless lessons to learn from them.

They would ditch a country's kit as soon as that country got knocked out. On some days, you could go to the stadium to see them selling the kit of the competing teams and on your way out of the stadium you'd see the same guys again, already selling the gear for the team the winner from that day's match was due to face next. They were extremely flexible and adaptable. They didn't indulge in guesswork, wishful thinking or gambling on the market's outcomes. They were dictated to strictly by the markets. What the market wanted they had. They didn't dare prescribe to the market what it needed, although they were innovative with a lot of products that tapped into the mood of the time.

I have all the time in the world for the street sellers because I know it cannot be easy to not only sell and run after cars but also to run away from the cops who are always fighting a losing battle to "clean up the streets". During the World Cup it must have been an even greater challenge for some of these street sellers, because they were completely banned from operations (Fifa made that abundantly clear) and there were so many police around you'd have thought we'd declared a state of emergency. Despite all these odds, no one who went to any of those games can say that they didn't have a memorable encounter or two with a street seller.

Say what you like about them, but I'd rather have a person selling me fake goods on the street than asking me for money for doing nothing. The street seller is learning something about trade and business and is at least offering me something that I, in all likelihood, can use. The second is merely being rewarded to come back and be totally useless again tomorrow.

The prostitute

I don't think there are many prostitutes who truly like what they do. Especially for the ones who don't have fancy websites that accept Visa and Mastercard, there can't be much joy in standing on a street corner waiting for any man with cash to come along – no matter how he looks, no matter how he smells, no matter how he behaves.

Every customer is a risk. He can assault you, kill you, or “cleverly” slip off his condom to infect you with the HI virus. He can make sick or sadistic demands because few men respect prostitutes.

Prostitution is the world's oldest profession, so they say. Put aside whatever your prejudices are for the moment to honestly answer the following question, whether you are male or female. If you were left with no option (or if you felt you had no other option) would you not be driven to also do what they do in order to feed and clothe yourself and your family? For the men, I will answer for them. Yes we would – and we would even be willing to do it for far less serious reasons.

Some of the people judging and hating prostitutes are not even aware that they are prostitutes themselves. For instance, many a girl will leave a guy because he never buys her gifts. She will sleep with the boss for a promotion, with the beauty pageant judge for a better chance at the crown or even just with the school coach who is choosing the team so that her kids can be picked for the first team. Many a student has chosen sleeping with a lecturer over having to put in five nights of hard studying. These, and many other transactions, are exactly the same as what the prostitute is more openly peddling every night on Oxford Street. Opening your legs for whatever reason, whether it benefits you now or later, is not, strictly speaking, a form of prostitution but it is prostitution in its best form.

As for guys, let me not even get started. A friend of mine told me something once that I struggled to believe, but then I realised that I had already come to live with it when I was in prison. My friend told me that some of the guys you see in gay porn

films aren't even really gay in their private lives. They just get paid hundreds of thousands of dollars, or whatever the amounts are, to have sex with other men on camera and so they go for it because they're good looking and it's easy money. That makes them prostitutes at a level that most female prostitutes can't even dream of reaching. This also reminded me of prison because daily I encountered romantic relationships between men who were "normally" totally straight on the outside. In prison, if they became some gangster's "wife", they could be assured of protection, money, food and a host of other privileges. They accepted it to survive. It was the sick way of the prison world and it was prostitution.

Anyway, think of this the next time you want to judge those fellow hustlers, the prostitutes. As I said before, judging's easy. Understanding is hard.

But back to the main point. The chief lesson here is that almost all prostitutes don't like what they do but they do it for many reasons that may well be noble. Not all of them are hopeless druggies with no sense of who they are or where they are – that's just part of the smear campaign against them. Many prostitutes are hustlers who understand that if they listen to the haters they will not be able to feed or clothe their families or whatever else they do with their money. Many of us change jobs in a hurry simply because someone insulted us, treated us rudely at work or are laughing at us behind our backs. Being insulted is just part of the job for a prostitute. They have long ago stopped listening to that.

Prostitutes should also teach you the lesson of dressing for success. Prostitutes don't wear what they feel like wearing. They wear the kind of outfit that will attract the most customers, no matter how demeaning it may make them feel.

Have you ever seen a prostitute wearing pyjamas? Even in the middle of winter, they'll be in their miniskirts. They want their customers to buy with their eyes first.

Come rain or sunshine, they are committed to their hustle. It's the self-punishing discipline we should all have towards our work and our dreams. If we showed the same kind of desperate commitment to our work as many prostitutes show, more of us would be successful.

Prostitutes don't discuss their hustle or the problems facing them with people who don't understand their trade or who can't help them even if they do hear them. Hookers understand the most fundamental truth about business and that is that business is challenging. It's not meant to be easy.

Many of us enter the business world hoping or thinking it may be a walk in the park. Whenever I encounter someone who still has the ignorance to think that owning your own business must be great because you can work your own hours and pay your own salary I almost want to slap the idiot. Being your own boss is the most difficult challenge you could ever give yourself. Prostitutes know business is not for the faint of heart.

Many of us are willing to throw in the towel because of one bad day at work. Prostitutes just forget another bad day. Every day. And do what has to be done again the next day.

Charter pilots

In my line of business I have spent a lot of time travelling in charter planes and helicopters here in South Africa and in some of the different regions of Africa. It's always nice spending time with pilots. I wouldn't call them "hustlers" in the sense I'd normally speak of a hustler, but I've still learnt many lessons from pilots that I think apply equally well to hustlers.

Being a pilot is considered an occupation worth bragging about. We have all sat around a dinner table with strangers and the conversation will quickly cover what everyone present does for a living. Usually, if not every time, when someone says he or she is a pilot the open admiration and respect from everyone there is instant and sincere.

I have learnt many lessons from helicopter pilots but the most important is that one should always look past the glamour of your job and its title to do what needs to be done to always get the job done – no matter how demeaning.

I have seen pilots carrying extra petrol in twenty-five litre containers and, the sweat breaking out on their backs from the exertion, loading the canisters in the back of helicopters. When we land somewhere to inspect a prospecting site or a mine, the pilot goes about his business of refuelling. That, on its own, is something to witness. He will use a funnel (and on one occasion our pilot had to make one from a plastic bottle, then carry the fuel again and pour it into the chopper. He does it quietly, without asking for help. He then rinses everything with water and soap, which he already has ready to eliminate the unpleasant petrol smell.

We have often had to mess some of our charter pilots around terribly, or sometimes it's just because of circumstances. On one occasion we were in

Mozambique and only ended up leaving hours later than we were scheduled to. Our pilot just kept himself occupied at the little airport or in the aircraft (I'm not really sure what he got up to), but I've never heard a pilot utter a word of complaint for being kept waiting. He might have another engagement to get to back at home, he might be messing up someone else's day back at the office, but pilots just take it in their stride.

Every time before a pilot takes off, he conducts a rigorous safety check of every aspect of the plane. I don't know if it takes half an hour or more. It's the same, mind-numbing routine every time. But if there's no one else around to do it, the pilots do it the same way they have done it thousands of times before. Personally, I barely even look twice at a car before jumping into it. It's probably a good thing I never wanted to be a pilot. The temptation to get lazy and just assume everything is cool would simply grow too strong for me by the five-hundredth time.

But pilots are used to it all. Sometimes the weather is just too bad to take off. So you simply stay another day. They know that to enjoy the best parts of their job, they also have to endure the worst of it, and that doesn't even take into account that every time they take off might be their last.

In business, I see tasks not being fully executed all the time because people just see certain things as not being part of their job. Nowadays, most people are increasingly conscious about what their job description is – not because they're concerned about the things their job description actually wants them to do, they're concentrating on all the things that aren't mentioned. Every time I've heard the phrase "it's not in my job description" there's a quiet rage that bubbles under my skin. Often, junior or middle-rank employees will mutter it to each other sarcastically and think they're being very clever.

I've tried to eliminate this attitude from my own businesses, but I've been in business meetings elsewhere that have been delayed for the most ridiculous reasons. One meeting that should otherwise have been completely pleasant turned into an hour of irritation because no one could locate the tea lady. It never even crossed anyone's mind that we all learned to make tea when we were five years old. No one among us just went to the kitchen to make a pot of tea.

I have seen important documents not being delivered because the driver was running late and hadn't made it back from his previous drop-off. Everyone was standing around as if in a terrible bout of unexpected amnesia that was afflicting only people wearing suits. Suddenly, they'd all forgotten how to drive.

What happened to just jumping in the car yourself? When there were orders for my book, I would often pop into the office and look through the packages and the addresses on them. If some of the bookshops were on my route, or not too far off it, I'd ask my PA to give me a few delivery notes and I'd step into the bookshops, bearing the parcels, myself. On most occasions the shop staff would just assume I was another nobody deliveryman, sign my note and usher me out of the storeroom. But it was always a lot of fun if somebody recognised me. Being "caught" delivering my own book wouldn't embarrass me. It was an added opportunity to chat to the people who were part of the process. They'd tell me how the book was doing, what people had said to them about it – and they'd ask me to sign a few copies. All of this would only take five to ten minutes but I learnt a lot about the bookselling business from those little visits. If I'd thought I was too important to do a few basic deliveries, I would be the poorer for it today.

I see office tables filled with dirty mugs because everyone is waiting for the cleaning lady. These are all minor things I'm talking about, but they speak to the bigger problem that there are so many things that can get done but don't get done because we are either too important or spiteful to do it ourselves.

I often didn't renew a manager's contract at one of our nightclubs when I saw him pointing to empty glasses, then running around to find waitresses to pick them up and take them to the kitchen. When I stepped into ZAR, it was not unusual for people to see me cleaning, stocking booze, carrying empty glasses away, helping to serve customers behind the bar – whatever was required to keep the place ticking. I could have said "I pay people for this" but workers are only really inspired by bosses who work harder than they do.

Instead of carrying your title in the workplace you should lose it the moment you step in. My policeman friend told me once that on most nights instead of seeing action or catching crooks (I know that word is rich, coming from me) he actually spends most of his time giving people hugs or advice. He's often the only guy around to comfort distressed people who have called him out after something terrible has happened to them. He told me of the endless times he had to step in as a counsellor for married couples who have been fighting so much the neighbours or the wife called the cops.

So be like my friends the charter pilots. Don't see yourself as too important to do something. If it requires you to do it for the bigger picture, then make it happen. People who only do what their job title requires of them rarely move past that title

– and rarely do their job properly anyway. By doing what is required in the moment does not mean you should suddenly become an interfering little busybody who goes around unwantedly poking into other people's jobs, telling them you think they're not doing it right.

It means you should step up when there is nobody else around or you can see the person who is supposed to be doing it is being buried under too much work. If you do, in fact, think that someone is not doing his or her job properly it will be in both your interests to explain to that particular person, as politely as you can, why you think they should do something differently and give them a chance to try or to explain that you're wrong. Don't just think you know better and batter your way in there. You might just mess up something that's actually pretty specialised.

Hustling and Love

People like to romanticise stories of how kings left their thrones for the sake of love. We watch movies where the lead actor goes to the end of the world for love. We start believing that being willing to make these ultimate sacrifices is what being men and women in love is all about. But it's easy to lose sight of the fact that we are not kings, nor actors. We are people who haven't made it yet. If you have nothing to sacrifice for the sake of love, then all you can really offer is your future, and no one should do that for the sake of love.

The simple reason is that no one who truly loves you would allow you to give up on your dreams. True love can survive distance. It can survive anything. If it can't survive your promotion, or your new job, which requires you to work on the moon, well then it's not true love.

True love helps you to become the best person you can be. It does not prevent you from finding happiness – true love finds a way when there seems to be no way. You should not settle for anything but this, because the alternative will limit your success in every way.

Many people have either dropped out of or failed in their hustle, not because they lack ability or potential but because they have a nagging or repressive partner who just doesn't see the big picture.

That romantic partner constantly likes to question why so little time is being devoted to your relationship – and so much time to work, business, projects or whatever hustle you may be busy with. That partner may decide he or she knows what's "best for you" and control and manage every aspect of your life. They're only doing that because it gives them a sense of power. They'll say it's because they care about you. But they really only care about themselves.

Trying to explain or justify what you are doing or want to do and how your success in it will change not just your life but his or hers too, along with that of both of your families, is no guarantee that person will, first of all, believe you or even suddenly become more understanding and supportive of your constant dedication to your dream.

Most people need support and encouragement from a partner to thrive. They certainly don't need their partner to nag about, complain about or actively oppose what they are trying to do. The constant assurance at the back of their minds that they have someone they love supporting them and cheering them on from the sidelines is something many successful people admit is one of the main reasons they became successful. But many people have to do it without that – and they may be better off alone.

You should never allow yourself to lose your own identity and your dreams in a relationship. Every relationship is a compromise, so that both sides can be happy with things – but know where to draw the line. The sad truth is that if you give in too much to what your partner thinks you should be, in the end that person just loses respect for you. They want you to be what they think you both want, when actually what they want is someone they can respect –it's easier to respect someone who respects himself and his ambitions. When the respect goes, the love will soon fizzle out too. Relationships are at their most successful, rewarding and happy when both of you are headstrong and are willing to fight for the things that matter to you. Just because you never fight with the person who loves you, does not mean your relationship is healthy and something to be proud of. You also don't want to make everything a fight. There's no need to try to turn everything into a power play – but be firm, set your boundaries and make it clear you are your own person and you can survive without the other person, tough as that may sound if you really are in love or if you feel you really need that other person.

A radio DJ friend once really made me laugh a few years ago when he told me over lunch that one of his pet hates in life is when people in relationships tell one another: "There's no me without you." Or "you complete me" or whatever line they've picked up from the movies. I found it particularly ironic, because this DJ is the king of playing the smoothest R&B songs, and every second line in these songs is "baby I can't live without you". But he was right. No one in a relationship can make you happy. It's not their job to make you happy, just like it's not your responsibility to make them happy, or complete them, or give their life meaning or whatever you think romance is good for. I once heard love defined as a state of being in which the one person in the relationship can only be happy if the other

person is also happy. That sounds sweet, but it's just not practical. It's just too much of a burden for any one person to bear, and before you can hope to have a strong and well-grounded relationship you need to deal with yourself first. Get your own hustle together and bring as complete a person as you can into a relationship. Then look for someone who can offer you the same.

If you're serious about being a hustler then you need to be with someone who gets what you're about. They don't have to agree with you all the time. They don't have to worship you or admire you. But they should respect the fact that you are going places. Here are some of the concerns you should have about a partner who is constantly nagging you about how hard you work – or is constantly opposing your attempts to hustle:

a) He or she doesn't believe you are actually destined for much and so is just trying to spare you the misfortune of wasting your time. That's just going to discourage you and lead to endless fights if you are determined to keep pursuing your dream.

b) He or she is worried that when you do become successful you will just ditch him or her for someone better. That may be true – but it doesn't have to be. Many people become more committed by seeing where they have come from together.

Either way, you can't hold yourself back in life for a partner. You'll just end up resenting that person for “destroying your dreams” anyway, and that's no way to grow old together. Ironically, that person who made you give up your dreams may not even be around for you to vent your anger – you could be growing old alone anyway – because he or she might run away with someone much more successful than you, somewhere along the way.

c) He or she has a life and identity that is so completely caught up in you and in trying to spend time with you that he or she has no independent identity any more (and that can become very stifling for a hustler, very fast). You need to deal with that.

d) He or she just wants you to do something else with your life – maybe something that you'll end up being miserable doing. That, hustler man or hustler woman, is exactly the outcome this book is trying to help you avoid.

e) He or she has deep psychological issues. Maybe he's trying to make you the mother he lost or never had. Maybe she's been hurt so many times before that

she'll never trust a man again. Maybe your partner is just a controlling psycho. It's not a pleasant thought, but you may do well to seek the truth and decide if it's worth trying to heal that person's wounds, or just move on because some things can't be fixed.

f) Maybe he or she is right, and you're flying too close to the sun. That doesn't matter. It's still your life and you have a right to make your own mistakes.

There are probably endless further things you can add to this list, but the important thing is that you get the idea that love is not something you want to allow to hold you back. It has destroyed too many people and their dreams, simply because love is such a strong emotion and it takes a lot of strength to do what's right for you, even if your heart disagrees with you. Having your heart broken will make you lie in bed and perhaps be depressed for months about it, but that is perhaps the smaller price to pay than dealing with living an entire lifetime with the wrong person.

As a hustler, you could perhaps find a way to ignore all that incessant nagging or attempts at controlling you and carry on doing your thing, or you could see it as a sign that there is something wrong and you and your partner are pulling in opposite directions. Fix it, or move on, tough as that may be.

Partners will constantly accuse you of all sorts of things, of changing too much, of not caring as much about the relationship as they do, of not loving them as much as they love you. They'll complain about not liking your friends and how you spend too much time with them. Sometimes some or all of these things are just a sign that you need to reassure your partner or you need to make more of an effort to be there for them. But it can also mean they're testing you, to see how much power they can exert on you and get you to do things their way. The best favour you can do for yourself is to make it clear that unlike what all the R&B singers on Metro FM might be crooning about, you can, in fact, live without him or her. You don't want to, you won't enjoy it and it may even break your heart, but you will survive and you will move on. A partner should always know there is a limit to how far they can push you – and you won't just be coming back for more all the time.

It takes guts to make a stand like that. People will test your resolve. But if you both care about one another enough you'll eventually get over playing childish games and just start to appreciate one another as individuals who happen to also

love each other – and you’ll support one another despite how insane or unlikely the other’s dream may seem to be.

This is especially true if you are a young hustler trying to make your way up from the ghetto. Many of the young people you are likely to fall in love with in such situations are unlikely to share your passion to improve yourself and make it big in life. If you come from a small place with small expectations then someone dreaming big is always going to seem like a bit of a freak. You may find yourself in love for a few years, you may even get married to him or her because you have a sense of loyalty along with your love and it’s a great story to think that you both come from such an impoverished past.

But I’ve seen it work out badly with one of my friends who became a big sports star, even though he started out as a gangster, just like me. He married the girl he’d met when they were both still at school. He really loved that girl. But as they got older, he became increasingly focused on improving himself – he read book after book, attended seminars on life-skills and business and started to surround himself with people who were as successful as he wanted to be someday when he was their age. His wife, on the other hand, through no fault of her own, just got caught up in the everyday challenges of running the house and raising the kids. She had no real interest in self-improvement, and why should she have? When they started out, neither of them had even known how to order a ticket to watch a movie together at the cinema, and now he was used to sleeping in five-star hotels around the world and had no trouble getting attention from girls with film-star good looks, sophisticated conversational skills, their own careers and their own exciting interests. To him, increasingly, his wife was just looking kind of boring.

I’m not saying anyone’s right or wrong in this situation, it’s just what happens. If both of you rise from the township to both become stars in your own right, that can be different. But every relationship where people are very unequal leads to problems. It’s never good if one of you is much better looking than the other, or much smarter, much richer and so on. Relationships have a good chance when two people are as evenly matched as it can get, and even then it’s a huge gamble. What will work and what won’t remains a mystery, even to the “experts”.

People like to accuse other people of “changing”, but I always like to think that change is a necessity for survival and growth. If you’re not changing, you’re not really fully alive. So when someone looks at me accusingly and says: “You’ve changed ... ” I say: “I know. But why haven’t you?”

In the end, my friend had to get divorced and he got hit with a huge maintenance order by the courts. I remember before he got married I pleaded with him to get a prenup signed— we almost came to blows over the matter — but he was determined that a prenup would be like saying he didn't trust his future wife enough or he was expecting them to fail. But I just wanted him to realise he was likely to be the only one making the big money in their marriage, and he wouldn't want his financial future to be determined by a judge who had likely only ever seen him on TV.

Either way, the bottom line of my advice is this: if you're serious about your hustle, then you should probably think twice before you get too deeply involved and committed to a serious long-term relationship. If she gets pregnant when you're just starting out, that added burden and stress is just going to make it harder for you to focus on your hustling. If you're a young woman and you get pregnant with no support from that loser you once took pity on in your bed, being a single mom is all sorts of tough. It'll be a lot harder to get your hustle on.

As a man, you can easily still get married when you're forty and have as many children as you like with a woman half your age. As a woman, you can still have kids until you're forty too, medical science is that good these days and will be even better in the future. I'm not saying you should wait until you're forty, or thirty, or even sixty. You can do whatever feels best. But don't be like so many others who just become another ghetto statistic, with nine kids by the time they're twenty-nine. I take my hat off to people who can still find success while meeting the burdens of paying for a growing horde of hungry mouths to feed, but such people are rare. Most of the lazy, useless layabouts who make children like the machine at the movies that makes popcorn leave the feeding of all those screaming, hungry mouths to some poor grand mother somewhere who can barely manage on her tiny state grant as it is.

If that's what your game is, then you are no hustler. You just need to speak to people who delayed having children until after they're older, when they're not children themselves, to understand how important it is. That's the only way to really break the cycle of poverty.

The truth is that people in relationships struggle to make up their minds about what they want. Their judgement is clouded by various insecurities, jealousies and a shopping list of notions about romance that they've read in books or seen on TV.

I don't regret getting married. It was a wonderful experience and I have two beautiful children with my ex-wife. She gave up a lot to be with me and we made it

through some of the toughest of times together. I was not a faithful husband and I'm not looking for people to admire that or want to be like me – but that's just how marriage panned out for me. We were very different people and we came to realise that over a number of years, after rushing into marriage soon after I was released from prison. Her parents had rarely ever left one another's side during all their decades together and that was the model for a marriage she was looking for. I, on the other hand, can hardly ever sit still. I'm always meeting people, rushing around with deadlines for impossible projects.

In our first few years of marriage I was constantly on the road, giving my talks and she eventually grew very tired of that. I like being with people, all the time. She liked to be at home, living a more secluded life. There's nothing wrong with that, it's cool, but we were just nothing like each other.

A hard-working hustler needs love. Many of us are working as hard as we do because we're hoping to have that special person in our lives one day, or we are doing it for that special person we already have.

Hustlers appreciate love and support. They appreciate having someone rooting for them – but appreciation doesn't mean that they absolutely need and cannot live without it. Love and support must not be at the top of your must-have-to-succeed list. It's a nice-to-have. Honestly and truthfully speaking, any hustler should never let the absence of luxuries, including constantly being patted on the back or receiving love and gentle whispers, derail him or her from their daily hustle.

Every working person has had to make the choice between working harder but spending less time with family. When asked for advice they all get the standard “cop out” advice which tells them to “find a balance”. You might try to find that balance, but I promise you that you'll struggle to find a lasting solution. Something will be losing out.

The problem is that to be successful, especially in the early years of your life, one needs to be completely obsessed. No one tells young people who dream of being concert pianists that they should try to find a good balance in life. They're instead advised to play the piano as much as possible, at the cost of almost everything else. The same goes for anything in life. Malcolm Gladwell has written a whole book about how the only way to make it is to spend at least 10 000 hours doing whatever it is that you want to be good at. That takes a lot of dedication. It takes a lot of sacrifice. There's a lot of things you are just never going to get around to doing if

you are investing 10 000 hours of your life into something just to become good enough at it so that you can then start to be a real pro at it.

I will give it to you as straight as I can. Do the job. Spend more time on the job, simply because family love is much more tolerant and forgiving than the love of your boss or the unforgiving nature of life's big opportunities.

People advise that it's a mistake to be so busy that you miss those important moments in your children's lives. You maybe don't see that first walk, or make it to the school play, or the soccer match.

You should try to be there for them as much as possible – but you are working to give them the best life they can ever have. Paying to send your kids to a good school and a good university, to raise them in a nice house and a good neighbourhood and clothing and feeding them properly has more value than almost anything else you could ever hope to do for your family.

I know people who chose family while I chose to spend more time at work. I've had a number of years to track the difference between us. I have seen how when they see my success they start resenting whoever encouraged them to be at home more. My kids still love me. They've never given me any grief for working hard (and they better not try). And I certainly love and respect myself more for being able to fully provide for them.

I once lived next to an old couple who couldn't have been more different from each other. The old lady was a gentle soul but the old man was a complete ass. I asked the old lady one day why she tolerated his constant rudeness. Her answer shocked me but taught me a valuable lesson. She said that she now knew that she had robbed him of realising his full potential, and had thereby robbed him of his dreams. She had demanded he spend more time with the kids and less time at work. She made him say no to opportunities that were gratefully snapped up by workers less deserving than him. Those guys had gone on to retire happily, with a decent pension, but she and her husband were struggling to rub two pennies together in old age. They now couldn't afford to go out and spend money on everyday things, let alone do the things they had always dreamed about in their youth.

Their kids had also moved on and were living in London.

In one of my not-so-numerous conversations with the old man I asked him for any advice on life he could give me – as I like to do with anyone with greater experience than I have. He shared what I consider a most profound lesson. He said real love doesn't demand of you to give up what you love. Real love stands in for you. Real love explains your absence. Real love will do everything possible for you to reach your dream. That's why I have only the world of respect for my kids' moms. They never speak badly of me to my kids. My kids don't think me not always being around is a sign that I don't care about them. Because it's never put to them that way, they never think of it that way.

What matters is not what happens to us, or the burdens we must carry along the way – what matters is how we see those things.

What is a Dream?

A dream should be about someone you want to be. For a hustler it is not about someone they want to be but someone they are going to be. A dream is something that grabs you and is with you twenty-four hours a day. Even when you are busy with work or a normal conversation the dream should be burning inside of you. It will not just be an ordinary flame. It should be nothing short of being an inextinguishable flame. It can't be doused by disappointments of any kind. If it elicits no interest from other people it shouldn't matter. If other people spit on your dream, it shouldn't matter. That fire must keep burning.

Even when you have reached your dream that fire must continue to burn – even brighter. It can only die when you do. It should be you, inseparable from everything that makes you. It just keeps burning to take you to greater heights. A great dream has no limits, no ceiling to bump up against.

When my son was sixteen years old he asked me to explain to him what it means to pursue your dream. Realising he was pumped up on hormones, I used a metaphor that was bound to make sense to almost any sixteen-year-old. “I told him it's like identifying the hottest, sexiest girl in a club, then suddenly realising that she has her eye on you too. You move closer and try your best pick-up line, or you just make conversation. You dance and eventually she agrees to go with you to your place. From the moment you leave the club you start kissing and caressing each other. You jump in the car, only half concentrating on driving. After that near-fatal drive you reach your place. After struggling through all the kissing to unlock the door, you eventually find yourself inside your house and then even the bedroom seems too far, so you undress in the hallway. You're both basically like a pair of wild animals at that point.”

Right then my son's eyes had almost popped out of his head. But then I told him pursuing a great dream should be something like that too. It should consume you

so much that no outside factors have any hope of catching your attention. Just as from the moment that girl agreed to leave with you, you had only one thing on your mind – no phone call, no problems or obstacles or bad news would have been able to prevent you from getting her home with you. You were a man on a mission, operating almost by instinct and completely absorbed. Only death could prevent you.

If you don't make achieving your dream your ultimate mission, then you can too easily allow obstacles, bad news, other people's needs and desires, or an endless list of daily distractions to allow you from reaching it.

I told my boy that if giving up is ever a real option for him, then what he thinks is a dream is merely something that would be nice to achieve or have – but isn't really a life-or-death matter. It could be forgotten within a week or after encountering the first obstacle. Those are the kinds of dreams that many people pursue but they are so busy just dreaming about what might be that they are, in fact, asleep.

To pursue a lifelong ambition you have to be more awake than everyone else. From the moment you wake up in the morning, what you have been dreaming of must be the first conscious thought you have and it must be the last thing you think about before you go to sleep. While you're actually sleeping, who cares what goes on in your head? That doesn't matter at all. It changes nothing. What matters is how you act it out during every waking hour.

I told my boy: "My son, a dream is not just something you can forget next week. Light the fire inside you. Make it unforgettable. If it is not burning and if you can't see it in your eyes when you look in the mirror, then it is no dream my son. It's just wishful thinking."

You see, dreaming is a serious business and you should treat yours with serious respect. It's common to hear people telling you what they want to become or achieve. People find tremendous joy in publicising their ambitions. Some do it to sound important and give the impression that they are going somewhere in life. While all of this is genuine, it is rarely serious.

Sure, they genuinely want to own a certain car but they are not serious about it. If they were serious, they would have started saving already. They don't start altering their lifestyle or curbing their spending in order to save more money to ultimately afford to buy that car. I'm not saying that buying a particular car is a great idea, but

if it happens to be someone's dream, then all I'm saying is that they should be taking steps towards making it happen.

Most guys in a maximum-security prison have, on average, ten years inside before they can be released. Most of them will tell you how they are planning to involve themselves in the economy when they're out, how they will want to close big deals, and how they are just going to be generally successful. They will be talking about it for all of those ten years until they are released, but when that day comes most of them still can't even read or write.

Although they are genuine in their belief, they are not serious about making it happen. They entered prison without knowing how to read and write, but prisons offer adult basic education and training – so even if they were let down by school, prison could have offered them a second chance to at least get some of the basics in place. There are not too many options available to an illiterate. They should know that, but they're not dreaming they're engaging in wishful thinking.

They had all the time in the world in that place. I know it's not easy to study in an overcrowded jail cell, but many do succeed despite that. All that those who didn't succeed proved was their lack of seriousness to truly pursue their ambition.

Don't be like the bunch who always talk, but never do. After pronouncing your dream, put all the measures you need in place to make it happen. Reaching your dream will never be easy, but to attain it you will make those worthwhile sacrifices. And getting it right will change your life.

I wanted to be a motivational speaker with all my heart. It was my life's dream at one point and I was lucky because I met the world's most special and dedicated lady, called Ria De Villiers. She held my hand through every step, and guided me through the tough wilderness you find when you want to become a motivational speaker. I couldn't have asked for a better person to help me make my dream come true, and a better mentor than Ria is hard to find.

I often wonder, though. What would have happened if I hadn't met her, or Charles, or many of the other people who helped me along the way.

I see people who outsource their dreams to other people's opinion. They turn back whenever someone tells them that theirs is a dream not worth pursuing or that they and their work simply aren't good enough. They find a mentor, but as soon as that mentor becomes less attentive they also lose interest in their dreams. Worse

still, whenever they find someone willing to assist them they end up expecting that poor well-meaning person to do most of the work for them to attain their dream. Some of my friends have another big scheme every time I see them, or they add twenty dreams to their first one. They take multitasking to a level that ends up becoming multi-failure.

Sacrifice is the cornerstone in building any dream. I can't tell you how many times, in my quest to become an international speaker, I went overseas with almost no money except for what I needed to pay for my accommodation. I would go all day without food and in the evening at my talk be eating caviar and lobster. One of my tricks was to personally compliment the chef on the good food no matter how awful it tasted. Upon meeting him I would praise the living daylights out of him.

My parting words would always be that he should send some food to my room so that my partner could also taste it, but there wouldn't be a partner.

Many will cancel trips because they lack this or that. I don't let what I don't have keep me from what I want. I daily see people who look at what they lack instead of improvising.

You will never have all the ingredients and tools in your suitcase on your way to reaching your dreams. Where you lack a knife you should cut the bread with scissors. Expect challenges. No dream is without them. The harder the journey, the sweeter the arrival. The most important thing is to know that nobody, and I mean nobody, will ever work as hard for your dream as you will. Nobody will make the same sacrifices for your dream as you will. And that's how it should be.

I know for a fact that if I had never met Ria I would still have gone on to become a top motivational speaker. I would still have reached dizzy heights. I would still have enthralled audiences around the world. I would have had to find another way to get there and I would have achieved it not because Ria's role was insignificant but because the fire in me was inextinguishable. It was a fire that would have burnt through any obstacle. My dream was everything to me because it made me whole, and I would never have been a happy person without working towards and attaining my dream. Pursuing a dream is the ultimate quest for happiness.

It's Not About Bad Colleague

I have met dozens of people who want to resign or take a transfer – not because they hate their job but because they hate someone they're working with. They dread coming to work because of this particular person. They spend their time at home complaining about this person. It's not long before the whole family and all his or her friends know all about this dreaded individual.

Not only is this person giving them grief at work but they have given this person control over their time away from work. They thus fall neatly into the trap this colleague has laid for them. By wanting to resign, they have given the bully exactly what he or she wanted all along. Of course office bullies want you to resign. They'd love nothing more. If you are being treated like crap it's normally because someone feels deeply threatened by your presence – whether they realise it consciously or not.

They just don't want you there. They'll do their best to make you feel useless, even if they barely do any work themselves. They'll make up endless stories about you behind your back, they'll blame their own failings on you when you're not around and do their best to paint you every shade of black. If you do have a corporate bully like that in your workplace (and, unfortunately, most people do) just remember the following story...

When I started at Chubb many people were not happy. They got increasingly less happy the longer I stayed, and the better I performed.

No one was angrier than one guy in particular, Andre. He not only hated black people but he despised the fact that I had previously committed crimes against white people. He made his feelings known to me in my presence whenever he could.

I simply didn't have the luxury of paying him any heed. At that stage, there wasn't anywhere else I could hope to go for another job, and I had just been given a raise. I could now feed and clothe my family. I could do some of the stuff I used to pray about and used to talk about endlessly – but before this job at Chubb those things were all just dreams. Had I chosen to resign over Andre and the many others like him, I'm sure they would have had a little celebration to dance on my bones. Everyone brings joy to someone in some way, right? Some when they arrive, some when they depart.

But if I'd played into that game, it wouldn't have just meant me leaving – I would have been abandoning all further prospects of career and personal growth.

I will never be able to give any person so much power over me and my achievements. I will only ever leave if the choice to do so benefits me. If I join your company and you don't like me, you will have to kill me to get rid of me – unless you can find a better job for me somewhere else.

When I was hired, I was promised a job, nothing more. I was certainly not guaranteed great treatment from fellow workers. A job, like everything in life, comes with arseholes. Unfortunately, some of them just happen to be sitting right next to you every day at your desk or, god forbid, are your boss.

But that's just something we all have to live with. A hustler does not concern himself with being everyone's friend. A hustler knows you can please some of the people some of the time, but you sure as hell won't please all the people all the time. And an arsehole can never be pleased, unless someone falls in an open manhole and dies. Then he'll spend the rest of the day chuckling about it and laughing uproariously with all his arsehole friends about how you got swept away in the drain and out to sea. Console yourself with the thought that the arseholes are probably even less happy to see you every day than you are them. And the friendlier you are to them, in turn, the more you are actually turning the knife in their guts. So kill them every day with the sweetest of smiles that says: "I really could not give a damn what your opinion might be."

Thin Line Between Crime and Business

The line between business and crime gets crossed more often than the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

People always talk about the crook with a book, referring to pastors, but they should be much more wary of the crook in a suit. For no reason I can explain or fathom the media and the law always seem soft on white-collar crime.

As long as your brute is in a suit, he gets treated with kid gloves.

The bread industry was, only a few years ago, found guilty of collusion and price-fixing. A fine was imposed, company names were mentioned (but not the actual individuals who took the decision to break the law). No criminal court was involved, no companies were closed. The fine was so weak that, the very same year, the executives of the leading company in the scandal were rewarded with bonuses.

Price-fixing, in hustler terms, is when a few companies involved in the same industry get together to screw everybody else. They do it by keeping the price of their product as high as possible, and make sure you can't get it cheaper anywhere else. They create the illusion of competition, but really they just end up being one giant illegal monopoly. There's always a huge incentive for companies to enter into such deals and you can find examples of it in all sorts of industries all over the world.

I mentioned the bread people because bread is something critical to the welfare of the poor. They eat bread every day. So if they can so blithely screw the poor you can just imagine what is happening in the industries where the rich are involved. Car dealerships screw you through the ear when it's time for repairs – the owners

of sports cars are the biggest victims because they know you can't take a Lamborghini to a Ferrari shop, and vice versa. Every industry, from banking to making T-shirts, has its own ways of bending or breaking the law, and mostly the people concerned are never brought to book or just get a slap on the wrist.

Just as this book was about to go for printing, a story broke that all the big construction companies in South Africa were alleged to have been part of one big price-fixing scam that's been going on in the country for more than a decade.

All the big companies had been getting together from time to time to agree on who would get which tender, what the winning bidder would charge, and how all the other players would just pretend to be bidding, while actually submitting uncompetitive bids. Newspapers reported that even Soccer City and Green Point Stadium had been funded via this crooked collusion.

In return, the other companies were paid off with millions by the winning bidder, which overcharged massively. The value of all these sham contracts and tenders, tainted by criminal mischief against business and the state – meaning everyday taxpayers – was R30 billion.

Some of the most respected people in the business community are the CEOs of big construction firms. But how are these guys any less criminal than I was once? I robbed a few hundred thousand at a time by storming into a bank with an AK47. They robbed a few billion by making some marks on paper with a pen. To me, both forms of crime are blatant theft. I was violent. They were silent. Noise will continue to be made about the violent criminal, long afterwards. Silence tends to reign about the silent criminal.

There are honest people in every industry – but don't be so naive as to think that every industry doesn't have its criminal opportunists either. Despite all the stories to the contrary, which you can read in abundance every week, I still meet many young entrepreneurs who think crime is something that is done to businesspeople and not by businesspeople – to them, crime exists on one side and business on the other and the line that divides the two is clear and self-evident. The truth is that to steer clear of crime when you're in business is a challenge you will have to face on a regular basis.

You may think that it's worth breaking a rule here, taking a shortcut there or just out-and-out getting involved in crime in your business and your daily hustle, but the truth is that yes, many people do get away with a lot of crime a lot of the time.

But there's no guarantee you will be that person. It will just take one betrayal from one disgruntled employee or business partner for you to find yourself exactly where I was ten years ago – rotting behind bars.

You can be successful by never committing a crime. After my release I was investigated by one team after the next looking for anything illegal, convinced I had to be up to something – be it drugs, money laundering, racketeering, corrupting government officials, you name it. No one could believe as prolific and successful a criminal as I had been could ever be fully clean.

I met one of those cops after he retired. He said he had worked on me for years, had even become obsessed with me. I was blissfully unaware of how often I had ruined this guy's day, just because he struggled so futilely to get something to nail me on.

Along the way, I regularly encountered people doing various crimes and frauds that were so obvious if only you know what to look for. The cops were wasting time, money and effort on pursuing me, but at least it gave me that sense of smug satisfaction that I had been right to be paranoid and so committed to my vow to never go back to prison – regardless of the temptations for easy money along the way.

In the end, if you keep your nose clean, you will have a long and productive career. If you catch your competition with their hands dirty, there's nothing better than a well-placed tip-off to the cops to take care of them. And while they go to court, go bankrupt, shoot themselves or merely grow old far too quickly because of bad conscience or just plain worrying about when their day of judgment will come, you will be doing your thing and enjoying your life.

Trust me – I've been very rich and I've been very poor. So I know how priceless a clean conscience is. Make sure that you never do something that you won't be able to give a legal answer for some day when the authorities come around to ask you why you did it. That's the rule I live by and it's what's taken a stop back to prison permanently off my itinerary in this trip through the remainder of my life.

So, as a hustler with big ambitions and big dreams, be aware how common crime is in day-to-day life and walk away from it every time. That door will close, but your reputation will (invisibly) improve and you'll meet the kinds of people that I do business with – good people who you'll be proud to introduce to your kids one day as role models. You'll do business with such people – which will be a harder,

longer and more winding uphill road, but it won't be the highway to hell the others speed down without caution.

And even after years of working with someone you admire – never lose your better instincts and your anti-crime attitude. Even massive organisations that should have proper checks and balances in place are caught with involvement in crime after many years. Even the watchdogs can be part of the scam. How else can you explain that auditing firms never detected the illegal doings of people like Brett Kebble and Bernie Madoff? It's possible they look the other way on purpose. Perhaps some of them are just so in awe of whoever it is they're auditing and they send someone still smelling of university to do the audit. This guy doesn't ask too many questions. He's looking for only good things, he is spoon fed the results everyone wants him to believe and he swallows it whole. It's not his fault – it's just one of the ways people have found to cover their tracks and stay ahead of the law. Sometimes it works, sometimes not. It rarely works forever.

The most important lesson you will learn about the business environment is that it has many more sharks than dolphins. Most young guys enter the business world with the best of intentions. They read a story about some conscienceless businessman, tut and shake their heads and say "how could he do that to people?" and then tell themselves there's no way in the world they could be that sociopathic.

But believe me, I have met more criminals in the business world than during my life of crime. To not fall into the easy trap of becoming one of the sharks, you need to be constantly aware of just how easy it is to do that.

Most people don't step out the door in the morning telling themselves that today they are going to go out of their way to screw everyone and be the worst version of themselves they could possibly be.

It just happens. The trick to make it not just happen is to not just let it happen. Like with all bad deeds it is often perpetrated by people who "fell in with the wrong crowd". In the underworld, guys' appearances mostly give them away. A mob boss looks like a mob boss. A gangster dresses like a gangster, talks like a gangster and (definitely) walks like a gangster. In the corporate world they come in all forms and suits. Some even shield themselves behind the illusion of being crime fighters in the business world. Secretly they are stealing from the very funds that are supposed to help fight crime or they are paying funds to some crime-fighting initiative when the money is, in fact, coming from the proceeds of corporate crime. They call it white-collar crime. But to me, crime is crime. It may wear all sorts of

collars – blue, red or no collar at all. Calling it white-collar is meant to soften it, but it shouldn't. Underworld criminals commit crimes that touch not only the victim but the victim's whole family. Crooks in suits can be far worse. They will steal pension-fund money or money from a widow and orphan fund. Their crime can affect hundreds of families at once. Their victims will be left with few options. Some of those victims opt for suicide.

So fine – you can call it fraud or racketeering, but from another perspective you may as well just call it a different form of murder.

Never do business without having a guard at the back of your mind constantly warning you that you may be about to get done in. You have little or nothing to lose by always being wary. You have everything to lose by trusting as if you're five years old.

These warnings should not scare you off jumping in the deep end of the business pool, but once you're swimming around know that everyone might look like dolphins but keep a look out for sharp teeth.

Making money is important, but not at the expense of your dreams. Because your dream should never be: "I want to live well as some kind of criminal." If you are living that kind of life it is no dream. That is a false and soul-eating compromise that will leave you feeling empty, worthless and addicted to the trappings of a lifestyle that's supposed to make you feel good, but it won't. You'll try to find comfort in drugs, booze, easy women, fast cars and the whole Playboy lifestyle. You'll be the poster child of what many guys think is just the greatest life imaginable – but secretly you'll be hating every minute of it. And hating yourself most of all.

Unless, of course, you're a complete psycho (but even that doesn't keep you free from justice forever). If you are a complete psycho, then this book is not really meant for someone like you. For the rest, take my advice, as someone who has walked the full stretch of that road and knows where it leads and how hard it is to return from – just stay true. Keep the faith. The Romans used to believe that your character is your destiny. Being a good person is not enough on its own to be successful, just as being a criminal is also not enough on its own. Criminals in the business world have to work hard to succeed. They have to work even harder to cover up their trail. They often simply have to work much harder than the rest of us because they're more paranoid about getting found out. That can make a criminal work twenty hours a day if he has to. Apply that same frantic mind-set to your

honest work and you'll achieve a hundred times more than any criminal ever could. You can just keep forging ahead and become a trailblazer – leaving a path that others can proudly follow – instead of becoming a trail sweeper – leaving only clues that the cops will patiently follow. Believe me, they will.

Even if everything I've said to you fails to convince you that doing any kind of crime – no matter the financial reward – is not worth it, then let me remind you of one final fact: by doing anything illegal, you are probably giving someone, somewhere, and at some time in the future, enormous power over you. You won't realise it at first, but it's an inescapable part of the deal if you want to do crime. Few people are ever able to commit crimes – especially crimes in business – on their own. They need crooked accountants, crooked business partners, crooked employees and a generally shared conspiracy. Even if only one other person knows about what you have done, you will have to rely on that person never betraying you. Even if they don't blackmail you directly, with shameless demands that you pay them money to keep quiet, they can blackmail you in all sorts of other ways. You'll find yourself having to agree to things they want that you would never have agreed to otherwise. You'll have to keep being friendly and nice to them, even if doing that makes you want to scream.

Situations like that will make anyone have many a sleepless night. It's what drives people to hire hitmen to just go and shoot the “people who know too much” – and that's how just starting with an “innocent” bit of tax evasion and cooking of the books ultimately turns into bloody crimes. That's why I said earlier that crime is crime. As someone who understands the operations of crime and all its sides better than most people you will ever speak to on the subject, I know that one crime will lead to the next and snowball into crimes of ever-increasing seriousness. It doesn't matter how “good” a person you think you may be. People in desperate situations end up doing desperate things.

I know of good men and women who have been forced to do terrible things and keep quiet about other people's corruption and crime simply because someone has some “dirt” on them. You can only live life on your own terms, with utter fearlessness, if you know that your conscience is clean. It's hard to be a hero, or feel like a hero to people – especially those who admire you already – if you are ashamed of the skeletons in your closet. You'll never be a whistle-blower if you're worried one of life's referees may blow the whistle on you too.

Like I said before – if you find out your competitors are up to no good, you can report them, wait for them to go out of business and then step up to take their

place. Don't think other hustlers will not be quick to jump on any opportunity they get to push you out of the game in the same way – don't give them that ammunition.

Pursue your dreams with a sense of steadfast, honest determination and you will build something no man will be able to bring down with just one well-placed phone call (which also brings us to the next chapter) – because your success will be based on the strong foundations of always being able to look the world in the eye. That way you can always remain proud of who you are and what you do.

Trust and Betrayal

There are different kinds of betrayal. Sometimes we're on the receiving end, sometimes we betray others. Like most things, there are categories of betrayal and it's important you distinguish between which are the serious ones and which are less serious. It's critical that you understand this, because your hustle will never be successful if you don't know when to just let some things slide.

We sometimes betray people because of circumstances beyond our control and vice versa. I can go on and on about it. Fortunate or just truly genuine, well-meaning people can go through life without ever having to betray anybody – but there is nobody, and I mean nobody, who is immune to betrayal. Even Jesus' closest disciple turned his back on the perfect leader when the going got too tough.

As for your own betrayals, always try to sleep on it before you sell someone out. As a serious hustler, if you're going to betray someone, make sure that you do it so well that person will never be able to recover and come back to take revenge on you one day. There's a saying that's stuck with me: "If you throw someone under the bus, make sure you kill him." It means that if you've decided to betray a man, then do it as coldheartedly as you can manage – but make sure that person fully deserves it first, because there will be no going back.

Being a gangster teaches you more about loyalty than most things, because the stakes are much higher than they are for the average person. If three guys get arrested for the same crime and none of them talk, then all three could walk away without being prosecuted or they will at least all serve a lesser sentence. If the cops manage to turn one of those guys, then the other two will sit in jail for a long time and the betrayer will walk. But the price of that betrayal may have to be paid later on, and you don't want to spend the rest of your life looking over your shoulder or sleeping with one eye open.

When you make your plans just know that a great part of your plan will suffer from the various betrayals of the people close to you. It just is that way.

All the same, one of the sayings I hate most is: “If you want true loyalty, buy a dog.” I don’t agree with that. I saw too many guys in prison who were willing to die before they would betray a friend to the authorities. Loyalty is strong, but understanding how it works is very hard to do.

Many guys like to say they have the ability to spot a betrayer a mile away. But no one has that skill, believe me. I’ve tried, but I’ve been betrayed so many times and I’ve never had a clue it was coming. That’s what makes it betrayal. That’s why it hurts. I’ve met people who were on the verge of signing the business deal of their lives, only to find that their closest associate cut them out. That kind of thing can eat away at your soul, but it’s just part of being in the game. It’s only if you let it knock you out that you’ve really lost. That betrayal only matters if it pushes you into giving up.

In prison, all I sometimes had to occupy my day was to observe other people. I became a pretty good judge of character. I’ve spent years with some of the worst specimens of humanity and I know what makes them tick. And in prison you, just as equally, encounter the smartest, most dangerously gifted people. They’ll talk a hole into your head and fill it with whatever they want.

People normally start out with clear and very honest intentions, only to betray you later, after gaining your trust. Something exploits a weakness and you simply betray someone in the blink of an eye. You may regret it immediately, but of course by then it’s too late.

If you find yourself betrayed early in your hustle or your deal you should consider it a lucky escape. Your earliest loss is always your cheapest one. It’s going to be harder and a lot more expensive to be betrayed later when the stakes are higher and your guard is down.

When I was robbing banks, those guys who proved their mettle after we were arrested were the guys I knew I could go to war with. I’m not promoting the idea of robbing banks or being a criminal, but even in honest business the principle still applies. All businesses need a competitive advantage to get ahead or stay ahead. You either have a better product, better ideas, better designers, better service – whatever it is. Someone close to the core of your business can utterly betray that by giving away trade secrets. What astonishes me more than anything is not that people in businesses sometimes betray one another – it’s how little they do it. In the 1800s there were only a few people who knew the real recipe of Coca-Cola. Apparently today there are still only a few people alive who know what really goes

into that stuff. They all take the secret to their grave and it is a secret that has ensured Coca-Cola is still one of the world's top companies today. Along the way I can only imagine what temptations, threats and crazy offers were made to the Coca-Cola guys – but they never betrayed their brand. There is still a lot of that kind of loyalty around.

In your own day-to-day life, romantic betrayal is probably the most common and the most obvious thing most of us have to deal with. Most women who go to jail for murder do so because they killed a cheating husband. Sure, they felt utterly betrayed, but really, many guys cheat on their wives. It's not a new phenomenon and it's not about to stop happening. Always be ready emotionally for betrayal. You don't want to be that person who gets so carried away by your rage in a moment that you end up saying or doing something you'll spend the rest of your life regretting.

All I can tell you is that you never want to tell your boyfriend, girlfriend, wife, husband (or whatever you call the person you share a bed with) the kinds of things you are going to regret the moment you have that last, earth-shattering fight. It's up to you – but share only the things you can live with seeing on the front page of the newspaper. The rest, keep it to yourself, because the person you fall in love with and marry is never the same person you split from or divorce. You're lucky if they don't do it, but many women will be only too happy to betray a husband to every news agency in the world when the time comes. Especially if you have been a liar and a cheat. You have no idea of knowing if you will one day become that. Very good men have let themselves down, so who are you? Protect your future self from having to pay even more heavily for his mistakes.

Betrayal in a family is always one of the hardest, because it's tough to walk away from family, no matter what they've done to you. This also makes it the rarest kind of betrayal. There's a reason why when brothers go into business together those partnerships can often last a lifetime. There's a bond of loyalty there that not a lot can get between. But in families there's often someone who isn't as strong as the others. For whatever reason, he or she can be made to betray you or will just betray you out of desperation. It always broke my heart, when I was still a gangster, to see how young, middle-class kids from the suburbs who were addicted to drugs could tell a drug dealer what the alarm system key code was at home so that the whole family's stuff could be stolen to pay off that stupid kid's drug debt. Sure, it's betrayal, but it's not a simple matter and the truth rarely even comes out.

You've probably heard this a lot before, but try not to have too many "close friends". Personally, I know everybody. I'm friendly to everybody and I love being around people. I call many people "my friends". I really like people, it's totally genuine and it's rare that I meet anyone who's more of a people's person than I am. I make it my business to know lots of people, keep in touch with them and have some fun with them from time to time.

But, if you can pull it off, let all those people think you are one of their closest friends, but pick your true confidants carefully. Only Kenny and one or two other people in my life know everything about me. I'm only comfortable with that. Let people tell you all their secrets and make yourself worthy to hear them. Make sure you don't just run around willy-nilly telling everyone you meet what so-and-so just told you – because that is guaranteed to get back to whoever told you and that will be the end of your friendship and you'll never be trusted again. They'll also be sure to tell everyone what an asshole you are. So be a vault for other people's secrets, and be very stingy with sharing your own.

You don't need to be Dirty Harry; you can tell lots of stories, jokes, details about your own background and so on – but don't overshare and don't take people into your confidence when you don't have to. If someone shares something they feel vulnerable about telling you, then tell them something of your own in return so it doesn't just feel like one-way traffic. But make sure you don't regret letting your big secrets out of the bag. I always say you should keep everyone you know only on a need-to-know basis. It works like that in the military because that's the best way to keep strategies and secrets intact, and it works equally well for any decent hustler's network of contacts.

Often, when I hear stories about betrayal or reflect on the many betrayals I've encountered in my own life, I realise the betrayal can't be entirely blamed on one person. People often have unrealistic expectations of others. They so badly want to believe that someone is their best friend, the love of their life, a fantastic business partner, a reliable confidant and so on. But if you actually observe someone critically you should be able to work out how loyal that person actually is. See how he or she speaks about other people. If they're always talking shit about someone else, trust me, they're going to talk shit about you too. If they're always sharing other people's secrets with you, same thing. If you can see how selfish they are in everyday situations (even if they're being charming and generous towards you) then you know they're going to choose themselves over you when the time comes. If you ask someone to look after your dog and water your plants while you're on holiday, but you know that person is always struggling to cope with just the day-to-

day troubles in their own life, don't be surprised when you get home and the plants are all dead and the SPCA is waiting to lock you up. That's not a betrayal. It's a bit of a disappointment, sure – but it's mainly you having had unrealistic expectations.

After I came out of jail, I believed many ex-prisoners were a lot like me. They just needed an opportunity in life, I thought. I was able to help some of them, but in a lot of cases it was just one disappointment after the other that just cost me time, money and the patience of everyone around me. I remember once telling one of my closest friends to keep his eye on another chap who had only recently been released and was still addicted to methamphetamine. They were both staying in my house while I was organising a job for my close friend. The meth addict was disappearing from the house at strange hours and we were obviously concerned that he might be breaking into the neighbours' houses.

While my friend was having a five-minute shower, the addict managed to get out of the house, scale an electric fence and steal a camera, money and some jewellery from the people next door. They caught him in the act and it was a nightmare scenario: I had to apologise and promise to send the guy back to Bloemfontein to a rehab clinic. A week or two later it emerged that my close friend was also addicted – to crack cocaine. I'd already organised a job for him at Central Rand Gold. I was putting my reputation on the line for a pair of guys who not only did not give a damn about my reputation, they didn't give a damn about their own. But what they were doing wasn't betrayal, I realise that now. They were just screwed up guys, lurching from one mistake to the next. But to me, at the time, it still felt like betrayal. When I spoke to them I made it clear I saw it as the betrayal of my trust. But the truth is they just had the sort of problems that were a lot bigger than my ability to solve them. The worst is when the same person keeps betraying you over and over, and you just keep on forgiving them. Don't fall for that. It's just another version of the beaten-wife syndrome.

I eventually had to accept that few ex-prisoners are like Kenny or me, although they do exist. I've never stopped trying to help ex-cons. But nowadays I'm much more realistic about the steps involved in their reform. We take it slow. I only give them responsibilities they can handle and we increase it in increments, day after day, year after year. When, after two years of trying to help a nigga out I find out he's back in the old 'hood spreading the word about what a giant arsehole I am, I don't take it personally. It happens all the time. It's betrayal, sure. It hurts, sure. But I learn from it and just move on. The one guy out of every five or ten who really makes it and shines – that guy more than makes up for the hundred who haven't made it or simply can't make it.

There should be times when you let a betrayal slide or forgive someone for it. A man or woman you've given a second chance can be more loyal to you than someone who thinks himself or herself immune to betraying you – but just hasn't done it yet. Someone who's been down that road and really regrets it will think much harder before doing it again. About that, all I can say is it's impossible to know what is the right thing to do. You should not forgive every betrayal, but you should also not punish or condemn every mistake – my rule of thumb is simply this: if I think I wouldn't be able to live with myself for not giving someone another chance, then I soften my heart and try again. The next time that person betrays me, it'll be a lot easier to close the door forever.

Betrayal is not about who is right or who is wrong. Everyone makes mistakes and I myself am not always worthy of the loyalty people give me. I also screw up, often sooner rather than later. Everyone does. Betrayal can be justified by all sorts of reasons that sound perfectly good when you say them or when you hear them. That's exactly why the people who don't betray you, no matter the mistakes you have made, are the soldiers who will carry you forward on your endless hustle. Sometimes loyalty is earned and is deserved. But mostly it's just there because you've all agreed you're in this thing together. End of story.

The point of all this is that you can't be paranoid. You have to trust people. The simple act of giving someone your trust can often be enough to make that person worthy of your trust. People can rise to your expectations. When you look at them and tell them you believe they are better than they believe themselves to be, that what you see before you is a great person even if they can't see that person for themselves, then that could be just the turning point that person needs.

The most ridiculous saying I have ever heard is "trust no one". You can't do anything without trusting people. You can't board a flight because to do so you have to trust the pilot to take you safely to your destination. You can't attend classes because you have to trust what they're teaching you. You certainly wouldn't be able to drive anywhere, because you have to trust that the thousands of other drivers you pass aren't out to kill you.

It's impossible to successfully operate a business without trusting people. You just have to give it five minutes' thought to see why.

The best thing you can say is that you have to carefully learn who to trust with what and even that is a skill you acquire only after knowing someone for some time.

The only way to know if someone is untrustworthy is not only when they burn you but by, as I've said earlier, studying everything they say and do.

A person who works hard will just talk naturally about the many occasions they put in all-nighters to get projects finished on time. A reliable friend will make their friends sound like amazing people, long before you meet those friends. You'll know that person will make you sound the same way if you happen to become friends. A caring person's every word and action will show that that is who they are.

So be prepared to put in the time to earn people's trust and to have them earn yours. When faced by tough questions, people seek refuge in the "don't you trust me?" reply. Always beware of people who ask you things like: "Do you think I'm some kind of thief?"; "Do I look like a criminal?"; "Why do you have to call and make sure I am where I told you I was going to be?"; "Why do you have to look at my work so thoroughly, as if you are trying to find a mistake?"

You can hear a lot of very defensive "why's" from people who should either be more confident in their own innocence or they have something they don't want you to find. It's not always true, but life has taught me that the most indignant people are often the ones with the most to hide – and it sometimes goes to the greatest extremes. The guy who is always going on about being moral and ethical is the one few people later believe was robbing everyone blind and lying to the few who could still see. I should know what I'm talking about. I've met many criminals in my time and there's no one so self-righteous as he who is completely guilty.

I was visiting my mom and once saw her doing something I totally disapproved of. I was quite horrified to see her frisking – and searching the bags of – her domestic help. To me it was sending out so many negative messages. I was livid but I let her finish what I considered an inhumane action. When we were alone, I confronted her. I didn't mince my words and told my mum exactly what I thought. "You should trust people more." After venting and giving her as many examples as I could think of, her reply took the wind right out of my sails.

She said her first responsibility was to look after her possessions.

“My searching the lady has got nothing to do with suspecting her of wrongdoing but more about me not doing the wrong thing, by not safeguarding my stuff. There are too many stories of people being robbed blind by their maids, so I refuse to also be a teller of those stories. You give me money to buy this stuff. How would you feel if I constantly asked you for money for a kettle because it was constantly being stolen? You would lose faith in me. I can’t risk losing the faith you have placed in me. At airports they search people not because they think everyone is a terrorist but because they want to protect innocent people. In this instance I’m protecting the things bought with your hard-earned money.”

Finally, she said: “Gayton, a time will come when I will stop searching the lady, when I will be completely comfortable with her, when I will trust her absolutely.” I acknowledged defeat in the debate and was just about to jump in my car and leave when she left me with the most powerful words. She said: “Trust is special. It’s earned, and the only thing that will make clear who you should trust is time.”

You will often find yourself in a position where trusting someone is your only option. Many years ago, a friend and I were arrested and the police started to interrogate me first. They tried everything in the book to get me to tell them where we had hidden the money. I stood my ground and denied everything. When they took me back to a different cell I realised they were going to interrogate my friend, after having their lunch, to corroborate my version with him. I had no way of telling my friend what I had told the cops. He and I had not had time to get our story straight. I was panicking. I saw another prisoner nearby, sweeping the floor.

The mere fact that he was unsupervised told me that he was a possible rat, but I had no choice than to trust this possible rat. I called him over and gave him my watch as payment to go over to my buddy’s cell and tell him, word for word, what I had said to the cops. That guy could have easily have gone to the cops to tell them everything I had said and they would have rewarded him too. He would still have had my watch – and maybe some time off his sentence. That would have been that, and I would have been sentenced to prison a whole lot earlier than I was. But that stranger with his broom didn’t breathe a word about us to the cops. He went over to my friend and helped us out. You will be betrayed, but that doesn’t mean you should stop trusting. No person ever achieved something worth mentioning without being both helped and betrayed by people. It’s not personal, it’s life – and you have to take your chances.

All the same, don’t blame people too much if they fail to meet your lofty expectations every time. A great leader makes men and women become the best

versions of themselves. It doesn't always happen overnight. Sometimes it takes years, but it does happen. A great leader inspires loyalty – and when betrayal comes he lets it pass and makes a point of rewarding those with loyalty.

Tell yourself that those friends who betray you on your road to glory will simply not be there one day to get a share of your rewards when you are at the top. Your few remaining compadres will each receive the lion's share.

Think of it that way, and work to make that dream a reality.

I once met a lady who told me about her fifteen-year struggle to find a job because of her criminal record. Her eyes begged me for a job. Her body trembled. She held onto my shirt and it almost reminded me of the biblical story of the lady with the issue of blood who touched the robe of Jesus in order to be cured. I realised she saw me as her Jesus in that instance and I told her, very stupidly, that I would give her a job. It was stupid because I was not part of management or in any position to give anyone a job that day.

The next morning I approached my boss and he told me we already had enough cleaners. I begged my boss to hire her and deduct her whole salary from mine. He couldn't exactly refuse that, so she was hired. Her salary was never deducted from mine even after I reminded my boss about it. He said I shouldn't worry about it. I personally took the lady under my wing, guided her career, sent her for computer classes and did about all I could to empower her. She was finally given an office admin job. I also helped and empowered some of her kids. A few years later a petition was sent around, which employees were signing in a bid to get rid of management. By then I was a part of management. Her name was at the top of the list of unhappy people. I couldn't believe it until I saw her standing with a placard outside, demanding my removal. I was shocked, angry, disappointed and dejected.

I also once had a cousin of mine leak confidential documents to our competitors and sworn enemies. This wasn't just any cousin, but one I had done everything for. I alone funded his entire existence; I had bailed him out of trouble more times than I care to think about. My love for him knew no end. If it meant a choice of helping him but bankrupting myself in the process, or not helping him and carrying on in my own merry way, then bankrupting it would have had to be. I felt that close to him.

Words cannot describe the feeling when he betrayed me. I'm not even going to try to explain it other than saying it was about as painful a feeling as anyone can

stand. I don't have enough space to tell you about the many other betrayals that are part of my history, but I will tell you about the lesson I learnt through it.

I spent months trying to find answers for what I possibly could have done wrong to these people I had loved so much, for them to betray me in such a fashion. Finding the answers to it consumed me, and my day of liberation came when I finally realised that we mostly don't get betrayed because of something we did. I have made terrible mistakes with people even closer to me than my cousin, and those people never betrayed me. With my cousin, I don't think he'll ever be able to point a finger at me and be able to mention one thing I ever did wrong to him – he just had a Judas spirit.

Some people just don't understand gratitude and loyalty and they simply never will. It's just who they are. The more time you spend on trying to plan your revenge on them or on crying about it, the less time you will have to devote to furthering your progress.

Upon finding out that a colleague had stolen yet another of his ideas and had gone to patent it before he could, one French inventor simply said: "I'll just have to think of some other ideas then. There's plenty more where that came from." That inventor was called Gustav Eiffel and today we still look at both the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty, structures that he designed – and he invented many other things too. Who knows – if he'd allowed himself to get caught up in the bitterness of being ripped off and stolen from, Paris would probably look much less pretty today and New York's harbour may never have been given America's most recognisable symbol.

So put the hurt of all those betrayals behind you and hustle on. The best way to get your revenge is just to be a bloody great success, as Frank Sinatra once declared.

When Not To Talk Business

One of the most irritating things for a business guy like myself is to go out to a club in the hope of taking a break from business and work, only to find when I arrive that there is yet another guy wanting to seize his moment and discuss his whole business plan over loud music.

This should be obvious, but loud music and business plans are the worst kinds of enemies. Listening to a business plan delivered by a half-drunk hustler in a club over loud music is the worst kind of torture one can endure, not only because half of what he says goes missing, but it also reveals what he thinks about his plan if he's willing to discuss it with someone who's probably not even half interested.

Hustlers should have game – you should chat, maybe, about sport or something equally light-hearted, but whatever it is it should show that you are a man with ordinary, down-to-earth interests and a normal, relatable attitude to life. That's the kind of attitude you want to be advertising in a place like a nightclub – that you have charm, an engaging personality and a lot of consideration for the people around you.

Always act like a gentleman (or close to it) even after a couple of drinks – and if you can't do that, then you need to give up drinking or it's going to get in the way of your dreams.

Bottom line, when the music that DJ is playing is pumping, talk about anything except business – the mere fact that I'm not in the boardroom, but at a club, should be sufficient proof that I am there to relax, away from business talk. If you have to seize the moment, then do so with a light, diplomatic touch. If all you do is get a number or an appointment, you'll already be on the winning path.

Use a line like this one: "I'm going to make an appointment with your office about a deal I would like you to advise me on." Even if you do not really want advice (maybe all you want is money), "advice" is, in my opinion, the most politically correct and tactful word for "I want you to do business with me".

I've used the example of the nightclub, but it applies to all sorts of other situations that are clearly not arenas where business plans and deals should be discussed. These include finding me sitting next to you on the airplane, bumping into me at the mall or standing for too long next to my table in a restaurant while I'm clearly entertaining other people. Even if you're playing golf with a business prospect (and I don't play golf), don't overwhelm the other person with complex business proposals on what should be a fun, social occasion.

The golden rule is, the more positively a person associates you with fun and a pleasant encounter, the more time he or she is going to have for you when you're finally looking at one another over a boardroom table. You should see all those chance encounters as an opportunity to break the ice a little further with a person you see yourself having a long-term business relationship with. Make sure people remember you, but for the right reasons.

Even if a CEO or an investor may not want to see you, even after you've done everything correctly and followed the right channels to make an appointment, keep in mind it is probably not a bad reflection on your deal – it might not fit into his plans or his time, so don't give up after a few, or many, nos. It won't hurt to ask for another meeting, with an even bigger smile and a joke, the next time you see that prospective investor. Remember being successful in business is a lot like being successful at getting a woman or a man you're interested in into bed: warm charm, smiles and playfulness are always going to get you further than haughtiness, sulking and an attitude of being the victim all the time. But, most of all, don't come on too strongly in the wrong situations.

Just like an air of desperation is the biggest romantic turnoff, it's possibly an even bigger turnoff for an investor. Unless you're advertising that all you want is for him to screw you and toss you away with nothing. So play it cool, even if you're burning up and can't sleep at night for thinking about your plans.

Always, just play it cool. Be like a duck on the surface of the lake who looks totally relaxed, while his feet are paddling like crazy under the surface – people gravitate to the person who can keep a cool head, or the appearance of one, while everyone else is panicking.

And, unfortunately, that is simply not the kind of message I'm getting from a guy screaming something in my ear under his boozy breath about "triple returns on investment" at 2am in the morning.

It Can Be Done

The world is full of “you-will-never-be-able-to-do-it” people. These people, who carry their cynicism as a badge of honour, will stop at nothing and no one to share their false gospel. The reasons they advance for thinking as they do are numerous.

Some claim to have tried whatever it is and have therefore realised “it” can’t be done, or they claim that if “it” could be done then someone would’ve done it already. Others quietly know that they are not capable of whatever it is, but the last thing they want to see happening is someone they know succeeding in a field where they can’t, or think they can’t. Every time somebody around them succeeds, they only feel like a bigger failure, so that drag-’em-down syndrome is a powerful motivator for them to ensure everyone around them stays on their uninspiring level. The worst thing about such people is how they criticise big achievers as “clevas”, who think they are better than everyone else. To them it’s better to be “real”, one of the “grass-roots” people who are somehow “more real” than all the “clevas” trying and pretending to be something they are not.

Give me a break.

The problem is that this lot, all the versions of them in every group and society in the world, are the most convincing bunch on the planet, because they have mass appeal. It’s easy to just be like them and give endless reasons for why something can’t be done instead of finding that one reason why it must be done. Such people have caused millions of others, who had a reasonable chance of success, to not only abandon their plans but to start thinking of themselves as similarly stupid and talentless. They can make brilliant people look at themselves as ridiculous for even dreaming of attempting ridiculously far-fetched ideas.

You want to be a Hollywood movie director? You want to find a cure for cancer? You’d like to play the oboe in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra? Don’t be

ridiculous. You're just a kid from Gugulethu. Such things were not meant for people like you.

Oh. Really? Who says?

I will share a simple a story with you of how I was nearly robbed of my life's greatest joy, and all the knowledge and good money I now have. If I had listened to one of the great naysayers in my life I would have made another of these false prophets a true one.

I had many dreams in life but the one that has been a constant has been my dream to travel and see the world. Upon my release I was told that because of my criminal record I would never be able to travel. Friends that had been released years ahead of me told me how this continued to be one of their biggest post-release hurts. Them, and almost everybody else, made it very clear that it was just impossible. I almost believed them too, the assumption was just so openly accepted and universal.

But since I never have been, am not, and never will be a member of the it-can't-be-done club, I had no intention of just taking all these people at their word. I read every available immigration document I could lay my hands on. London was my first pick to travel to and I started the arduous process of finding out what was required of me and I applied to go there. I was completely upfront and honest about my past from the beginning. I presented a whole booklet of why I wouldn't commit crimes in their country, and I compiled a list of my post-release achievements. I obtained letters from people with high standing in the community, along with letters of gratitude from organisations I had helped financially and otherwise. In retrospect, most of what I did was probably overkill – but life has never punished anyone for being overprepared. I made sure that if they did say no it would not be because I had excluded something that I would spend the rest of my life kicking myself for. They interviewed me and I dressed as though I had been shopping in Bond Street in London already. When I got my visa, it took all my self-possession not to whoop and jump for joy.

I have since travelled to most of the major countries of the world, aside from the USA, which is notorious for being the hardest to visit. Even now, I'm preparing a fresh pack of reasons for why I should be allowed to visit that country. I make no assumptions about it. Far better men than I have been refused US visas.

In my travels, I have met and made friends, agreed on deals with foreign investors, done sightseeing, shopped in the best high-street stores, visited famous museums, theme parks and clubs. I have hung out at the homes of international sports stars, entertainment-industry heavyweights and globally influential politicians. And I have visited places so beautiful that, to these weary eyes of mine that had once stared at nothing but the walls of a prison, all I can say was that those sights are indescribable. Through it all, I am grateful to say I have become wiser and more open-minded about so many things, especially the richness of different cultures around the world. I may not know much, but I know that if I had listened to the it-can't-be-done brigade I would have been infinitely poorer, not just financially, but in my very soul. I would not be the me I am today and I would never have met the array of people who made me feel at home everywhere, from Uganda to Ukraine.

You may think I just told you something about how it is good to travel. Sure, travelling is great, but that's not the lesson you should remember. I could give you another hundred examples of things the it-can't-be-done crowd told me, and which I thankfully never believed.

The lesson here is that, screw them, it can be done.

You have to make sure that you don't become one of them but also learn to avoid such vampires of the soul like the plague they are. They will be to your ambitions what a bottle of vodka is to an eighteen-year-old's ability to drive home.

They will cloud your judgement, they will rob you of your vision and laugh as you, too, crash into all the same devastating barriers that they wrote their lives off on long ago.

It didn't take me long after my release to learn this lesson, and if I hadn't learnt it fast enough, I'd be nowhere today.

When I was on the first phase of my parole, I couldn't even leave my house without written permission from the correctional services authorities. My neighbourhood was never short of guys on parole so we would visit each other. I always waited for them to visit me because I couldn't risk not being found at home if my parole officer decided to check up on me. I had this one regular visitor who stayed a few houses from me. He would talk endlessly about his life and everything that was wrong with it. According to him, his whole life was one big mess and all his prospects were bleak. I spent my first few months out of jail

listening to this guy all day, everyday, all of his moaning and bitching. Really, he could speak of absolutely nothing positive. I tolerated him simply because being on parole can be a lonely place, but all his complaining about his crappy life led to even more bad luck for him because when the authorities visited him he was not at home. He was with me, complaining. Being discovered talking to an ex-bank robber like me did not help his cause much either and so he was sent back to jail.

He went with a defeated sigh, as if he'd expected and even hoped for the worst all along.

That saved me.

From the moment that guy was gone I noticed people started to compliment me on my new outlook and sense of positivity. They started noticing a change in me. This was coming from people who were very close to me, like my parents and girlfriend. I also started feeling like a new man, like I had this load off my shoulder.

Without knowing it I had stopped applying for jobs, had stopped thinking about business plans; I had stopped a lot of things I'd always wanted to do and had been planning to do before my release, because I'd simply started believing my visitor's lies that it was all a monumental waste of time.

Energy vampires believe you are stuffed even before you try. Their power is invisible, but it will sap the life from you. Their devastating impact is huge. Their negativity rubs off on you very easily and the more you try to gee them up and make them feel better the more they will just absorb everything good you've ever thought and felt and turn it against itself and against you. After a while, you'll feel you have nothing left to say or give to them and, in spite of yourself, you'll start to share their dismal outlook on life. They don't change, but they do change others. They'll turn you from being a believer in the future into a non-believer. They never stop. They can't. They'll go on and on until you become a disciple of negativity. They're not trying to do any harm, it's just that misery will always love company and they want you to be as miserable as they are – because that's the only thing that really makes them feel any better.

They turn non-issues into big issues that need tissues. I remember how my visitor once turned the fact that an Indian guy didn't greet us into a whole lecture about how Indians passionately dislike blacks and how they are responsible for our downfall. For a while I even believed his rubbish, but my point is that these bad-

news disciples cause more damage than you could ever imagine. They won't rob you of your dream, they'll make sure you never even start dreaming of a better life in the first place.

Beware that they are everywhere, and stay far away from them. Recognise them a mile away, tolerate them only as long as politeness will allow but, if you can, don't even listen to a single word they have to say.

I'm not unsympathetic to people who have depression or other mental health problems and I'm not really writing against them. When it comes to psychology, my hero is Viktor Frankl, the psychologist who survived the Nazi death camps and invented the psychological principles of logotherapy. In a nutshell, he said that the people who make it through even the impossibly dreadful conditions that exist in death camps are the ones who find meaning in their lives.

I don't have any of the answers to the big questions of why and how it is the world exists – I don't really think anyone has those answers. We're all just guessing. All that we can do is find meaning in what we do, in how we treat other people, in how we encourage them, believe in them and in ourselves. As human beings we must keep the faith that a better future is possible.

However you define that future and your place in it, and however you plan to contribute to making it happen – let that be your meaning for living, doing what you can with the time you have right now, but working towards your dreams and goals. Because if you betray your dream, then you are betraying yourself.

Try to move with and talk to people who share your passion for meaning and purpose.

We have all heard the saying that a man is known by the company he keeps. Each of us is capable of different levels and kinds of conversation. Some conversations are idle talk – nothing that can uplift the spirit, nothing soul-searching or too deep, just idle talk about nonsense and we all engage in that from time to time. For some people this alone is their daily staple. From time to time they will speak of something more soul-searching, but mostly they return to their idle chitchat.

I always try to keep in mind that great men and women speak about great ideas and the great ideas of other men and women, which is unfailingly inspiring. Regular people speak about current affairs and their daily preoccupations, which are also important but can become over whelming and trivial. Small-minded, mean

and petty people speak constantly about other people and all the gossip that can be mined about them from everyone around them.

The company you keep will mostly decide the kind of conversations you will have. Listening to uplifting, motivational talk is what will light a fire in you. Great conversation is an ember that can spark a brilliant idea while you are listening and speaking. You walk away from such a conversation fulfilled and ready to take on whatever you may have been postponing. You feel the power of the words that have been spoken right in your bones and they will keep you walking on cloud nine.

When arriving at a pity party where negativity is the starter, the main course and the dessert, the wine will be gossip, self pity and hearing all about problems but no solutions. These sorts of conversations will make you feel like the world is on top of you and crushing you. You'll feel as if life is conspiring against you, and you will soon feel that the world is nothing but a dire place. You'll feel like death and even slitting your wrists won't seem like such a bad idea.

Personally, I have the misfortune of moving between two mentalities that are far removed from each other. Whenever I hang out with my ex-convict friends I will soon feel like death because I'll be overwhelmed with stories of how ex-cons are discriminated against, how people hate them, how they can't find jobs and all the other things that make you want to order a blade and no shaving foam to go with it. On the other hand, I spend time with my entrepreneurial friends, guys who believe they are the next Obama, Branson or Motsepe. These guys make you feel that your dreams can never be big enough.

So take it from me, try to stay away from the circles of fools, because that's what they are. In a world that is so full of stories of bravery, achievement and overcoming the impossible, you would be a fool to spend too much time with people who simply aren't sufficiently aware of that. Take that first step to get out of a circle that's more like a whirlpool than a knightly round table.

When you are in the circles that will teach and inspire you, use the opportunity to learn as much as you possibly can. The virtues of silence should be shouted from the rooftops, paradoxical as that may sound. Many of us just don't know when to be quiet. We constantly have the need to make our presence felt even when we are dwarves in the company of giants. It's a classic error.

I once found myself flying in a private jet sitting with three accomplished gentleman in the mining business: Bob Kirkby, Michael McMahon and Michael Salamon. All three have run major mining companies. They decided when the private jets of these companies should be used and when not, so before I boarded the plane I knew I was in the company of mining royalty and this was a time to shut up and take in everything I could. Such opportunities come rarely, and I was not about to squander mine. What I learnt just by listening to their conversation is what I still use up to today. A lot of what I learnt on that plane made it onto many of the pages in this book. I have made millions in my own business ventures using the wisdom I gathered during that conversation, and by observing what those men were like.

It is not only in the presence of captains of industry that you need to shut up and take in. You probably don't realise how much you can learn from your granddad or mom. You can't buy what they have to teach but you can take it in. You can learn so much just by moving in different circles that don't expect you to make a point and are happy for you to just take in what they are willing to share. In prison, I used to irritate my friends by always asking guys who had returned from the outside why it was they hadn't made it. My friends couldn't understand. They thought I was just being nosey, but what they didn't get was that I was preparing and learning. I wanted to make sure that I know about as many of the mistakes that bring people back to jail so that I could try to avoid those same mistakes.

I was also often the youngest guy sitting among the oldest prisoners in jail. Those old guys, who had been part of the gangs for years, and seen all manner of change happen, are some of the wisest people I've ever met. My friends could never understand why I'd spend so much time with the wrinkled warriors, but all the lessons picked up from everyone are tattooed on my brain. Those lessons kept me from the doors of jail, which seem to call most ex-cons back.

You don't need to belong to a university or an academic institution. In life, you mostly don't even have to pay a fee. You just need to shut up and take in when you are in the presence of greatness.

It's Your Business Too

Have you ever arrived a minute late at any store or restaurant and been told that it is closed, or the kitchen has closed? Who hasn't? The entire staff are still present, no cash up has been done, all the chefs are still there. If you're told to come back another day, I'd hazard a guess that everybody who could possibly be involved in that business is there – except, of course, the owner.

The owner would have opened that door, given a last-minute instruction for just one more meal to be prepared. The owner would have seen deeper than just that one meal. He would have seen further than just helping out one more random customer who perhaps just wants to buy dental floss. In that one customer, he sees a dollop of extra money to pay for one extra thing. He sees one more perishable item, like a lettuce or a bag of peaches, being sold that don't have to go bad and get sent off to the pig farm the next morning. Most importantly (and only business owners and truly visionary store managers understand this), he is seeing the world's best opportunity to turn a random customer into a loyal one.

By looking at the everyday nonsense that's happening in a lot of businesses it is easy to see when the owner is not present. For most people a job is just a job. They begrudge every minute they spend there. They dream only of that moment their paycheck will hit their bank account (even though all that money will be gone in a week – only for them to start dreaming about payday all over again). They spend their day not looking forward to reaching targets but to reaching home. They look at their watch instead of looking after the business. They even stupidly think that by sabotaging their business in small and petty ways they are sabotaging their boss, who they probably hate. But many a company has had to retrench or close its doors because of such backward thinking from its employees, who fail to understand that the company they work for should be an extension of themselves. Any damage to that business is an attack on them too. The best-run businesses are those where you struggle to see the difference between the staff, the management and the owner.

Hustlers who have jobs understand that working for someone is like being paid for receiving training. That job is helping them to be ready for when, some day,

they do their own thing. Hustlers are already treating their employer's business as though it is their own, because they want to transfer that same attitude to their own business some day.

Some workers really need to be shot for complaining. I don't mean they should be shot for voicing real, legitimate complaints about things that are hindering the success and growth of the business, but for complaining, for example, about how busy the shop is and how the boss always wants them to work faster. Some even say: "Why should I work as hard as person A, because I don't get his or her salary." Or: "Why should I work so hard when everyone around me is always slacking off?"

The answer is simple: You should work harder than the guy with the great salary, so that you can get his salary after he gets fired for slacking. You should be damn grateful if slackers surround you. It means you will easily be noticed. It might take a long time, but you will be noticed. There is such a thing as justice, and believing in it helps to make it real.

If you are someone for whom no task is too big or too small – believe me, that's the quickest way to be noticed by the people who matter and to earn their trust. In any company you're in, you should try to treat it as if you are its owner. Real entrepreneurs do everything. They fuss over their business' every need as if it's a screaming baby. Because it is – it's their baby. If you treat someone's business as if it's your baby too, you are likely to earn the owner's undying gratitude and respect.

When we started constructing ZAR Cafe in Kimberley I took five of my former ZAR Joburg staff members to live and work there. If they didn't relocate, they would have been out of work, since we'd shut the Joburg club down earlier. All five were trained in club security and knew nothing about the construction industry. But there wasn't a club to guard yet, but there was a lot of construction still to do.

They were told to report to the guys at the construction site.

It was not what they were used to. It was hard, backbreaking work, for long hours every day. I saw how they would relish their breaks, how they demanded their lunch hour even though their foreman, the old man Dougie, was a workaholic who ate a sandwich with one hand and worked with the other. He saw things like lunch hours and tea breaks as little more than a lazy habit. I didn't agree with him (and

obviously neither does labour law) but I respected his experience and what he did and meant for my business.

Everyone I had brought from Joburg complained about being driven like slaves, except one young man, Vusi, who kept up with old man Dougie. He would give up his breaks to stay on site and ask Dougie questions while they worked. He hung onto Dougie's every word, and he would imitate his every action. Everybody saw Vusi as the greatest suck-up, but Vusi he didn't care. Full lunch breaks also became an irritant for him.

One day Dougie called in sick and Vusi said there was nothing Dougie was doing that he could not now do. No one really believed him, but he stepped up to the plate and finished two of the last six frames that Dougie had still been building. He worked those frames like a pro. I was so amazed and asked Vusi how on earth he could do that. His reply will stay with me forever. He said: "Boss, I was stealing with my eyes and ears, while the rest of the guys were mixing cement."

Just having a job, any job, in today's economy is a huge blessing. Having a job that keeps you so busy with a multitude of customers is an even bigger blessing. It means that in times like these where other businesses have closed because there wasn't enough business coming through the door, you are in safer waters, with the wind in your sails.

And what keeps a business open is the bottom line: it's about the amount of money coming through those doors. Money does not know what time it's supposed to be traded. It doesn't know that it can't be accepted when the electricity is down or the cash register has packed up. It doesn't care if half the staff phoned in ill and it's only you in the shop today.

In our frozen food business we worked crazy hours. When the delivery truck arrived, we packed fish in temperatures of minus twenty at four in the morning if we had to. If customers arrived at 10pm to load from the warehouse, I would go to open up the warehouse doors myself if I had to. But there were many staff members, many of them ex-prisoners, who did all of that much more often than I did. They would travel with stock in freezer vans at all hours, taking turns to sleep. They wanted to see our business succeeding just as much as I did, maybe more than I did. Having a job gave them dignity and hope.

So just be happy when you see money coming through that door or if you have an opportunity to learn valuable new skills while being on the job. There's no

shortage of struggling businesses out there. Work your skin to the bone if you have to. Work like you own that business. You might not be rewarded by your boss for all of that after everything you have put in, but you'll be damn good at what you do by the end of it. Which will make you a killer competitor for that ex-boss of yours when the time comes for you to do your own thing, or when you get hired by the rival across the road. Your boss will rue the day you ever left. Never Give Up

It was Bill Copeland who said the trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score. Truer words are hard to find.

I have seen very intelligent, well-connected, very driven people amounting to nothing. I've seen their lives standing still, even though they're as busy as a beaver in a flood, but they never seem to produce any results worth mentioning. They don't stay long enough with a venture to see it through its infancy to its adulthood. They drop it in its troubled teenage years. They are always part of the next birthing but never there on payday. Much of this has to do with patience and bravery. When Kenny and I took on the arduous task of getting Central Rand Gold its mining licence, it was a challenge with many facets and compartments. We approached it with a big team and many friends. Part of the plan was to hand out flyers notifying the communities of possible meetings, another was going door to door to explain the possible mining venture and win support for it. Some of the guys on the team saw it as beneath them to be handing out flyers on corners, some just got tired of arguing with the many different interest groups and cranky individuals who were against the mine.

It wasn't easy work. It was donkeywork. But we had to get it right. My eye was not on the insults from people against the mine, my mind was not on the looks we would get handing out flyers or the scorching sun we had to stand in all day. My mind was only on the bonuses and recognition we would receive once we were successful.

Kenny and I knew this was the assignment of our life. We read up on every bit of legislation regarding the procedures, rules and requirements. We were absolutely focused. We lived, breathed, and slept that mining right. And we were convinced

that we could do it despite coming into the industry with little experience, few contacts and friends and not much time in which to achieve our goal.

We had meeting after meeting with all the different stakeholders. We met with community leaders, councillors, private citizens, teachers, principals, environmental groups and government regulators. The list seemed endless. We met with everybody that legislation requires you must meet and we painstakingly recorded most of these encounters for our final submission.

Most people were unwilling to assist us. Some were rude to the point of me actually considering hitting them with a brick. But this wasn't about my pride and ego, this was about a mine worth a billion rand. I had to keep reminding myself I was Gayton McKenzie, an executive of a company listed on two stock exchanges, not Kanzas the gangster from Heidedal. So I kept my cool and my professionalism in the face of some of the rudest people and the worst insults.

I understood that mining companies had taken people for a ride in the past with big promises and little in return for the communities around them. I was absolutely convinced things would be different with Central Rand Gold and it was frustrating to try to bring people around to seeing things through my eyes.

But to most of the people Kenny and I met we were just another two guys with big promises.

We did door-to-door campaigns in difficult communities where we realised it might not be wise to see everybody at one time. Experience had already shown that some communities can become very agitated at such public meetings and things can quickly spiral out of control. We thought we'd first educate people about what our company was about before we called them to a mass gathering.

I now think that I can truly sympathise with how someone like a Jehovah's Witness must feel after getting a door slammed in his face for the umpteenth time.

It was, indeed, a tiresome process. I have never been sworn at so much in my life, not even by brutal warders in jail.

The people we met who did agree to hear us out and then even gave us their support often also took the opportunity to tell us about their personal problems. With them it mostly ended with yet another request for money. They almost always said they needed airtime to canvass more support for us and our mine

(which must have sounded like a neat line to the person saying it, but we were hearing it over and over). We did deal with community members who wanted to see their community being uplifted, but the brigade of people only looking out for their own interests were legion.

After a year of doing everything near perfectly we realised it could all still come to naught. Opinions in communities were about as divided as ever – the communities who were excited about the mine's possible operations in the heart of southern Johannesburg were now even more excited than ever (in fact they were growing increasingly impatient that the mining right still hadn't been awarded) and some of the other communities who'd been opposed to the idea from the start were now becoming even more organised and hardened in their opposition. And there were groups on both sides using their own little power plays to muddy the waters.

We had done our research and we knew that hundreds of other mining companies, just like ours, had done all the right things, played by all the rules, and just ended up chasing their own tails. They were eventually just gobbled up by the big boys with all the political connections and influence who make things happen behind the scenes and then only create a front of playing by the rules.

Instead of just accepting we were out of our league, we realised we needed to step up our approach. We needed some political muscle. We didn't have much, but we worked with what he had. We had gone to the funeral of a respected old ANC comrade who had died a pauper. This was the case for most of the old Umkhonto we Sizwe military veterans. There were many others from their ranks in attendance, and this was in the period in which Jacob Zuma was rising to prominence as the likely future president of the country. Unlike his predecessors, he was very close to the veterans and this veterans' group had been waiting for a very long time to be taken more seriously in the corridors of power.

At the funeral of this old comrade we could see many ANC dignitaries in attendance. We realised they were showing a lot of respect for the old veterans.

So we approached the few people we knew pretty well in veteran circles and asked for their help to win a sympathetic ear in government to our pleas for a mining right. In return, we offered to assist their organisation. Unlike others we had gone to for advice and help, the comrades did actually do a lot to assist us. We worked as a team. Things started going much faster and we could finally start planning for success.

We accepted that our ability to move in government circles and be taken seriously was basically non-existent. But the old rule that you always know somebody who is one, two or three social connections away from anyone else on earth is still completely true. You can start with you who know, and work your way up to not just someone you need to know, but who needs to know you.

We didn't just sit there feeling sorry for ourselves, complaining about a community that was never going to be what we wanted them to be. In the end, it's not them who decide what is best for the future of society, the economy and the future of the country. We believed that our mine and all the investment it was bound to bring into the country was a good thing for the city and the country. We trusted that government officials, elected by the people to make the tough decisions about what is best for the greater good, would see the same potential in our mine that we did.

Our military veteran contacts helped to put the case coherently and convincingly and we were eventually granted our mining licence. We were ecstatic. We believed everybody had won that day. Kenny and I got our bonus. The investors would see returns on the gold we could finally mine. The government would earn masses in tax from the mine. People from the surrounding communities were given jobs and business deals from the mine. And the military veterans won a sponsorship from Central Rand Gold to fund their comrades' international reburial programme.

In the long run, the success of the mine was impaired by the global financial crisis that hit just as we were looking for more funding from international markets. Since those early experiences of learning about mining I've learnt much more about the industry and its problems. I could write a book about that on its own. But that's not what this book is about. The point here is that what we had done in securing Central Rand Gold its mining right was something most people told us simply couldn't be done in the time allowed.

It established our reputation and allowed us to go on to work with even bigger companies, like Gold Fields, where we needed much more help, a much bigger team and many more contacts in the mining industry to be equally successful. The other lesson is you should never be too scared or too proud to call in help when you realise you are losing the fight or you don't have capacity to reach your goals on your own. Find someone who can assist you to do what you are finding impossible – but make sure you're knocking on the right door, you don't want to waste your time or theirs.

Advice about not giving up is something you hear every day, but it's something you should hear every minute. Judging by the many people who give up at the first hurdle, the message hasn't hit home yet. Ironically, so many of us give up just centimetres from the finish line.

Don't let that be your story.

Affairs at the Office

If you are going to have an affair at work then for god's sake don't let it be with the janitor or the tea lady. Remember no office affair remains a secret forever (and mostly not even for very long). So if it's going to come out then it should at least not be something you'll end up regretting on every level imaginable. You don't want people laughing at you for your desperate attitude to jumping into bed with anything that breathes.

Also avoid sleeping with anyone at work just for the sake of sex, because, first of all, that simply isn't possible anyway – it will complicate your working relationship immensely. Please don't even mention love because if you are in love then you will soon be completely consumed by the passion of that relationship. Guys willingly sacrifice careers, friendships and reputations for love – but that sort of romantic whirlwind passion never lasts, and it certainly won't last long if both of you get fired and face long-term unemployment.

Both men and women can learn from what happened with Monica Lewinsky. As a White House intern, that scandal sucked the life out of all the opportunities that could have followed in her career. In fact, she sucked the life out of everything except Bill who, even today, is at the top and as popular as he's ever been. Do not think your affair won't pan out this way too. Life isn't fair and love is even more unfair.

Every risk in life brings with it possibly major benefits, but the punishments and pitfalls are even more numerous. Whenever you take any risk, always ask yourself what the benefit might be for the risk you're taking. No matter who you are: a young female secretary, a middle-management administrator or the CEO of the firm, every affair brings with it risks. You might tell yourself you are unmarried and single, so having an affair with your married boss means you've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. But that's naive. He is unlikely to ever leave his wife for you and you are unlikely to ever find a husband. That may sound fine for a while, but how long – how many years – do you think you can keep that up before wanting more? How long do you think that kind of thing can stay satisfying before you start resenting being someone's dirty little secret? If he leaves you, out of fear

of the risks involved for him, too, don't think you won't have a broken heart. You are going to fall in love somewhere along the way. It starts out as simple lust, but after a few weeks of that you'll realise you're just another office cliché.

If you're found out, his wife can easily seek to make an example of you. You could lose your job and your tarnished reputation will follow you wherever you go. Even years later, after you've started a new job, a new life and perhaps gotten married yourself, that history can pop up at the worst possible time.

All the same, I'm not preaching. Everyone knows affairs are dangerous and pretty foolish – they're also common. You can, of course, survive affairs, and even benefit from them too.

We all know an affair with the boss can sometimes be the fastest way to get a promotion. You can move up the ranks faster than Richard Mdluli did, but your position at the top will be precarious. People who've worked their way painfully up the corporate ladder often view having a mistress or two as their right for their power and wealth. That's what they're getting out of it. If you are that mistress, there will certainly be rewards along the way.

The top of all corporate floors are full of people who didn't take the stairs but used the lift and, as to what happened in that lift you have to be eighteen to know. Just remember, there is no lift in the tearoom or the janitor's office.

Sex in the workplace is as unavoidable as gossip. It mostly happens between a senior guy and a pretty, younger girl who is not so high up in the corporate ladder. It is rarely love. He's after sex and she's after power.

Staff will start to resent her, but she won't give a damn about that. They'll also start to fear her, which is what she wants. Everyone is forced to start walking on eggshells around her and treating her with the utmost courtesy, because they know she can twist the boss' arm on just about anything she wants.

But office affairs have ruined many a powerful man. My Greek friend once told me that there is a Greek saying that one strand of a woman's hair can pull a building down. Corporations have indeed come crashing down because of office affairs. As I was busy writing this very thing, the head of the CIA had to resign because he was found out for having an affair with his biographer. In my opinion, he was more powerful than the American president himself, but all his achievements were brought down by one affair.

The most dangerous thing about any affair is how to stop it. As time goes by, power moves from you to her. She ends up not only knowing your every thought but all your secrets too. That is great power for a junior worker to have, and nothing will unleash her wrath faster than if you leave her or replace her with a younger version.

Getting involved romantically with anyone you work with is a difficult prospect even if you're not having a full-blown affair. The joy of being able to go home to a partner after a long and difficult day at work is that you can unload to that person, complain about all the ingrates you work with and just share how tough your day has been. It's hard to do that if you work together. Your work will always follow you home and work problems will become domestic problems. Domestic squabbles and issues will follow you to work. If you have a fight about the children that morning, then you'll avoid each other at work all day or involve colleagues in your marital spat – all of this will just get in the way of getting the job done.

And if two people split up after falling in love at work, it will be very hard for them to continue working together after that.

There are many successful husband-and-wife businesses, but know they are the exception. Such people are exceptionally committed to one another and to making their business work. They share a dream that binds them as strongly as their love for each other. If you can find that, then you will be lucky – but it's certainly not an everyday thing.

It's understandable that people meet and fall in love at work. It's happened millions of times before and will continue to happen. It's merely because you're always in the presence of that person and it's easy for one thing to lead to another. Even if you want to have an affair, there are always other people out there (there are even websites for discreet affairs). Whatever you're doing, try to keep your work life and private life separate.

Hustlers, remember sticking your pen into company ink may seem unavoidable to you when you're caught up in the moment, but in truth, you will rarely profit from the arrangement. Don't let seduction destroy everything you have built.

Discipline

Don't be one of those pretend hustlers who think you can have it all. If you don't prioritise like you should, then sooner or later something's got to give.

You can't party all the time and score straight As. Sure, a very gifted, selected few, can, but most of us have to study hard to get just a C. Discipline kicks in when you have to ignore peer pressure and know it's not your time to shine just yet, but your day will surely come. Discipline shows in wearing cheap clothes while everyone around you is making noise about their designer labels.

Those designer labels don't write exams, but you do. Discipline is knowing that university is preparing you for the good life and university is not supposed to be the good life. Of course, many students do get distracted by all the parties, the sex, the drugs and the freedom of campus life, but even if you do manage to get your degree while having fun, there's no guarantee that having a degree will get you a job. Especially if you're studying one of the more popular, "easier" subjects, it's only the top students who will go on to have fulfilling, successful industries I involve myself with – and that didn't just happen for me because I wished for it. I had to read boring book and boring manual, boring research paper after boring government circular, time after time. I had to spend many an evening working late and I can't tell you how many times I've had to get up at two in the morning just so that I could be at some school or business in another province to give a motivational talk by 8am.

The fact is that just because you're at university doesn't mean you're learning anything, and just because you aren't at university certainly doesn't mean you're not learning anything. Wherever you find yourself, if you practice the philosophy of self-denial and application to your task, you will grow and become a success, as surely as flowers follow rain in Namaqualand.

Know that there is a difference between the good life and the fun life. The fun life is temporary, but the good life is forever – or at least for as long as you are alive. Make those enormous sacrifices for what you want to achieve. I always think of another friend of mine who is the biggest Manchester United supporter I know. He had been pestering a successful businessman to have a meeting with him for

weeks, and the man, as luck would have it, agreed to meet him on the same day we were all supposed to go to Durban to watch the Manchester United preseason warm-up match. But my friend stayed behind and attended the meeting. He did himself a huge favour – he convinced the gentleman to sell him a small stake in his business, which today has grown to being much bigger and very profitable for him.

My friend understood that temporary sacrifices are worth it for the end result, even if what you're turning down is very clear and right in front of you, waiting to be taken, and what you are hoping for may just be a vague promise, far in the distance. If you feel the fire of your dream burning strongly enough inside you, you will be able to taste the good water at the end of the desert you're going through and say no to the poisoned well you've just found, which is tempting you so strongly to stop and try it.

Today my friend can go anywhere in the world to watch his favourite team. If achieving your goal was easy then everybody would be whatever they want to be today.

I can use a million other examples but I will use one about a young woman we all know, Katy Perry. Her story contains many lessons worth remembering. For the few of you may not know who she is, she's the girl who got everyone talking with her first hit song: "I Kissed a Girl and I Liked It".

Born to conservative and very religious pastor parents, she hadn't even been allowed to listen to any pop music while growing up. She grew up listening to gospel music and singing in church. She recorded a Christian music album when she was fifteen and a few years later she released another gospel album, but it went nowhere because the record label closed down. Aged just seventeen, Katy went to Los Angeles, like so many millions of others, to realise her dream of being a recording artist. She was luckier than most because she got signed to a record label, but it took years for them to put an album together for her and when it was meant to be released – when she was twenty – the project went nowhere and her record label dropped her.

Her tenacity got her signed to another record label – but they had plans to make her just a supporting act, so she started recording her own album on her own. When she was almost finished with it, that record label also dumped her.

This is the point at which my admiration blossoms for her – any reasonable person would be forgiven for thinking that maybe they aren't cut to be a successful artist, because surely two record labels dropping you in the space of one year can't be wrong.

The last of Katy's bit of money dried up. Her car was repossessed. Nothing says go back home with your tail between your legs like having no money and no job, all on your own in the big city. But she found a job working at a talent-scouting company and didn't give up on the idea that someone would realise what an undiscovered talent she was too. Going home was just not an option for her. Her younger brother had a standard greeting whenever he spoke to her, which was: "Are you a star already?" He knew his sister, and he knew it was just a matter of time.

So Katy started writing songs for other people, never letting go of her own singing.

The rest, as they say, is history. She found a label that believed in her and made her first album a hit, and her second album was the first in history by a female recording artist to produce five number one hit singles. Today she is one of the most recognisable stars in the world.

The biggest lesson for me with the Katy story is that she didn't allow setbacks to influence her self-esteem.

She believed that she was good and no number of closed doors could ever change that. She knew what she wanted to achieve and she was not willing to go home before doing that. She had that attitude of "do it, or die trying".

She didn't have an "everybody-hates-me mentality" but an "I'm-gonna-show-them-who-I-am" one. She believed in her talent. She sacrificed many things in her pursuit of showing the world her talent, but show us she did.

Rejection is unavoidable. It happens with everybody. Don't see rejection as the end of the road. You will lose out to those who see it for what it is: a pothole in the road. I once heard someone saying that most people are just so negative that they have to say no seven times before they can work up the energy to give a single yes.

Some of the best business plans have been rejected. Those plans are left to gather dust and their owners amount to nothing because they believed the “no”. Others turn those business plans into gigantic businesses housed in skyscrapers around the world – because they didn’t believe the first no or the hundredth no they heard. It happens in every sphere of life. Very deserving people get rejected. So many big soccer stars have been sold cheaply by one club only to reach dizzy heights at the next.

So many bestselling or prize-winning writers spend years writing books to be told by publisher after publisher that their work is just not good enough. Most start believing that because someone said their one book is no good, they as a writer are no good. They stop writing altogether, but most of the best writers of our time were rejected not once, twice or thrice but even hundreds of times. They don’t give up, though. They just keep at it until something gives.

Twilight was rejected fourteen times before publication. Many very educated people will be very quick to point out that Stephenie Meyer’s books are not written well (so they tell me), along with endless other criticisms, but the fact remains that she has sold millions of books. That would never have happened if she did not have the type of belief and resolve needed to still believe after fourteen separate professionals told her it was not worth publishing. The author understood the meaning of perseverance. She saw “no” only as a pothole in the road. It is a rare road that only has one pothole. When you embark on a journey nobody will be able to tell you exactly how many potholes you will hit, or how many speed bumps may come your way. Potholes should not mean the end of your trip. Your mind’s eye should be on the real end of the road and getting through all those potholes. When you hit a pothole that’s so bad it damages your vehicle so badly it’s unable to even move any more, is when I think of one of the wisest of Sotho sayings: “Go checha ya mona hase go balea Mara go koko moyo”. Translated it means that if you retreat at times it doesn’t mean cowardice, only that you are getting your breath back.

We sometimes must retreat, perhaps to work on our document more or to better plan our presentation. We should know full well that we will be back on the road. Maybe you’re thinking that Twilight was just the exception to the rule – but no. The world’s most successful writer, JK Rowling, had Harry Potter rejected six times before she found a publisher. They weren’t just successful books, but the movies based on their stories have made billions and billions of dollars.

It's hard to find a better example of how anything is possible than Oprah. She's a woman. She's always had weight problems. She's black. She's been raped. She underwent a teenage abortion.

For most people any one of those reasons would have been enough of a reason for why they could not achieve anything. You may rightly be wondering what being overweight has got to do with anything – but overweight people can put themselves in a box, or play roles where their weight is turned into a joke. So many overweight people play that self-deprecating humorous role. Few will appear on our screens daily to tackle serious issues and be taken equally seriously. The other reasons, however legitimate they may be, Oprah has shown were never enough to hold her back. Anything significant Oprah may have achieved in life would have been remarkable with a past like hers but Oprah set her mind to become super-remarkable. Her life changed when Reverend Jesse Jackson gave a talk at her school, and after that talk she knew the world could be her oyster, as it could be the oyster of anyone who put their mind to it. She went on to become indisputably the greatest talk show host in the world. She has put many people through colleges around the world. She has embarked on the greatest of ventures in her lifelong quest to give back. One of those projects was her girls' school in Johannesburg.

Just as her school was starting out it faced challenges and lawsuits. But not too long ago, in 2012, the first class of exceptional girls matriculated. I have no doubt many of those girls will go on to achieve great things and build this country.

Oprah is today the richest woman alive, but her many ways of giving back will be her greatest legacy. I hope I have explained why Oprah is a hero who can't be matched in my eyes. To me, the surest sign of either madness or the profoundest ignorance is when I hear someone saying that he or she dislikes Oprah. It also proves that it doesn't matter who you are, how good you may be, how much you may have achieved and how exemplary your intentions may be, there will always be a horde of people who don't like you. That's why being perturbed by the haters is such a waste of time – if there are people who don't like Oprah, how the hell is everyone going to like you?

But the main reason I wanted to write about Oprah is to show you that it is not our beginnings that matter but our endings – not only in our lives but also in our ventures. Oprah also had a rocky start with her school here in South Africa, but because she possesses a spirit of conquering, that school stayed standing and it is making a difference today. Whatever difficulty has happened to you personally, even if you have been made fun of, molested or even raped, it's possible to not

only overcome that but also soar. Maybe, in a way, your business has been raped, but just like Oprah's school your business can overcome it and deliver spectacular results.

We are born to win. Not at the same things, sure enough – but everyone is born to win at something.

Celebrate In the Rain

Our first big victory in mining came when we got Central Rand Gold its mining right. Words cannot state the absolute state of euphoria everybody associated with the company was in when they received that news. Kenny and I achieved near god status right then, as we were credited with doing a lot of the work to make it happen.

Kenny was his usual flamboyant self and enjoyed every moment of it. I, on the other hand, just wanted to get on with the next step. I also wasn't entirely comfortable with all the congratulations and thank yous that kept being lavished on us as Kenny and I had been part of a much bigger, hard-working team and it was all so unexpected.

Kenny was happy to lap it up and enjoy it, but I was more concerned about all the work that still lay ahead for us in the company.

The company's board then invited us to join them in Dubai for a personal thank you from all of them.

They had decided to gather there for the board meeting because the company was very multi national, with investors and board members from as far afield as Australia, the UK and Canada.

I told my CEO, Greg James, that although I appreciated the gesture I wanted to finish some essential stuff and would thus have to disappoint the board (and myself on this one).

But he looked me in the eye and asked me a question I really don't think I understood until much later. He asked me how much longer I thought this state of affairs – with everyone admiring Kenny and me – would last. How long would it be before the board stopped thinking we were the best thing since sliced cheese? In typical Greg fashion, he left me to answer that for myself. I was too taken aback by his question to tell him I actually had been thinking the admiration would never end. I soon realised how utterly naive I was being and told Kenny we should go to Dubai and he told me he had never had any intention of not going. His bags were long packed already.

We flew first class for the first time in our lives. Kenny must have come close to setting a world record as the long-haul passenger who tasted everything and used every possible service possible in first class. I don't think cabin attendants have ever been summoned and sent around as much just to serve one guy. What Kenny didn't order or request simply wasn't on the plane to start with. I felt a bit embarrassed by his shameless display and leant over to tell him he was acting as if we were never going to fly first class again.

He said: "Well, you never know."

In Dubai, the board lavished praise on us. We indeed felt like gods. Nick Farr-Jones (the Australian rugby captain who had won the World Cup in 1999) was near tears when he expressed his gratitude. He even took us to a bar for a personal drink.

If you fast-forward this movie by two years those very same people would have told you they couldn't get rid of us fast enough.

Nick Farr-Jones once again invited me to a bar, at the Sandton Sun this time, except now all he could say was that Kenny and I were by far the worst individuals the company had ever hired. He and I nearly ended up trading blows.

The story behind why there was this change in our standing is something for another book. But I remembered Greg's words. He had been so right. Never postpone enjoying your moment of glory. Never think it will last forever. And don't always rush on to the next big thing without enjoying the conclusion of the last big thing.

Such moments are fleeting and hard to come by. Relish them when they come.

My experience made me think of a story I had once heard in Namibia. They say that when it's dry people will spend months cursing the person they once believed was the rainmaker. But when the rain does come again, the rainmaker knows it is his moment to dance and celebrate – in the rain. Because the moment that rain stops, everybody will again forget who was given the credit for bringing the rain. And the cursing will start all over again.

Celebs Who Get Hustled

Kenny and I like to spend our Mondays discussing what we will be doing in the week ahead. We also like to discuss how successful the week that just passed was.

At one stage, we realised our days in the mining industry were numbered. After a lot of debate and argument we came to the conclusion that one of the rare industries where former (and even present) gangsters can survive and thrive is the entertainment industry. In fact, it sometimes seems that the worse your past, the greater the respect you can be afforded in some parts of the industry.

We decided it was the way to go. Kenny already had several celebrity friends – he’s always been a bit of a socialite, even when he was flat broke – but we soon befriended loads more. We studied them closely and what we soon discovered about the average South African “celeb” was revealing. These guys wear and drink brands that give them nothing. They do all this great advertising for all the big brands, but they are worse than slaves, because at least a slave doesn’t do it willingly, with a smile on his face. These local celebs are either bankrupting themselves in an effort to keep up appearances or are wearing fake stuff – which could come back to haunt them in the media and make an even bigger joke out of them.

Our celebs, like people in the public eye the world over, influence the fortunes of big companies by associating their name with that company. Their fans flock like lemmings to stores to look like their idols – but in South Africa, few of our pacesetters have much to show for this. The biggest trap most of our celebs fall into is the expensive clothing they are given to wear for free to award functions or other big events. Shop owners and designers clothe them, but then have the audacity to ask that the clothes be returned the next day. The shop owner will send it off to be dry-cleaned and will then inform everyone who walks through the door that “this or that celebrity was dressed by us. Here’s the photo in the magazine.” For fashion-conscious buyers, this makes them realise they must be in the right shop. While the shop owner sells clothing item after clothing item the celeb struggles to make ends meet. The relationship lasts as long as the celeb is famous, and then the fashion labels move on to the next person.

Car manufacturers give them cars to drive (often crappy ones) but don't pay them to do that or let them keep the cars. Even the celebs who are given sports cars and smile for the cameras with "their" new Audi R8, have to return the car after a week or a month – after being kept to very stringent conditions. Many celebs would honestly not even consider buying the sponsored car they're driving if given the choice. It doesn't end there. These car owners then expect their branding to be written all over the car as boldly as possible so that the whole world can see that so-and-so is being given this ride by this or that dealership. If the celeb is in a VW Polo that can be very embarrassing. Give me a Rolls Royce Phantom and you can write whatever you want to write while I'm riding that beast. Give me a Polo and you should just be happy if I take it to the shops to buy dog food once a week.

My problem is not really the cars themselves but the fact that these celebrities have paid their dues. They are just so overeager to please and are grateful to be given any old scraps for free. Any celeb is a sucker for a free anything, and savvy marketers and promoters know that only too well. For a small investment in a person in the public spotlight, they can enjoy hefty returns. This was part of my hustle at Chubb. I wasn't even nearly as famous or admired as many of the celebs who fill column inches in newspapers, magazines and websites every week, who are plastered all over our TV screens all the time. And yet, I got my hustle on and would wear my Chubb T-shirt for every media interview I gave – I'd mention Chubb as much as was subtle and as in good taste as possible, and because of the millions of rands' worth of exposure the company got, I was paid for that handsomely. It created the financial springboard I needed to launch the the next phase of my life.

I've applied the same thinking to everything I do. I value my time, my effort and my personal brand. Because I place such a premium on it, the people who want to use it as leverage for their own brands have to come to the party or get kicked out. I refuse to be exploited.

Kenny is the same. Everyone knows him now. He's notorious just for being Kenny. He won't just appear somewhere for a brand or on an event's behalf without being paid for it, and paid well by South African standards. Kenny won't just be driven there in just any sort of car. He wears clothes that pay him for the privilege to dress him for the occasion. It's not that he or I think we're better than anyone. It's just that you teach people how to treat you and our celebs could do a lot better in their hustle than I'm currently seeing.

Battles Not Worth Fighting

Striking is a national pastime in South Africa. Every year we see workers go on strike for reasons that are sometimes good, sometimes bad and mostly just routine. What is commendable about most of the strikes is that there are always people who join the strike not because the outcome, one way or the other, affects them, but because they want to show solidarity with their colleagues. While I admit this is commendable, I'm not about to say it's wise.

Before you go off trying to change the world, you need to be really sure you don't have more to lose than sticking up for the "good cause" is worth. If it really is the right thing to do, then picket, wear the T-shirt and toyi-toyi like it's 1985 – but if you have your doubts then you need to have the courage of your misgivings and insist on doing what's best for you, regardless of the pressure you may feel to conform from colleagues, friends and people whose issues you may be sympathetic towards.

Most hustlers see their current job as a temporary measure. It pays the bills while allowing them to prepare for their real future. This basically means that participating in a strike must be the last option – a hustler's focus is centred on the future, away from the current employer.

When I was working at Chubb I started out, as I've explained, with a very low salary that quickly got adjusted beyond my wildest expectations. As with most of us, I also adjusted my spending and my family's lifestyle accordingly. It was raining money on our previously drought-stricken land. My son was enrolled in a better school. We all got medical aid. We took our first holiday abroad.

One morning, at the gate of our workplace, a colleague and I were stopped and we were asked to join a strike. My colleague didn't hesitate when he saw that one of the demands was for the removal of racism in the workplace and better salaries for all.

I, however, had to assess my own situation and my family's. I had a pretty unique job in the company. I was doing well, and if the bosses saw me prancing around with a placard at the gates of head office they would have thought I'd lost my mind. There were perhaps things in the company that needed to be improved and

the strikers certainly had a few valid grievances, but the truth of the matter is that their fight was not my fight. The workers would have liked nothing more than to co-opt me onto their team, but their only motivation for that would have been the misguided idea that I could somehow add pressure on management, using what little influence I had. I probably could have done that. Management had some respect for me by then and they would have given me their ear. But a hustler should accept that he can't change everything that's wrong with the world overnight.

You should pick your battles carefully and not get distracted by causes that are probably far worthier than your own – but the thing is, they're still not your cause. There are probably a thousand things you could be doing with your life that are worthier than the thing you really want to do. It still doesn't really matter. Focus on the thing that you want to achieve, the thing that matters to you. I looked at all those strikers and knew that, unlike me, they didn't have criminal records. Finding a new job for them would certainly be easier than it would be for me. If I stuck my neck out for them and it backfired on me (and it certainly might have) none of those guys would have been able to do much more than give me a conciliatory pat on the back and wish me luck. Pats on the back would not put my kids through school. They would not have assured my parents of a happy retirement. Pats on the back do not buy much.

Tempting as it was to want to feel part of something, I knew I could never entertain showing solidarity towards that dissatisfied group at Chubb. It would not only mess up my hustle, but potentially ruin the life I'd built with my family. So I was a blackguard. I went to work as if it was just any other day. While most of my colleagues saw what I was doing as very cowardly, I saw it as one of my bravest decisions. We should want to be heroes to those under our care, not champions to people who will forget us within a week, even though we joined their strike.

A hustler places his hustle above everything, including his own emotions or how the people around him may perceive him. As I've said before, being successful is not a popularity contest. Let them hate you, if that's what they have to do. You're just doing what you have to.

Don't involve yourself in fights that aren't even yours, or which don't really factor into your goals.

Wars and fights sometimes never have an expiry date on them, so your energy and resources will be used and depleted by a never-ending war, and that's the last

thing you need if you're not even sure what the point of your war is other than that you no longer want to lose. Once again, that is your ego, and if you're in a fight because your ego can't walk away from it then recognise what's going on and back down. You're not retreating from the fight, per se, but from your own arrogance. Sometimes you should be willing to lose the battles that don't matter that much, especially if only your pride is at stake. If it means being the one to apologise first and ask for a truce, then be the person who does that, especially if not doing that means you stand to lose even more in the long run.

A hustler cares about his bottom line and his survival, not about his pride.

Running a business from day to day is a lot like having to wage war. So fight the fights that have a purpose, when winning brings with it lasting benefits. Fight the fights that will allow you to leave your mark as a person not to be messed with – never fight because of emotion and hurt feelings. Fight the necessary fights and stay away from the ones that could leave you bankrupt or in prison for doing something stupidly violent.

Never take on a fight that's going to leave you wondering, in shame: was that really necessary? And if you're going to pick a fight, then do it either because you believe strongly enough in the cause and you're pretty sure you're going to win it or because, even if you don't win, people will admire the stand you took and it will grow your reputation in the long-term.

Ignoring, walking away from or postponing a fight does not simply make you a coward, although the difference between a strategist and a coward can often be a fine line – deep in your heart you will always know where that line is. Listen to your heart, but decide what to do using only your brain – and ignore what the people may think of you, either way.

Put Your Cards on the Table

Kenny, a friend and I started a new business together. On the face of it, the three of us were sure we would start making money within a few months – but it turned out to be far harder to put everything together and be successful. We really struggled in the beginning, mostly having to dig into our own pockets to keep the business going. This went on for two years. The company finally started making big money and then all of a sudden our friend started telling us about expenses he had personally built up over the two years, and which he was still incurring. He said, for example, he'd been making sure the surrounding communities were being kept happy and that cost money. We really had no way of proving if he was lying or telling the truth. His expenses were not the sorts of things you get given a slip for.

I only had one question for him, though. Why was it that we were only coming to hear of all this now? To this I got a very vague answer, which was enough for us to decide to just immediately sell our stake in the company and move on. Sometime later, a group of our mentees had a party they were planning in another province. One of them said that there was no need to book a hotel as his relatives had a big house there, while another said that he would use his own car to drive everyone to the province. Another mentee offered his bakkie to ferry stuff up and down. They were all excited and in good spirits.

The party was a huge success. Afterwards there was lots of money available to share among everyone involved. The first guy then said that his relatives wanted a payment for giving everyone accommodation. This triggered the others to also demand payments for their respective contributions. Some even started to demand refunds for their cellphone airtime, others offered reminders that they had paid for lunch, another said he had paid for breakfast. In no time at all, the discussion had become a circus. All the brotherhood, camaraderie and trust they'd shown at the start was lost, along with the euphoria and pride they should have been feeling at putting such a brilliant function together. Everyone was now well on their way to becoming sworn enemies.

Why? It's because everyone did not put all their cards on the table right from the start. The excitement of being involved in a new venture made them forget about

this all-important detail. The lesson to be learned is: try not to involve yourself in something if you don't know what is expected of you, how things will be paid for, and how revenues will be split afterwards.

If one of your business partners offers to assist with a certain service, it should be clear (and even signed on) if the service will be for free or paid-for.

Assumptions will just make fools and enemies of everyone. Seeking clarity in all your relationships, but especially business ones, is something you should prioritise at all times. People may think you're being a stickler or an irritation for wanting to clarify the "rules of the game" before the game is played, but doing it in any other way always just leads to unhappiness. You will see things one way, your partner will be completely different – but by the time the deal has been done, it's too late to iron out what the expectations were at the start.

The only time you can get away with not doing this sort of thing is if you're working with someone you've got a long shared history with, who instinctively understands how you do things, and who you also understand completely. That doesn't mean you won't have misunderstandings with even such a person, but you'll have a shared code to use to work it out. And you'll value one another too highly to allow anything to mess that up.

For everyone else, make sure that you enter any partnership deal by first putting everything on the table and demanding that they do the same. That way, if they come up with any demands after the fact, you can just shrug and say: "Too late."

Once there's fresh money on the table people are quick to hatch some greedy little scheme to see how they can dish more of that cash onto their own plates. If the rules are clear beforehand, it's easier to keep everybody honest.

The best way to do that is to sign contractually for it first.

Kenny was once approached to help his community derive some benefit from a Harmony gold mine that had been mining on his community's doorstep, while allegedly not doing very much for the people who lived there.

Kenny agreed that they had several valid points and he agreed to assist the community committee, but he also immediately informed them that there is very little he does without me. So I was roped in. We had a verbal agreement with that community that we would be reimbursed for our efforts once opportunities and

funds from Harmony were made available – and we were quite confident this would happen.

It turned out be a costly exercise – not for the committee or the community but for Kenny and me. I'm talking not only about the cash we spent but the huge amounts of time we put in as well. We fought, negotiated, even helped to arrange and lead marches against the mine and, eventually, a memorandum of understanding was signed and the mine agreed they should, and would, do more for the community. It was also agreed that a lot of this community investment would take the form of community members receiving business from the mine. We stayed up for days, often going without sleep, structuring the whole plan.

When the time came for these business deals to rain down on the community, through the committee, we suddenly sensed a newfound attitude of arrogance from the committee members.

It was clear they now felt they didn't need us any more.

We were being left out of crucial meetings. They even stopped giving us any feedback on how the meetings went. You didn't need to be a rocket scientist to figure out why we were being treated in such a way. We shrugged and just walked away. Sure, we'd just lost out on being part of big money, and we'd lost money and time, but we smiled because we had just been handed the biggest lesson of our lives, and it came early in our careers. That experience stood us in good stead for the future work we did in mining and other sectors.

Now you will never get us involved with anyone else's business affairs without contracts being signed and sealed first.

Kenny and I once went into partnership with a guy to take over half of his struggling business. We had done our research into what he was up to and we were completely certain that we could make his business profitable. While the paperwork for the co-ownership deal was being drawn up we were already putting huge amounts of cash into his business. We weren't concerned as he was an honest guy and we trusted him absolutely. He kept on reminding us that we needed to sign the papers to make our deal official, but we just kept on putting it off. Then he suddenly fell ill, went into a coma and died without us ever having signed ownership of half of his company. In the process, we lost hundreds of thousands and all the future millions we stood to make with his business, all because we had not focused and put an hour aside to sign a business agreement.

That's just one example. Signing contracts has got nothing to do with not trusting anybody but it's about protecting yourself and the person you are doing business with. You're also protecting that person from the unknowns of the future and from their future self, because a person who suddenly has money thinks very differently from a broke one.

I know only too well how some deals have been done on a handshake – I have personally derived my greatest successes from many deals done exactly that way. But it only works when the hands concerned have done a lot of digging together first.

If you are going to offer someone anything without receiving any guarantees on how it's going to work out, then do so without any expectations whatsoever. Don't think that person is going to share anything with you, help you in return or even put in a good word for you with anyone else.

It's not a bad thing to help people without expecting anything in return. You should help people. You should be giving of your time, your money and your expertise. If you do get something, it will be a bonus. If you rock up later, whining about feeling done in or underappreciated, you're just going to look like a weak-ass fool knocking on doors where he's no longer welcome.

Save yourself that disappointment – you're bound to find that most people are good people and, if you do them a good turn along the way they will remember it and you'll get rewarded one way or the other. Perhaps not in the way you may have expected it, but eventually these things have a way of levelling out.

When people need help they are lambs. After they get the help and no longer need it, they become lions. Don't be surprised if that happens to you.

Business deals are a little bit like romantic relationships. The person with the power is the one who cares least. It's not nice, but that's how it works. You can only enter into anything on blind faith and trust when you're sure the other person cares as much for you as you do for them.

I have shaken many a hand, not knowing if I might be shaking the weapon that will one day murder me. So do your business carefully and transparently. Draw up contracts and make sure they are watertight. Create checks and balances that will cover any eventuality.

The best deals are the ones where you are both not only looking at sharing the profit, but also the losses and the failures. And don't risk and take bullets for anyone who might be the very same person who is pulling the trigger.

Mistakes

Learning from the mistakes of others is by far the best policy. You need to speak to people older than you who've seen and done it all and listen to what they say. Reading books on the subjects and industries that you're interested in and want to work in is also a sign that you're serious about doing things right. Thousands of people have walked the road before you and to be successful you sometimes just have to add a few steps onto where people before you have reached. So first find out exactly what it is other people have learnt, study the mistakes they have made and the advice that they might have for you and then try to achieve on it by taking it further. Even so, no matter how careful you are, no matter how much research you do or how many people you ask for advice, you are bound to make many mistakes and simple day-to-day screw-ups that will cost you time, money, reputation and hurt pride. Those things are unavoidable. Everyone makes mistakes and they remain your best teacher. They're also a sign that you are, at least, trying.

The braver and more revolutionary your plans are, the more mistakes you are bound to make, because no one would have done it before you. With every mistake you make, you'll have a better idea of how not to do it, which takes you one step closer to finding out how to do it. If you eventually eliminate all the wrong ways of doing something, only the right way will remain.

My eldest son entered the world of business in much the same way all of us do – by losing money. Fortunately, he learnt the lesson while he was still a teenager. Unfortunately, he did it at my expense at a time when I could sorely afford to pay for his lesson. But when it's time for someone to learn, it's best not to delay instruction, regardless of the cost. At the time, I was still recovering from a huge financial loss. A particularly critical investment, in which I had put just about all my cash flow, had gone horribly wrong. So it was just my luck that my boy decided to plan “the party of the year” right after that. He was bubbling over with excitement, convinced that not only had he learnt something from watching Kenny and me throw parties and events and turn big profits from them, but he could do it better than us. He would commission performances from the “really” hot artists (not our old boring ones) and be assured of recouping his money from just the cover charge at the door because he was sure an overwhelming crowd would no doubt show up.

I looked at him and thought that if I only had half his excitement and energy, along with half my own wisdom and experience, I could probably move, if not mountains, some pretty heavy hills. But he'd never done anything like this before and it was obvious to me that his party was going to be a monumental flop. I still lent him the money he needed. I parted with what precious cash I had right then quite begrudgingly, but I knew it was a small price to pay for the big lesson it would prove to be for my boy.

And, of course, there was always the outside chance he would surprise us all and make a million bucks. Then I would be the one to gratefully admit to him I was wrong to doubt, and then make him pay for a giant pie so that I could eat it humbly.

I never told him about any of my misgivings. People at his age believe only what they like and are convinced they're smarter than the rest of us anyway. They believe this only because they've never had their fingers burnt. It's only natural.

He pushed that party like it was the party that would end the world. About half way through his big night, when the last of his fifteen or so guests had quietly snuck out to go somewhere where something was actually happening, I tapped his shoulder lightly and told him we could have a chat about it in the morning.

He couldn't even look me in the eyes he was so disappointed and ashamed. I told him to pull himself together and we'd retrace his steps in the cold light of day.

The next morning I told him to spend the next few hours writing down every mistake he could think of that he might have made. I took a look at his list and admitted it was pretty good and quite insightful. Then I asked him if he wanted to know which mistakes I thought he had made, and which weren't already on his list. He was only too happy to hear my advice.

Before he crashed and burned with his poor party, I had realised he thought I knew nothing. He dutifully wrote down all my points. He studied them like they were written in tablets carried down by Moses from the mountain. I told him to keep that paper and use it as the planning document for his next gig.

Making mistakes is great – just do your best not to keep repeating the same ones. As hustlers, the problem should never lie in the mistakes we make, but in not learning from them.

Not talking and not thinking about your mistakes, to use them as an opportunity to interrogate your own weaknesses, is almost the greatest mistake of all. It can only be surpassed in its foolishness by one massively bigger mistake: making excuses and trying to blame your mistakes on everything and everyone except yourself.

If you go down that road, you will never come back from it. It's doesn't matter what your intentions may have been. Results matter, and you need to hold yourself to them alone.

So to avoid becoming such an excuse-seeking ass, who can never take the blame, you may as well start practising the following phrase right now, because it's usefulness in your life will never fade: "I was wrong and I screwed up. But it's not going to happen again."

It's not so bad to say it. You sometimes don't even have to say it to anyone but yourself. The important thing is just never to lie to yourself.

I also fail in most things. And I honestly mean that. I can't give you a percentage of how often I fail or succeed, simply because I don't concentrate on the negative for too long. I make notes on what went wrong and how to avoid it in future, and just move on.

I have been introduced to several opportunities that I buggered up totally. There's no other way of putting it. I have been introduced to people who left completely disgusted with me. I have started some things that I simply never finished. I have broken promises for no apparent reason. I am a man with so many failures that it's probably my saving grace that I don't concentrate on them for long, or it would have been easy to see myself as a loser – and when you reach the level of believing you are a loser it only heads downhill for you from there.

You can't be a winner if you can't stomach failure. If you fall ninety-nine times it won't count against you – if you stand up a hundred times.

At the height of my public speaking career a few years ago I was contracted by one of the most prestigious industry leaders in the jewellery industry to give a talk at the Sandton Convention Centre. Only the who's who were invited. I was looking forward to it because it meant more engagements would almost certainly follow because what normally happens at these big events is that the top owners and managers would have wanted me to come and give my talk to all their staff

members in all their branches. Such appointments, potentially, are worth hundreds of thousands.

God only knows why, but my PA didn't record the day properly in her diary. The event organiser had paid my fee on time and had done all that was expected of her. Their whole function was basically centred on me giving a one-hour talk and interacting with all the delegates.

Normally, whenever I have an event my PA not only puts it in my diary but constantly reminds me about it like a caring parent. Because she hadn't diarised it properly, there was no reminding me, and she only realised her mistake when it was too late. The event organiser got hold of me five minutes before my scheduled talk, when there was no way I'd get there on time.

As expected, the event organisers were furious. I suddenly had so much damage control to do. They wanted my blood, I wanted my PA's blood. But during this bloodthirsty moment the event organiser told me something that calmed me down and led to the lengthy process of patching up some of the wounds. She said: "Do you know how much money this is going to cost me?" I asked her how much and she broke it down. The fee she'd already paid me was just a small portion of it. She'd hired the venue, had it decorated and paid for catering. It came to a substantial amount, but I paid it to her and also personally signed copies of books for the hundred people who'd been meant to hear me speak. Each person got that as a small token of reparation for their disappointment.

All in all, this whole experience was a huge setback for me and I had every reason in the world to fire my PA right there. I didn't, though, not because I felt sorry for her but I wanted her to deal with and feel the aftermath of what my non-appearance had caused. She had to deal with all the complaints from the people who'd attended. She had to assure my future clients who had also already paid me that I would not be a no-show for them, and she had her work cut out for her to convince them not to cancel. It was a much tougher period for her than for me.

It was during this time that I saw, for the first time, her true potential, extraordinary charm and determination to deal with the mess she had created. I secretly admired how she handled herself and the situation. Anybody who called to cancel was simply mesmerised by her and easily convinced that cancellation was a major overreaction.

I could also see how terribly sorry she was.

It often happens that the people who cause the trouble in a business don't have to deal with the consequences of what they did. They either get sidelined or fired and someone else has to come in and clean up their mess.

Liezl had to sort out her own disaster, and while doing it I think she said “never again” and truly meant it. Today I have no doubt that she is the world's very best PA who checks, double checks and triple checks everything. She takes nothing for granted, and has become something of a superwoman. I can phone her with almost any request or demand and she simply makes it happen, in double time.

Liezl and I each took different lessons from that incident. She learnt to double check, write stuff down and so on, but I learnt the even more powerful lesson, which is that making mistakes makes us stronger and better if we're serious about taking ownership of what went wrong and vowing never to let it happen again.

She taught me another valuable lesson on another occasion too, which is that even if you've made a mistake and you're neck deep in trouble because of it, falling in a heap and feeling sorry for yourself doesn't help. You have to just put your head down and keep going. As the saying goes: if you've dug yourself so deep that you're almost at the centre of the earth, just keep digging until you hit the other side of the world.

My company once arranged a huge crime-fighting luncheon, coupled with speeches from community leaders, government officials and Kenny and I. While we were delivering our speeches, our staff were preparing hundreds of meals for all the guests.

The only problem was that the attendance was triple what we were told would be there. I realised that we were looking at a potential crisis, but I also trusted that my staff were aware of what was going on and would take measures to prepare more food. But when I went to check the kitchen I found them dishing up in the hope that some kind of miracle was going to happen, as if the Sea of Galilee was just around the next hill and the food was somehow just going to multiply by itself.

Pretty soon, I realised, they would be scraping the bottom of their big pots. How they failed to identify the crisis and take action to remedy it was beyond me. Saying: “But no one told us so many people would come,” was not going to help. It would sound pathetic and we would look bad – just really, awfully bad.

As soon as I realised how big a disaster this could turn into – Kenny and I would suffer a huge reputation knock – I snapped. I let rip at Liezl. I spoke to her as if the lives of my children were at stake and I left her and the others with very clear instructions on what I expected them to do to get us out of this mess intact.

While the rest of us ran around like mad, placing orders, buying more food and preparing it as fast as it came in, I couldn't help but notice how Liezl was crying while continuing to work behind her computer, giving us the names of places with food available. She got on the phone to suppliers and placed orders – with tears streaming down her cheeks all the time.

In that moment, she taught me one of my life's greatest lessons. I marvelled at her. She taught me that life may make us cry, but it doesn't mean we should stop what we're doing. Life and its troubles go on and so should we. We should only stop working when the challenges of life, amid all the headaches, heartaches and drama around us, stop. Before that, we should just keep pushing on. And the challenges rarely stop.

That lesson has strengthened me in moments when I had to deal with huge disappointment. Once, over a short period of time, thousands of shares I had in Central Rand Gold lost ninety-nine percent of their value. I never sold even one of them despite the value plummeting steadily, week in and week out. Not one. I kept thinking: "Tomorrow it will stop and the price will recover." That's the sort of mistake many a man can get suicidal about. In a few months the value of those shares went from several million rand to about R40 000. Just like that.

I may have wanted to cry about it, but there was still work to be done.

There is a Nigerian proverb that says you shouldn't look at where you stumble but where you are going. You are going to make many a mistake on your way but don't allow it to stop you. I always think about Thomas Edison and the many failed light bulbs he had to change before he finally switched on the one that came on, and stayed on.

And I think about how Liezl succeeded in feeding that entire hungry horde that day, even if some of their pap was probably salted with her tears.

Finding Motivation

The world is full of motivators, but forget the whole world, the area around you, wherever it is, is full of motivators. Your parents probably survived circumstances twenty times more severe than anything you are about to face.

Shortly after my release from jail, I was listening to the chief rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, and he said that this country is short of many things, but not motivators. He said if you look left or you look right there is always someone you can help to uplift. But there also so many people who are uplifting themselves.

Think about the grannies who are selling sweets on the roadside. Come rain, shine or cold you will find them there without fail. When one of their customers leaves his house, he knows he will buy a cigarette from the granny; he doesn't wonder if she will be there – he knows that only death can keep her from her sidewalk.

When I drive out of the golf estate where I live the most heart-wrenching scene confronts me every day. You want to ignore it but your conscience can't allow it.

It's something that makes me realise how fortunate I am, and which makes me, as a successful black guy driving a sports car, push the accelerator harder. It's partly guilt and shame at not being able to change the situation and it's partly just the pain of seeing it. Sports car owners usually drive faster when they see a group of people so they can advertise their car's power and sound. This is different. I want to get away and hope they don't see me.

The guys standing on the corners are not just looking for a job, they're begging for it. They're literally running after cars – bakkies being the most sprinted after. Anyone needing their services need not say a word. You just lift your hand and, with a show of fingers, indicate how many you need. You'll get triple the number of guys on your bakkie and what happens next is like a scene from the movie *Roots*.

The owner of the bakkie can choose which ones he doesn't need and, just as in the movie, the fittest-looking ones survive. The rest must return to the corner to wait for the next bakkie.

I should record that scene to show any person who is constantly complaining about his job what real survival looks like. Those guys don't negotiate a salary. They go on a hope and a prayer that the owner of the bakkie will not be an exploiter. Negotiations usually take place at the place of work, too far to turn back and not to accept whatever you are being offered. Being given food is considered a lucky day at the job. Minimum wages or union talk are nonexistent. Unions don't operate on this street level. The wages they get are probably what a union membership-fee costs. Appreciate your job. It might not be easy, but it is way better than running after cars like dogs do in townships. Your boss can be insensitive, but your salary is a negotiated one, as is a lot of what you do. I don't know much about these guys and their feelings but what I do know is that your worst day is probably better than one of their best days. A job is something you should value and respect because it brings you respect.

Our greatest inspiration should be our African counterparts from farther north on the continent. Our Somalian, Zimbabwean, Congolese and Nigerian brothers are economic warriors and the true hustlers of our era. They are far from home and family and are willing to do all kinds of jobs to survive.

One man, Kennedy Gihana, who survived the genocide in Rwanda after being a soldier, walked more than 5 000km to get to Joburg with nothing but his matric certificate strapped to his body in a plastic bag. He slept on street corners with glue-sniffing kids and started his journey to a better life when he became a security guard, paid only R700 a month. For four years, he hustled and survived, but he graduated as a lawyer and a bestselling book was written about him. They'll probably make a movie too.

There's another man, Jamala Safari, who did almost exactly the same, except he walked down from the eastern DRC to become a biotechnologist after starting out as a security guard who couldn't even speak English. Both these men are extraordinary, but if you look for it you'll find other people who are even more extraordinary. You'd have to be dead in your soul not to find inspiration in it.

While we were busy decorating ZAR Cafe in Kimberley we went to different material shops to purchase long metres of material. We mostly found shops that had one thing we were looking for, but lacked everything else. It was a tiresome process.

We eventually found the right shop. It was huge and had just about everything we needed. I was truly impressed. The owner was on the shop floor. I took the

opportunity to have a chat with him. He taught me three lessons that will stay with me forever. He also shared with me that he only started to make money in his twilight years. He was sixty-two when I met him.

He told me that he had arrived in South Africa penniless. He started selling all kinds of stuff to make ends meet. He was once given a few rags and material to sell by a beauty queen. He was surprised at how fast it sold and that made him start his own textile business. He went to an auction where only wholesale merchants showed up. He realised he could outbid them because they were selling to other stores, while he was selling to the public directly.

He was so cheap that most of his customers accused him of madness. Instead of upping his prices, as most of us would have done, he told his customers not to tell him his prices were low but to tell their friends. They did and he had an influx. The material wholesalers then begged him to stock their wares. He told me that life had taught him to never look down on anyone or be envious of anyone else's achievements. He reminded me of the fact that we are never too old to make money. It came late for him in life, but it still came because he had a never-say-die attitude.

It's really not hard to find motivation. I could easily go on and on. All of these things are happening in front of you, so if you say you lack motivation, you can't be serious. Rather say that you lack the will to open your eyes because the world has plenty of motivators and not seeing or searching for them is like dying of hunger in a supermarket.

‘Rats’ and Sinking Ships

I once attended a comedy show of Chris Rock’s where he said that whenever you lose all your money and belongings and your girlfriend says “baby you’ll be fine” he says that the countdown has in fact just begun. She is already making her plans to leave your ass. She said “you” will be fine, not “we” will be. In the same way, in business, when things start going badly, people will leave your company if they can. Those who just can’t find anything else will stick around and one or two may just be loyal enough to try to save your sinking ship. This is why many of your best people, with the most experience and skills, abandon you when you need them the most.

Business owners like to call these people rats.

Anyone who has lost everything can testify to it, but I totally disagree. When I lost everything I experienced it too. People started leaving the business, they started ignoring my calls and many who had previously begged me for business were not even looking my way any more. As much as money is like nectar gathering all the bees, the moment that nectar dries up the bees will scatter – and some will even give you a few parting stings.

But I still totally disagree that all these people are like rats leaving a sinking ship. We are all born with survival instincts that will kick in whenever we’re faced with anything that threatens our everyday routine and our livelihood. Everyone’s circumstances are different. People use their salaries differently, and responsibilities differ wildly. You can’t call someone a rat when he or she is paying for the medical bills of their sick child every month. If that person decides to leave the company during a difficult period or during heavy uncertainty over the future payment of salaries, you should be the most relieved that they found work somewhere else. Maybe you need that person to fulfil certain duties or the company will suffer even more. Don’t get mad at them for leaving – let them go then, ask them to do some freelance work in the evening or on weekends to tie some things up for you or hand over to someone else. You can offer to pay them for it, and it’ll cost a lot less than their salary. Some will even do it for free out of a remaining sense of loyalty.

However it goes, people have the right to leave for another company every time. Always know that your problems, as the owner of a business, will mostly be carried by you alone. Don't expect people to make your stresses theirs if they have their own problems.

Your priority must always be to concentrate on getting your company back on track. When you started you didn't have a big team and you can build it up again. Those people can come back to work for you again if they want to and things haven't soured between you.

You should always be able to anticipate things in your business, and chief among them is that people will always leave. Don't personalise it, never resort to name-calling. Don't overthink it. Just know that people will leave when the going gets tough or if they get a better opportunity. It's not personal. It's not always that they lack loyalty – they may just be loyal to something more important than you are. You are not only the hustler in the world. People's first loyalty will always be to a family that they have to provide for every month.

You can forget many things as a hustler but never forget that many people will leave you when you're in Shit Street. Because, as a hustler, if you're working for someone but you can see the writing is on the wall for your employer, you already need to have your own exit strategy and back-up plan in place so that you don't find yourself without options when it's too late. You can leave on good terms and wish your former boss all the best. If he thinks you're a rat then so be it. Rather than being a dead hero and a martyr.

Watch Your Back

We rarely hear people talk about or admit to their greed. They always talk about the greed of others. It doesn't mean they are in denial but greed is just one of those things that you see clearly only when it kills you. It is hard to recognise it in yourself. It's like a drug and the user will always find ways to justify it. They won't know how deeply addicted they are until it kills them.

Greed is a silent killer. It gets most people, and particularly the best among us.

Kenny and I were doing very well in mining. We moved some of our cash to a new entertainment business and started two nightclubs. The money was rolling in and, as it does, our greed took over. It became uncontrollable, and suddenly we were investing in all sorts of stuff, when really we should have known better.

Greed makes one not do all your checks and balances. Uncontrollable greed makes one overlook the important things and only look at the till. As with most cases of uncontrollable greed, it only takes one bad turn to turn the greedmobile on its head. Our crushing blow came in the form of investing in live concerts. If you add up all the losses in cost and the blowback, we blew as much as R10 million. We were warned that it takes time to arrange a concert with any international artist. Greed made us not listen, and we had five international artists on our bill. We should have given ourselves four times the time to arrange it. Instead, we gave ourselves a sixth of the time.

A few months earlier, a fake talent agent, who – very convincingly – had claimed to represent two of the world's biggest rappers, relieved our business of R4 million. He was finally caught and was standing trial for his crimes in Canada as I wrote this. The irony, which I only later came to appreciate, was that we lost less money when it was stolen from us directly by a conman than what we lost by actually trying to prove something in a business we didn't know enough about. Looking back, I can't believe I ignored all the pitfalls. But greed makes you only look at the big money you stand to make at the end.

Being good in a particular industry doesn't guarantee you success in another. Greed can make you think you are smarter and more resourceful than you are. I was successful in other fields because I refused to take shortcuts, I always did my

homework and I started small and gradually grew in competence. With the concerts, I just wanted to jump in the deep end, throw lots of money around, and call myself a big-time international promoter. It just doesn't work that way.

The biggest symptom of greed is arrogance. If greed is the gun, then arrogance is the bullet –in the end it's a lethal combination that will make you and your business the target.

So don't be like I was during my big concert power trip. Do what you do well. Don't rush into territories where you know little because you think the returns in a new field of work are apparently greater. Slow down and get it right, because it takes a lot longer to fix something that you've rushed into doing and broken, than to just do it slowly and get it right the first time. And don't be fooled by all the success stories of people who diversified. We only hear the success stories while the greed graveyard is filled to the brim with casualties who bit off too much and then found they didn't have the teeth to chew it all.

Greed is also what makes people rush into expanding a business too soon. If your business is doing well, it's only automatic to think about expanding. We get encouraged by friends to open new branches, hire more staff, buy more vans, more equipment and so on. We believe we have found a winning formula and we stupidly believe that just because a business works in one area it will automatically work in another. Business unfortunately doesn't work like that. I've learnt that the hard way, too. You should never enter a new market or expand beyond a critical point without doing proper market research.

At the time it opened, we had the most successful club in Joburg, ZAR Lounge. In the first year, we could sometimes make a turnover of half a million rand on a single night. We served rich guys very expensive alcohol – we didn't serve any cheap champagne (or cheap anything). We only served top brands to high-end customers and it was a rollicking success. Our guests were not just the top local celebs, but we hosted the presidents of countries, had actual royalty, the managers of major football clubs and even real international mafia bosses who'd rock up and intimidate the daylights out of everyone with impossible demands, which we invariably found a way to cater for.

Things were going so well and the ZAR brand was such a household name that our first thought was that we needed to open another club in Cape Town. We pumped millions into the new ZAR, in the expectation that we would own the best

venue at the best hotel in South Africa's most beautiful city, a place that regularly hosts international superstars and rich tourists.

Little did we know how sharply the spending habits in Cape Town differ from those in Joburg. Don't get me wrong, more than our fair share of people had tried to tell us and warn us about what Cape Town is really like, but we just didn't want to hear it. We were high on our own success in Joburg and believed that with our formula we just couldn't go wrong.

Guys in Cape Town are not the snazzy type who will spend R100 000 on drinks. The ladies are also not the same kind of serious gold-diggers you find in Joburg, and in Joburg it was thanks to the ladies dragging their rich boyfriends to our club that we were making so much money.

We quickly realised our mistake and turned the whole concept of our club around, but it still cost us a lot of money to do. We had to carry the business ourselves until our turnaround plan showed a profit.

It's a lot harder to scale something back once it's got momentum than it is to just let your business grow naturally, with an increasing customer base that you simply have to cater for.

Focus on building your present business to get it running at its maximum capacity, because if you spread yourself too thinly in the beginning you'll have too much to do, too quickly and you'll lose control and be stressed to the point of a nervous breakdown. It will drain all your money and your energy. You don't want the kind of situation where you are using the profits from a successful business to support the losses of a less successful business, unless you can really see the hope that it's just a matter of time before the less successful business turns the corner. In most cases, though, that doesn't happen.

Most importantly, always ask yourself the question I wish I'd asked myself: are you being motivated by a sound business idea – or is it greed and the lure of easy money?

Millions of people play the lottery or go to the casino every day hoping to win. Very few know how tough the odds of winning really are. Even those who know they are far more likely to leave with nothing rather than the jackpot – never mind the money they started with – will justify it by saying it is all just a game of luck. For many, though, especially poor people who religiously play Lotto and believe

their Lotto-branded ship will come in any day now, actually understanding the odds may have helped them not to buy that ticket with their last R50 to perhaps play something else, where the jackpot is not so mind-blowing, but where the odds of winning are greater. Ideally, they could have just bought bread and eggs, but gamblers seldom care about the odds.

Gamblers, though, are not only found in casinos – the business world is full of them. It's almost a prerequisite for being an entrepreneur and going into business. I've always been a gambler and I thrive on taking risks. I feel half alive if I'm not taking a chance on something, but I've learnt a great deal about taking risks during my life and the golden rule for me now is always: does the pain of potentially losing outweigh the joy of the gain I might have by potentially winning? If the pain would feel far worse than the gain would feel great, then I back down. It's a rule that has stopped me from throwing my last cent at deals that sound amazing, which offer astounding returns and amazing results – but which could take my last cent. By keeping to my rule, if everything bombs, I still always have something left to start again.

That has already happened to me once, but I was able to stay in the game. I took a big risk and lost millions, but I was able to keep going and make a comeback.

Risk and gambling are much the same. To win or lose you have to take a certain risk. Unlike people who just walk into a casino and risk their cash against insane odds, clever businesspeople first find out exactly what they're up against. They weigh the pros and cons, they study the market and try to get as many guarantees as they can, even though they know that nothing in business can ever be fully guaranteed. Luck will always play a major part in the outcome for any business, but luck is not the only factor being depended on in business and it should definitely not be the most important factor by a long way – unlike the casino or the lottery.

In business it's vital to know the terrain and the players you'll come up against. Poker is the best metaphor for the gamble of business because just like when professional poker players do their thing, business is about people who know something you don't and it's up to you to figure out if they're telling you the truth or not. In poker, a guy with a great hand will try to make you think he's bluffing so you can bet more money and a guy with a rubbish hand will try to make you think his hand is great so you won't call his bluff. In business, other hustlers will lie, exaggerate or play all sorts of mind games to part you from your money as quickly as possible. They might be telling the truth, you have no way of knowing, unless

you do your research, speak to other people they've done business with, study their previous projects, get your own accountant to go in and analyse his books and whatever else you need to do to give yourself as much information as you can and get the edge. There are nice ways of doing it, but blunt ways are just as effective.

I was once with a friend at Chubb and a guy was giving us a presentation on an investment project he wanted us to put money into. He claimed it was such a great investment that he was making R50 000 a month himself after only investing R700 000. My friend told him: "That sounds great. Let's go to the bank right now and we can ask them to print out your bank statement. Then you can prove those amazing results to us."

The guy excused himself to go to the bathroom, but instead he made a run for the parking lot, drove away and we never saw him again.

Many people enter business hoping to make it solely on luck and getting some big break. You will be out of pocket and out of business in no time if that's your attitude.

Business is like marrying a woman. No man of sober mind just picks someone at random after one conversation and rushes off to get married. After finding out you like her, you'll start investigating her past, get to know her family and friends, look at her mannerisms, how she reacts to certain things like pressure, challenges from other ladies, her behaviour in times of money and times of hardship. If you're a really careful and slightly paranoid bugger, you'll even check out all her ex-boyfriends and find out what went wrong with them. Was it something about her, or were they just not worthy of her? Even if she was the one who made mistakes, you'll be empowered to decide what your take on it all is – and then step into the big decision with your eyes as wide open as possible. There are still no guarantees, and you're still going to need luck to succeed, but you'll have fewer nasty surprises.

Many guys are simply happy to walk around with a business card as if that little piece of paper proves anything. Beware. People can only be conned if they are willing to ignore that little voice in their head telling them the deal is too good to be true. In casinos all those little lights, noises and corny music from the slot machines are there to drown out that little voice.

Conmen and unscrupulous business people will drown out that voice by flashing brilliant smiles at you, filling your ears with flattery and promises – they will rely

on the fact that your greed will overpower your common sense – just as it does every time someone stacks up another set of chips at the casino. Someone once called gambling a “tax on stupidity”.

In business, the only taxes you should be paying are the ones government wants as its reward for your intelligence and your success.

So do your homework and stack the odds in your favour every time. That’s the hustler’s way. You may not win them all, but you’ll take home the prize more often than you won’t.

Too many people, upon hearing about a chance to make good money lose all sense. They can’t seem to bring themselves to think of anything else. They can’t bring themselves to ask the right questions. Any opportunity that offers a chance to make big, easy money should see you being extra vigilant. Your guard should never be down anyway.

The first thing you ought to ask is if someone has this easy money to be made why is he or she bypassing all his friends and family? Why is he not taking it for himself? Ask yourself: “Why me?”

Does this person look like a million dollars? What about his clothes and his car? All that can be faked. Enquire where he stays and proceed to make sure to ask how long he has been staying there and with whom. This info will cost you a hundred bucks and any security guard at the security gate will be happy to help you. The same goes for the guy’s offices. If he moved in the week before, but is making out he’s been there for years, it’s obviously trouble.

Take all your info to a financially literate person to analyse the data to see if the promised returns are even possible. Thousands of people are conned every day with outrageous stories of good returns. Be wary. Be vigilant. Be smart.

I have seen fortunes lost, life savings blown, pensions up in smoke. As you’ve probably heard a thousand times before: if it’s too good to be true then it probably is too good to be true. There’s no way anyone can hear it enough. Because greed makes you stupid and you have to fight it afresh every day. People will enter a deal when they feel there’s more in favour of it than against it. All the paperwork seems to make sense. Everything seems meticulous. All your questions are answered on paper. By this time, you may have put in a lot of work to reach the point where you

think you know who you're dealing with and you may already have said: "These people are the real deal."

But wait a minute.

I have seen so many people buying mines without doing their proper due diligence first. They took that decision solely on trusting what they saw on paper, which can often be overwhelming and impressive. Most importantly, they will have seen what in mining terminology are called geology reports, reports done by competent persons and even respected companies well known to everybody. But then few people actually go to the trouble of calling up that company and its competent person to double check that they are indeed the authors of the report. It could just be a piece of paper with a logo downloaded off the internet – and it often is just that. Everybody gets caught up with the riches contained in the paperwork and the lure is often that the person who seems to own these riches acts as if they have no idea just how much what they have is worth. You convince yourself that you are the clever guy who can smell this opportunity and grab it out from under its owner's nose – but that's just the typical way any scam works. They have to convince you that they are the dumb ones and you are some kind of genius. It works because it appeals to your ego and your greed. You have to rise above that, as I've said in the previous chapter, if you're ever going to make it in business. The moment you find yourself uttering the phrase: "They don't even realise the value of what they have," you're about to get royally conned – and that applies to everything, not only mining.

I once reluctantly agreed to meet a guy after he sent me endless meeting requests. But I was reassured when he took out a stack of documents about his mine, including all his prospecting and mining rights in Malawi. On the face of it, everything you want to see as an investor was there, and the guy was charismatic and charming to boot. We had a good laugh and he created the impression that he was basically, if not the unofficial king of Malawi, at least one of its lords.

He made it clear what would be needed from my side and, to show him respect and my own seriousness, I travelled to Lilongwe with an eight-member team on a chartered jet.

Upon our arrival in Malawi our contact did not have any of the proper vehicles required to take us to his mine. He neither owned nor arranged for such. He didn't inform us prior to our departure of any of the difficulties that might be awaiting us. Our office in South Africa made a few calls and we finally got two vehicles. He

then hit us with an even bigger surprise. He seemed not to know where the actual location of the mine was. My geology team was ready to murder him. One comedy of errors after another followed, including a visit to the “minister of mining” at what looked a lot like an abandoned school building with a few mining charts from the 1970s turning brown on the walls inside. This minister told us all about the opportunities for investment in Malawi and the more I listened the more utterly despondent I became. He was talking about mining semiprecious stones. You don’t ever want to hear the word “semi” in front of “precious”. He spoke about gold as if the mythical town of El Dorado might be somewhere in them thar hills – who could say? The legends do tell ... I was wondering if this guy really was a minister or just someone’s uncle in a suit with a Malawian flag on his desk.

It eventually simply grew too dark for anything to be achieved anyway and we dropped our “host” off at his offices and went on our way. I was beside myself with rage. I told my team we were heading straight home. I was livid and the Malawian and I had parted on less than favourable terms.

On the jet home it hit me that, in fact, all of this was my fault. I replayed everything as it had happened before we left and, from the start, I hadn’t asked the right questions. I had so badly wanted him to be for real, and had assumed so many things. I hadn’t asked the deep questions. Even the geologists had mentioned that Malawi is not exactly known for its abundant mineral wealth, but at that point I was believing only what I wanted to.

The guy had obviously been hoping, from the start, that I would just hand over a big parcel of money without actually travelling to Malawi and seeing his assets for myself. At the point that I had jumped on that jet and left for Lilongwe he was probably not just “semi” pissing himself but “completely”, knowing how badly he was about to be exposed – but perhaps he still thought he could talk his way around it, and get his friend the minister to put up a good show.

In reality, if I had just kept my eyes and ears properly open from the start and been more critical I would never have reached the point of even entertaining the thought of an expensive flight to that dead end. I can tell you a million stories just like this one – most of which did not take me in quite so completely. Never assume that a person is the real deal. In business, it’s called due diligence, and it’s your responsibility to keep your costs to a minimum before you start throwing money at anything. The key to success to anything in life is homework, planning and critical thought.

So do your investigations, your research, and never be afraid to ask direct and penetrating questions. The business world is not a place where diplomacy and sensitivity get you ahead. You need to be brutal in your search for the truth.

Ask people about their past successful deals and their references. Ask them what else they have on their radar screen. Ask them anything you need to that will give you comfort.

Truly, the circus will never be without clowns – if they run out, they can always borrow a few from the business world’s seemingly abundant supply. Everything can be faked. When a friend of mine ordered alcohol and all the bottles of alcohol were fake I realised that the labels were subtly different. The guy on the bottle of Johnnie Walker was walking in the wrong direction. Kenny picked that up and laughed immediately. You need to be someone who’s lifted many a bottle in his time to spot that at first sight.

People fake papers, their exam results, their qualifications and company letterheads. Such frauds are as common as the flowers printed on two-ply toilet paper – and they should be treated as even more worthless.

And, of course, the number one line every con-loving salesperson uses is: “There are many other buyers interested, so you had better hurry with your decision. If you don’t say yes by tomorrow it will be someone else’s. Millions of people hear that line every day when they’re about to buy anything. It’s taught to every salesperson in every industry and it’s the best way to “close a deal” and nudge people to finally commit, even if they’re in two minds. So while you’ll hear many “legitimate” people spinning you that lie, it is also the world’s oldest con, which will be with us for centuries still to come. You’ll only know how few other people were really looking to buy the piece of rubbish you just took money out for once you try to sell it again.

Take a second-hand car. If you buy something like a Toyota Prado, every time that thing gets to 100 000km, the service will set you back by R40 000 or more. Most people selling those cars will do so just before it reaches the point of that big service. Of course they won’t tell you about the surprise waiting for you at the dealership after that service light switches on. It’s up to you to do your research first and decide if you’d be willing to pay that – and perhaps you can use it to bargain the price down further. But that sales guy is, almost guaranteed, going to tell you: “I have another buyer coming from the town next door right now and he told me he just wants to make sure the car is in good condition and he’ll make a

payment today still for this car. So you had better decide quickly if you want it, because by tomorrow it will be gone. This is a great deal and I'd hate for you to lose out."

This regular con works because of the different messages being conveyed.

You're firstly being told that this purchase must be good or all these other people wouldn't be beating down this seller's door to buy it. It also stops you dead in your tracks from negotiating a discount because the "other buyer" might not want a discount. Lastly, it plays on your ego because we naturally never want to lose out. It's just a human thing. We're competitive. We want to tell us ourselves how we beat that guy driving from Pretoria and how disappointed he will feel to be informed he's the loser who's going to have to turn around and go home empty-handed because you, the undisputed champion in all things deal-related, got there first.

I repeat – I'm in no way saying that every person using that line is conning you. But if you're going to survive as a hustler you simply need to be made aware that in ninety percent of cases you're either dealing with an outright con, or a touch of dishonesty. Always remember, anything that you are going to spend money on needs to happen on your terms. If you're the guy with the money, you're the guy with the power. If you don't feel that is being respected, rather walk away. Your money will not lose any of its shine and there's almost always more people trying to sell things than there are people trying to buy – unless you're trying to get whichever new iPhone happens to be out, but things like that are completely different.

Hang onto your money. Always bargain as if you're in some flea-infested market in Cairo. Don't let anyone scare or intimidate you because once your money's left your hands it's hard to reverse a deal and get it back. If you have any nagging doubts at the point you want to pay, first do something to gain comfort. If the seller isn't willing to let that happen, he or she might be hiding more than you can afford to find out about later when the seller will have vanished like smoke. You can't be an "impulse buyer" if you're new to the game. It's just stupid. Buying something simply because you're scared another buyer might grab it before you do is even more stupid. Take your time, investigate what you're about to buy thoroughly and let nothing and nobody rush you.

As a hustler, never forget that a "bargain" is like daylight. It will always come around again.

Your Ego is Your Downfall

I once arranged a concert that was meant to go from Harare in Zimbabwe to Durban, Cape Town and Joburg. Zimbabwe's ticket sales were only average but we wrapped up the show there and returned to South Africa with all five of our international artists on board an airbus we had chartered to fly them, their agents, dancers, DJs, technical crew, friends and numerous bodyguards on our own time, without the need to rush this small (and very diva-ish) army through commercial airports. Arriving in Durban, I realised the support for the concerts in Durban and Cape Town was not nearly as good as we'd planned and hoped for. The more we looked into it, the more obvious it became how poorly these shows would be supported.

We had advertised extensively, we had media partners and a deal with Computicket. Sure, a few thousand people had already bought tickets in Durban and Cape Town, the events company running the stages and all the equipment for the shows was already contracted and setting up in Durban. Perhaps, most painfully, the international artists had already been paid. The primary reason we couldn't hope to sell all our tickets was simply because we'd only managed to confirm the Durban venue just more than a week in advance of the actual show and the whole concert concept had been a rushed affair from the start. With a bit more time, it would have been a sold-out success countrywide, but it was too late to reflect on such lessons now. Our Durban show was scheduled for just two days away.

Our accountant broke the numbers down for me and it was one of the most difficult statements of fact I've ever had to hear. But it was the truth and ignoring it would only make things tougher.

I knew I had to take a decision. I called Kenny up to my hotel room. Whatever I was going to decide would affect his fifty percent stake in the tour. We both acknowledged what we had to do, but pride, concern for our image, denial and false hope fought with us to delay making the right decision. The right decision – the correct business call – was for us to call off the concerts in Cape Town and

Durban, refund everyone who'd already bought tickets, apologise to the production team and just focus on making the Joburg show, which we would have a bit more time for, as successful as possible.

It was, by far, one of the hardest decision I have ever had to make. I think it was even harder for Kenny because he was the face of the concert. He was the one who'd have to appear on TV, be heard on the radio and have his statement printed in all the papers saying that our ticket sales had gone badly and we were just going to take it on the chin.

We knew that we were going to lose a lot of money and credibility by cancelling the concerts. We also knew that if we didn't cancel those shows we would surely face complete financial ruin.

Even the prospect of ending up on the bones of our asses did not make the decision any easier. It is amazing how strong and self-defeating one's ego can be. There was a part of us that just wanted to muscle on bravely into the oncoming hurricane, and blow the consequences. Fortunately, though, we put our pride in our pockets and, that way, managed to keep a bit of money in those pockets too.

It's only through my own experiences of seeing how my poorer business decisions grew and took on a life of their own, as if taunting me to prove my own logic wrong and make them work, that I now understand how so many people can persist in throwing money at ideas and projects that are clearly not working – something of ourselves is caught up in all of it and pulling the plug on your baby almost feels like killing a part of yourself. You foolishly end up thinking it's better to just die with the business, like a captain going down with his ship.

But you can never have any business project that is more important than your own welfare and long-term success. If something is weighing you down, and you can see that it's obviously dead weight, the sooner you cut and run, the lighter your losses will be. You'll always have losses, but you may just do it in time to get to shore alive. I now understand why my friend, who ran a glossy and prestigious lifestyle magazine in the Free State, could not be convinced to close it down after even three long years of not making a profit. Everyone could see that his magazine was not profitable and it was just costing him packets of money. Every day, I advised my friend to shut it down, but he just gave me a million reasons for why it was going to work. That was his ego talking. Too many of us will ask: "But what will the people say? What will they think?" They ask that instead of asking: "What's the right way to deal with this situation?"

Just because you may be involved with something that is losing money does not make you a loser. A lot of businesses nibble away at your capital, and can do so for years, before they break even and finally start making you good money. I'm not saying you should dump everything that isn't making money all the time, every time. I'm saying that when everyone around you, but most especially you, can see that the writing is truly on the wall – put on your reading glasses. And forget about your emotions.

We decided to cancel the concert. We went through a month of hell mopping up the fallout – but then we pressed on, having learnt from the experience and determined to make the next attempt a success. My friend kept his magazine open, but time and the harsh realities of business eventually closed it down for him, and not on his own terms.

Never take decisions with your ego in any meeting. Do what needs to be done and then deal with the consequences, even if you have to put a lot of positive spin on it to move on. By the time you're basking in your next success, people will have long forgotten any of your temporary setbacks they might have heard about anyway.

When we opened our first ZAR we were printing money. Then after a year we weren't the newest and hottest venue around and by then another ten clubs had opened within a 30km radius of us. It just wasn't worth the effort of doing business any more, so when the hotel approached us to pay us out for remainder of our lease because they wanted to add more floors to their building, the first thought we had was: "What will people say? They'll think we're bankrupt. It will cause a whole media frenzy."

Common sense finally prevailed and we decided to close.

I couldn't help but think that if closing down was so hard despite us having such a lucrative financial offer, how difficult it must be for someone to close their doors and get nothing for it.

I have since had to close the doors of other bloodsucking companies, but now I worry less about what the people might say. Some think that if their business is not doing well it's a poor reflection on them, but there are always many factors playing a role, not just them. In the end, you are not the be-all and end-all of what will transpire in your business. Some terrible businesspeople are insanely wealthy and successful simply out of luck, other brilliant men and women crashed and burned,

simply because of an extended sequence of bad luck. Many factors play a role in the success of a business, unfortunately some of them completely out of your control. My first big job at a big gold mining company came to an end because banks in America were too eager to lend people home loans, and then the whole global economy came crashing down.

So you can't control that sort of thing – but you can decide when to do the right thing with a project and shut it down.

Many fall every day, but when they trip and fall over their ego that fall is so much harder and possibly fatal.

Don't let ego dictate how you spend money either. Depending on the type of business you are starting, you should keep your costs very low. Don't do fancy if it isn't necessary.

If your business is the type of thing that requires clients to visit your premises than it's wise to be as fancy as you can afford, but if what you're doing just requires you to have an internet connection, a fax machine and a phone, then going too fancy is a waste of money and just playing to your ego.

When we started our fish-selling business, we didn't sell our fish to customers directly from our premises. We chose the cheapest warehouse we could get. The only people who ever saw it were our staff. A few years later we started a mining-consultancy business, which was to be frequented by mine owners and very rich investors. For this, we hired the most expensive office space per square metre in Sandton.

So many people spend ridiculous amounts on office space and furniture for nothing. Business should be about keeping the costs as low as possible and the profits high. The excitement of opening a new business makes people forget and get carried away because they want everything to look nice. They want to show their family how they are working at a great place, but it's a decision they regret every time they have to pay the landlord. Those extra costs have to be passed on to the customer. The guy who doesn't have to spend as much as you do on rent will sell the same products you do for less.

The principle extends to everything: don't spent money on things that won't bring you money. Invest your money in your business.

I'm not for a moment saying that all businesses should start in rundown warehouses, but not all your extra cash needs to be spent on something. When we buy luxurious, but unnecessary, things we justify it by saying it was surplus cash anyway. You should bank that cash. No business has ever closed because it had too much cash.

Extra money will come in handy in a crisis and could be the difference between surviving tough times or having to close your big, heavy, expensive doors.

Mark Shuttleworth, the famous South African billionaire, sold his business for around R3.5 billion. He started that in a garage. You may think Mark's story is exceptional, but HP, Google, Apple and Microsoft were all started in garages. They built themselves up without being distracted by the stress of rent and keeping up appearances.

So reverse your car out of your garage and start a business that you can sell for a few billion in a couple of years.

Don't relax like the rich. They have done all their spadework already. Don't make the mistake of looking at what rich people are doing and then decide that it's the way you want to live and act.

Most of the imitators are only half rich or still on their way to riches. But they start taking long, extended holidays, they start buying race horses or vintage cars, which they really don't need.

It's understandable if you get these things to make a particular statement, but some guys get it purely because they see the rich having them and they think that it's the way to live. It really doesn't matter. It's another sideshow.

When hustlers buy stuff that they don't really need they do it to blend in. Perhaps they wouldn't be able to blend in without having the racehorse, so the racehorse is an investment in their hustle. But as a hustler on his way to riches be very careful what you spend your money on. Times will indeed come when you have to make some purchases just to prove a point, but make sure that there is a reason behind your spending. Don't just spend for the sake of it.

Know what is absolutely necessary and what is not. Remember, you want to eventually be part of the rich boys' club, so it's all right to fake it till you make it. The catch is to make sure you do just enough to get attention, while not

bankrupting yourself in the process of wanting to look rich. The highway to wealth is littered with the bodies of guys who just didn't know when to stop buying.

The majority of the wealthy people I have met all have patience in common. They worked and slogged long and hard. They will respect you just for being semi-successful already, particularly if they're aware of your age and your background. Just show them that you are clearly on your way to riches and the people around you will want to be a part of that story – be they rich or poor, young or old.

You'll impress everyone most just by being consistent and working harder, not spending harder.

Talent Doesn't Need Money

I met a guy from Zimbabwe who crossed the border, walking from Zim to South Africa. A friend asked me to assist him. A meeting was arranged, and it was obvious he needed help. He asked me for some money to start a business, so I asked him what he knew about business and it soon became clear that he knew absolutely zilch.

I asked him what he was good at. He told me: “Nothing.” I told him that was bull – because in the past hour he had made me laugh many times. I told him I already knew he had a gift for comedy. I gave him a first task, which he would have to complete as a condition for my time and my willingness to assist him.

For a man who'd just told me he was good at nothing, it should have been an impossible task: I gave him twenty-four hours to come up with a list of things he was good at. When I saw him again, he'd come up with so many things that it just confirmed what I know about most people. They ask for help while already having all the help they need. In the words of the old Mad Magazine joke, people asking for a helping hand are ignoring the one at the end of their own arm.

He was funny, charismatic and knew how to eat fire – literally. He even knew how to do tricks, like juggling balls, doing balancing acts, and a lot of other stuff that one normally only ever sees in the circus. I told him that what he needed was not money but an audience.

So we started him off at the Waterfront in Cape Town, just entertaining people as they walked by. He kept them spellbound and was soon making money. Eventually he was noticed and was offered a job at a travelling circus, where I'm told he did very well. Seriously – that's a true story. He is now in the process of giving me money to buy shares in a company I'm starting– and I've never given him a cent.

Before we approach other people for help, we should rummage around in our own pockets, because the keys to our future success may already be with us. I've noticed that people are always quick to look at what others are doing and what

they're good at, and they disregard what's unique and special about themselves. I've met young girls so beautiful that just looking at them you can't believe they're even real – but they lack confidence so much that they struggle to even step outside the house. With a bit of attitude and some self-belief, some of them could be world-class fashion models. I've met guys who can add up impossibly big numbers in their heads, without really even trying. They could easily be mathematicians or physicists, but they don't realise what they've got.

The other day I was online and came across a story about a twenty-seven-year-old man from London called Kelvin Okafor. He's a young artist who's becoming famous for making pencil-and-charcoal sketches that are so photorealistic that you can't see a single one of his brush strokes, no matter how hard you look. At first glance, anyone looking at his work would say it is nothing more than a photo of someone famous, but it takes Okafor a hundred hours of work, per portrait, to finish once he's started. Already people have been offering him ten-thousand pounds (about R120 000) per portrait, and all he ever had to begin with was a set of pencils, some paper, some charcoal and a lot of time.

A whole lot of time and a little bit of talent that can be developed is exactly what all of us start out with. Young Kelvin Okafor took his talent and honed it to perfection through single-minded dedication to his craft. While his friends were out having a good time, he was practising his technique. He knew that if you have talent, then you don't need money.

To me, the best thing in the world is if you can turn yourself into a one-man or one-woman industry. You are your best resource and you can find a way to turn your mind, your hands and your whole body (if you need to) into the only things you'll ever need to have a successful life. Once you've perfected your talent, the money will follow. Everyone has some special talent. If you think you don't, you need to wake up and identify what yours is, before you lose it completely. Because a talent only sticks with you if you look after it and you use it. Stop spending so much time just admiring others. Admire them if it inspires you – but use your time to hone your skills.

Towards the end of the writing of this book I made the acquaintance of the producers of a TV show called *An Idiot Abroad*, which is quite a famous international programme about an "idiot" named Karl Pilkington who goes around the world in one of the most original and unusual travel shows you'll ever see. Karl is, to me, one of the funniest guys in the world and he's not even trying to be funny. He's just being himself, reacting honestly to whatever he's seeing or

hearing about. Karl is not well-read, terribly curious about anything, ambitious or even that concerned that his friends regularly refer to him as a great imbecile.

He's certainly not the first person someone would think of as the definition of a hustler, but there's still something we can all learn from his story.

In the show's first episode, when he goes to China, he's asked to visit a fortune-teller who'll tell him about his future. Karl says something about this that has stuck with me. When he was born, if someone had told his dad Karl would not do very well at school and would leave with only an E in history Karl says his dad may have said: "All right, his life is going to be a load of shite. Get the brick." And that would have been the end of young Karl.

But Karl went on to have not only a pretty comfortable career as a radio show producer, but after the British writer and comedian Ricky Gervais "discovered" him Karl became part of the world's most downloaded series of podcasts and his travel show now has a global audience of 250 million people.

Karl has been mocked for being an idiot more than anyone else on earth, but he's unbelievably successful today. Along the way he may have been led to believe he had no discernible talents, but he has caused millions who would otherwise never have tuned in to yet another boring, overly informative travel show, to tune in and watch him having a terrible time all over the world.

It turned out that Karl, against all the odds, had a great gift. He's a loveable everyman. That's why I can say, so confidently, that everyone has a special talent and everyone can bring something to the party.

Touchy Subjects

An Australian friend of mine once had a meeting with a wealthy Mozambican landowner. My friend, who is one of the world's biggest agriculturalists, asked me to accompany him to meet with the man and help him decide on whether it was worth investing in Mozambique's farming industry.

We flew to Mozambique and this gentleman picked us up.

The more we spent time with this Mozambican, the more we liked him. My friend was evidently impressed with this guy. Not only was he showing himself to be a good businessman, but he was clearly also a man of good principle, judging by the stories he was telling us.

He gave a sterling presentation about his land and its excellent prospects. My investor friend was more than keen and gave the assurance he was fully on board for the various projects in Mozambique. We then had a delicious lunch and enjoyed another great conversation about farming and life in general. Our host was an excellent storyteller and he regaled us with anecdotes and jokes. As we were on our way back at the airport, though, just before our return to South Africa, our host ran our car over a dog. The Mozambican just carried on talking as if nothing had happened. Whether that poor animal was dead or alive meant nothing to him.

I could see my friend, who is a great animal lover, looked pale and horrified. He and I exchanged disbelieving glances.

From that moment on I knew it wouldn't matter how good a project it was, how good the man's business principles might be or anything. My friend had already lost and forgotten every reason he'd ever had to invest with this man.

It's like that with many people. If you listen to how they speak about themselves and their great principles and so on, it would be easy to think that everyone you meet is kind and generous person. Few of us have the introspection to really analyse what sort of person we really are and, if we don't like what we find, try to

be better. It's in our deeds that we give ourselves away and, in the long run, we are judged only by our actions – not our words and the empty promises we can utter.

We bid the Mozambican a polite farewell at the airport, but my friend and I already knew he would never see us again.

Kenny and I once worked on a deal to export granite from Zimbabwe to Italy. We believed we had done everything right and we agreed on a lucrative deal with an Italian billionaire.

As custom required, we took our guest and potential benefactor to dinner and spoke about everything from soccer to politics. As the wine flowed, the talk improved. Kenny, in his usual assuring manner, told the investor his team had led the negotiations so well they could probably sell “dope to the pope”. To us, saying that was meant to be a compliment.

The Italian, though, got visibly angry and red in the face. He asked us how we dared to use the word dope in the same sentence as the pope. He asked us how it was we could have so little respect for the pope or Catholicism. I realised our deal was in danger so I tried to assure the Italian that I had been brought up as a member of the Catholic faith and was still part of the church.

Instead of calming him down, this only made him angrier. It prompted him to ask me if I had no shame or no pride in my religion. How could I allow somebody I worked with to so blatantly insult the highest member of our church?

He looked and acted like a man ready to send us to hell. He stormed out of the restaurant, but not before he left enough money to cover the bill. He told us he could never have men who had made fun of his faith pay for his bill.

Kenny and I were shocked to the core. We couldn't even speak until Kenny said I should at least look on the bright side. We'd gotten a free dinner.

More seriously, though, you should beware of the strong feelings that religion can invoke and try never to be on the wrong side of it. Even modern-day wars are fought over religion. If people are willing to take up arms over religion than cancelling a deal or a relationship is not much of a step.

Business partners usually spend a lot of time with one another before they are about to conclude a deal. A lot of discussion and planning takes place. Scenarios

and profits are planned at these gatherings. Who should be hired and who should lead the company are also discussed at dinners and luncheons. Several topics come up simply because partners want to feel one another out, and the most dangerous topic to avoid is religion. If it does come up you should first get a sense of what the other guys' views are on the topic before you open your mouth. Open your mouth only if you absolutely have to. Also be prepared to say that you respect all religions and would like to know more about other people's faiths. And don't just say it but ask questions about people's religions and have something good to say about what they tell you. Remember, you're a hustler wanting a deal, you're not there to discover or debate any theological or philosophical truths, and yours is not the place to make any definite religious statements.

So watch what you say.

A very religious contact of mine once invited me to join him for lunch with a young entrepreneur. My contact obviously wanted to invest in the ideas of this young man, and my contact, as he customarily does, opened the lunch with a four-minute prayer making it abundantly obvious how religious he is. The young man tried to curry favour by using the religion card. He said "God bless you" a couple of times and my contact was hugely impressed until he asked the young man if he reads the Bible. The young man opened his bag and actually took out a Bible, saying every spare minute he had he would read and study from God's word. That was a big mistake, because my contact then asked him a perfectly innocent question: "What's your favourite verse?" You could have heard a pin drop in the silence that followed. When my contact pressed him for an answer, he blurted out that all the verses mattered equally much. But he'd obviously just given himself away as a fraud.

It's a fine line to walk to get along with people who have very different persuasions about life than you do. So show an open mind and good humour. Let people tease you first and they'll eventually be comfortable enough with you that little you could do or say will offend them. Religious people love to save people, so rather act like someone who needs to be saved, instead of coming across as either too righteous for words or a know-it-all. If you find the people you're with aren't religious, then you can let your hair down, so to speak, if you are the same. But otherwise, show respect, and don't be a faker.

Politics, too, is something you need to discuss equally carefully. All I'm going to say is don't let politics or religious beliefs get in the way of great opportunities. Hustlers don't roll that way. During my motivational talks, I always loved to tell

the joke about a young Muslim boy who finds himself enrolled at a Christian school. In Bible class the teacher offers the children a reward of R100 to the first pupil who can tell her who the most powerful person in the world is. The first child gives it a try and says: “Barack Obama!” She says no. The second boy tries: “Jacob Zuma!” Oh no no no, says the teacher. Then the Muslim boy puts up his hand and says: “The most powerful man in the world is our lord and saviour, Jesus Christ.” The teacher is stunned and says, “Mohamed, that’s absolutely correct. But I thought you were a Muslim.” The boy goes to fetch his R100 from her. She then asks him: “Does this mean that you are a Christian now?”

He pockets the hundred rand and says: “No miss. I’m still a Muslim. But business is business.”

Most people hearing that joke, particularly if they were Muslim, saw the funny side of it. But there is also a lesson in it for any hustler.

It’s not possible for everyone, I know, but when you are doing business, you should be willing to trade with people whose ideas and belief systems are very different from your own – and you should be able to speak to whoever you’re dealing with in their sort of language.

Get to know who you’re working with first and try to avoid any touchy subjects – if you must discuss controversial matters, do it professionally, so no one can easily take a disliking to you. Stay diplomatic, though you needn’t be a teacher’s pet. Just remember that an investor is more likely to give you money because he likes you than because you have the best business deal in the world.

I’ve often only had half-baked ideas, but I’ve found investors because they like me and trust me. They end up investing in me, not my perfect plans. And when things go wrong sometimes, we manage to still stay friends or friendly acquaintances (well, mostly we do) because they still like me and are willing to give trying something with me another chance.

Build the Bridge First

Every relationship reaches a point of comfort. That point is when both parties have built trust and respect for each other. It counts as strongly in business and at work as it does between couples – sometimes more so. You might be able to get away with lying and scheming in your sex life, but you need to hold your professional life to the highest possible standard.

There is a line that exists between any two people, and it should never be crossed. As time goes by and those two people experience each other and different things together, that line moves, taking you closer to greater intimacy or friendship. A hustler understands exactly where that line is and he never dares to cross it. When the line shifts, then he shifts with it. It's that simple progression, where you may start off calling somebody Mr Smith, then Alan, then Al, then "my brother" and finally some crazy nickname only you have for that person. Crossing that line too soon is a risk no hustler is willing to take – he knows he has to earn it and only then does it have value. If you start calling a guy whose name is Andrew "Andy", "Ands" or "Mr A" you are very likely to irritate him, particularly if he's a serious kind of guy who doesn't just let his hair down with simply anyone. Everyone has an easy-going side, but don't assume they'll just let you see it or have access to it immediately.

As you start to work with someone and begin to gain more respect for them with the passage of time, you reach that point of comfort. You'll know when you're at that point because you'll feel you've been given a licence to venture into topics and make requests that would have been considered intrusive or rude in the beginning of the relationship. You'll start to tease one another and it'll become very hard to give or take offence in one another's company – you will just implicitly "get" each other.

Too many people get this so terribly wrong. They ask for stuff long before the period of asking for stuff has arrived. They get too personal and – the most common mistake – they reveal far too much about themselves, too early, to people who have not yet done everything to earn their trust.

This covers every possible action – giving things, making invites, proposing plans and so on.

I once had a woman who'd only been working for me for three days invite me to her sister's wedding; I was not at all familiar with her yet, let alone her sister. I should have declined politely but for some reason I decided to go. Nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to experience. Upon my arrival I was whisked away to the main table, which is normally always reserved for family and close friends. Even more embarrassingly, all the different speakers (none of whom I'd ever met) constantly mentioned my name, and I was thanked profusely for attending. Any stranger (as if there could have been anyone there who was more of a stranger than I was) who attended that wedding could have been forgiven for mistaking me as the family's closest friend and patron. I was so put on the spot there, and I felt sorry for the groom who must have mistaken me for a long lost brother (or worse yet, perhaps the love of her life who'd got away) judging by the lavish praise his bride heaped upon me.

My late father was fond of making stuff with his hands, mainly through carpentry. He made a frame for me many years ago which I kept in my office to keep the memory of him close to me and remind me what a special man he was. A new PA, who was still on a probation period at one of my corporate jobs, a few weeks into her stint decided to buy me a new frame and rearrange the furniture in my office. Upon my return my eye immediately fell on the absent frame. It had been replaced by some kitsch, shiny piece of crap and, trying to keep my cool, I asked her to please reinstate the old frame she'd found there.

But she'd thrown it out with the rubbish and it couldn't be found again. I fired her immediately, and no one dared to say a word to me about it.

As for personal boundaries, it doesn't get more intrusive than the issue of lending money. It's one we all have to deal with at some point. Someone who won't even be that close to you will ask to borrow money from you at some point. It will come as a shock, because this will be someone you would never dream of asking for money in a pinch. Somehow they just don't see that there isn't enough shared history and trust between you for this sort of thing to happen. Not only do such people fail to get a loan from me, but it probably means the end of the relationship too – but if they'd only allowed time to work its magic, perhaps we would have become friends down the line, and then I would maybe even have felt insulted if that person didn't come to me for help when they were in trouble.

The lesson here is all about timing. Before you propose, give an invite, ask for a favour or even want to give someone something (particularly advice) make sure that you guys are “cool like that”.

Once you’ve reached a certain point with someone, your friendship could last a lifetime, even if you only see one another once a year. Every time you do see each other, it’s like nothing has changed and that bond of trust, loyalty and respect remains always. If that doesn’t exist, trying to pretend or force the matter will just cause whatever you do have to crumble even faster.

A CEO once told me how the woman making tea at his office bought him a pair of shoes worth double her salary. He wondered if perhaps she thought his shoes were horrible. Secondly, how do you react to such a gift? What does he buy her? Something double his salary? In that case it would have had to be a new car. Her gift caused him more problems than it was worth and put a strain on their relationship from that point forward. That’s not what gifts are supposed to be. Timing and understanding the stage you are at in all your relationships is the key to building a network of people around you who you can turn to and who can turn to you when it matters most.

Making New Contacts

Most senior executives, entrepreneurs and celebrities will most probably never admit to you just how much they hate having to give out their number. It's uncomfortable when you ask for someone's number and, after a two-second silence, you can see they are still unsure. At that point, you just feel like saying never mind, but the awkwardness will remain even if you do get the number anyway.

Hustlers ought to know better.

Be strategic. Calculate your move. For instance, when you do need someone's number desperately you should play it like a pro. Spend the time you have with the person trying to make sure they offer you their details without you even having to ask. The only way to do that is by making yourself the guy to know, not the guy who needs to be avoided.

Start by finding out everything about the person whose details you are targeting. Compliments are gold. Compliment them on their work, preferably in the company of other people. Try to get them to ask you about what you are doing, then open the charm and the exaggeration. Just make yourself sound more important, interesting and perhaps even richer than you are. There are ways to do this without completely lying, but sometimes completely lying is a lot simpler, faster and easier.

Remember that, just as famous people love famous people, rich people love rich people and successful people love successful people. It is just a peer thing and that successful person will want to avoid feeling guilty about being around a poor guy or a nobody, so if you can say or do something to make them relax around you, at least they will give you a chance. If they later find out that you aren't nearly as successful or rich, they will at least have got to know you better and – I've found – if you are actually friends by then it won't matter. They might even feel guilty, with the sure knowledge in the back of their mind that they would have judged you too early to get to know you anyway. Plus you never asked them for money despite perhaps needing it.

I may be quite successful today, but I had to pretend to be better off for years first. If I hadn't, many of my business contacts would have run for the hills. If, despite your best efforts to seem like somebody worth knowing, they still haven't asked for your number or offered you theirs, use a line that doesn't seem to make getting the number the main priority, though that's all you're really after. I have used the line: "Who does your suits? Can you refer me to your tailor/designer?" If that still doesn't work then you can get his number from whoever dresses him or the place he buys his suits from.

Another sure-fire winner is for your wife/girlfriend to befriend their partner. Compliments can also start that relationship, and much more easily. Many guys are doing business today because their wives or girlfriends met originally and were friends first.

This is clearly not someone who'll just offer up a phone number. Just ask for it, then, directly. You'll probably get a business card, if you're lucky. If you don't get the direct number, you'll probably get the PA's number. It's only later that you can try to find that person on LinkedIn or connect via some other social network or email.

If nothing you're doing seems to be working, then make peace with it. You may be able to find that person on Twitter and get them interested in something you're tweeting, but social networks are a notoriously difficult place to really build strong contacts. I try to interact with my Twitter followers as much as I can, but it's just impossible to reply to every question every person asks me on a social network open to endless thousands. If that person isn't following you it also won't be possible for you to send him or her a direct message using Twitter. If you can't do that, you may not want the whole world to see whatever it is you're writing to someone. Social media is really a hit-and-miss kind of way to make contact. It is most effective after the face-to-face meeting, which will always be the only truly reliable way to be remembered after making a good impression on someone. Once you have someone's contact details remember that the magic lies not in whether or not you get the number but in whether or not the person remembers you when you call or send an email. I know only too well how annoying it is having a stranger call me and then we spend the first two minutes trying to get reacquainted, while I struggle to put a face to the voice. Those calls are hugely embarrassing for both parties and mostly end up going nowhere.

The golden rule is don't forget you should not make a nuisance of yourself in your pursuit of someone's contact details. Be canny. Be relentless, but do it graciously.

Once you have that number, at some point all of us will have that call we have to make that means a great deal and which might secure a big deal. The call is usually to some CEO or senior politician. It's somebody we have perhaps met only once and he gave you his number, or you managed to hustle his number somehow.

If he gave you his number you probably had to explain why you needed it so he already knows what you're about and he's willing to listen further. If he told you to call his office then call his office. Call until they give you the meeting, if that's what your target already agreed to do. You'll get your meeting even if it's just because they don't want you calling there any more. I can't tell you how many times my secretaries ask me to have a meeting simply because the caller is driving them crazy. I've gone on and met whoever it is, and sometimes something has come from that.

If you have hustled that number from wherever and he has never heard of you, then my advice would be send him a text. You can say more in a text than in a call, you won't be interrupted and you can phrase your message exactly as you'd like. You can reread and change a text, but if you accidentally blurt out something foolish in a phone call, there's no taking that back.

Most, if not all, top businessmen don't have the time or the patience to be hearing your smart mouth yapping away during a call. You might have that phone call after sending your text, but you won't be able to follow up with a text after he tells you he is not interested – unless you want to tell him to go hang himself, which will come back to haunt you one way or another anyway.

By sending a text I don't mean send an essay. Your text should be brief and precise, cutting straight to the chase. Leave the compliments and kissing of arse for when you get a face-to-face meeting. Remember that if you just try a blind call then chances are he will be in a meeting, driving, spending time with family, watching sports or will have just missed your call because he was in the shower.

There's always a better chance you're calling at a bad time than a good time. But there is never a bad time to text and few people, especially people who matter, miss a text.

One final bit of advice: don't start with: "Hi sir, my name is". Write your name at the end of the text and keep your middle name to yourself. Your middle name only has a place at your criminal trial, your funeral, your wedding or on the cover of the epic fantasy trilogy you authored. For cellphone text messages, just your name and, perhaps, surname is more than enough.

And feel free to call people by their first name. You're not at school and we're not living in 1954 any more. You'll know when it's necessary to be more respectful, but as a general rule you want to get onto first-name terms with someone as soon as you can.

Once you have someone's attention, always remember what I consider a cardinal rule about making any sort of pitch to a possible investor, business partner, employer or landlord: do your proposal in person.

At one stage, we wanted to take our ZAR night club brand all over the country. We decided to call it Pop-Up-ZAR, but we needed the perfect portable structure that could be erected anywhere in hours, could look classy for parties and private functions and then be dismantled again ever faster. I had an idea of what we needed and I'd seen some things on my travels that appealed to me.

We started Googling and found the perfect structures, but they were only available in London. We emailed the contact person for the website. He replied immediately. I asked to see him the next day. Within the next few hours, I was on my way to London. I met him the next day at lunchtime.

We spoke. He sold me a structure and I sold him the idea of me becoming the sole agent for his product in Africa. We agreed and I left London the next day with a deal. Today these structures are a significant contributor to our business.

Several months later, Andy, the man who'd sold me the structures, told me he hadn't believed I would come. When I did arrive I pitched a very convincing argument about why I should be his agent in Africa. It was something he would most likely not have agreed to had I just emailed him a proposal. Proposals are necessary and even great when you can't go personally. But passion doesn't shine through on paper. Papers can't read people's faces. You can't adjust your presentation to match the reaction you're getting while a preplanned proposal is being read. You may think you can guess how your writing and pictures will be received, but you're really just hoping for the best, and if you haven't even met the person you're pitching to it's even harder.

Papers don't change tact on the spot. So use all you can to get a face-to-face meeting. If that is not possible then make sure you put together a very sexy proposal, one that screams "Read me!"

Do the following:

One, be short but descriptive. Two, be sexy. The cover should look appealing. Three, the returns you're offering should be worth the loan or other benefit you're asking for. Be clear how this will happen. Four, leave lots of praise about the person or company you're pitching to out of the proposal. It's too early for sucking up. People in most companies would rather put a nephew or niece's proposal in the pack and shove yours in the bin. And, unfortunately, the most common outcome is one in which they steal your idea lock, stock and copier machine.

That's harder to do when you meet someone face to face, look them in the eye and close the deal. Once that handshake has been shook, the deal is more real, more tangible. It's no guarantee, but it's the best shot you're going to get.

Being a Pawn

As most of us know, pawns get used, abused and sacrificed during a game of chess. Unfortunately, life is also full of pawns. If your opponent has more of them, he can have a powerful advantage.

Everybody has been a pawn in someone's game, sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly; sometimes willingly, sometimes unwillingly. But we've been pawns all the same. Being a pawn is not necessarily a bad thing. It can sometimes be a very good thing when it advances your own agenda by being part of someone else's bigger plan.

Let me simplify it – If you have dreams to become a millionaire and someone is using you in his game, which could make him a billionaire, while making you a millionaire, you might not always agree with his approach to doing things, but as long as it makes you reach your dream and it's legal, why would you complain in the end?

Also, in most cases he will think you are stupid, but the joke is on him. Let me explain. I once met this white guy, Jake, who befriended me only because he liked the idea of wanting to give off a tough-guy image and show his friends that he knew ex-gangsters and an assortment of dangerous people coming from long stretches of imprisonment. Some of these people did not just live in the underworld. They'd built their mansions there.

He was pretty rich. He invited me to all his functions and would insist I tell stories about my past to his friends. After one of his many functions my girlfriend, with tears in her eyes, told me that I was being blind to this guy's actions and that he was simply using me. He had made me his show dog. She said she couldn't stand it any more. I told her not to worry, I had this one under control. She wasn't convinced and I had to stop taking her along whenever he was around or she would mess up my hustle by walking around with a long face.

Many months later she couldn't get her brother into a top rugby school. The waiting list had 4 000 people on it. When we went to the school the principal embraced me. He invited me into his office and talked about my prison stories, then told his deputy what good friends we were and how we had hung out together at our friend Jake's house. My girlfriend's brother and three of his cousins were admitted to the school.

When we were in the parking lot I asked her if she remembered how angry she had been when she accused Jake of only using me. I told her that nobody had been more aware that he was using me to boast his street credentials, but I was gaining far more than that. He was introducing me to his powerful and wealthy network of contacts, people I could later call on anytime, particularly as some of my old stories suggested that you might be digging your own grave by saying no to me. (Hey, there has to be some upside to everyone's scepticism about me being a completely reformed man).

I was a pawn, but pawns get promoted if they stick around long enough. A significant proportion of my business success today has come from those early introductions.

There's a final note I can share on being not just a pawn, but knowing when you should not try to act like the king. On the occasions when you meet someone with significant power or influence, who has the ability to either help you or make your life a hell, don't make the classic mistake of suddenly trying to show what a big man you are and how you are not intimidated or frightened by the other guy's power.

Perhaps you should be.

I've seen this when people get stopped by traffic cops for example, after they've clearly done something wrong, and if there are people in the car the driver will try to "impress" them by making a bold or sarcastic comment to the traffic officer.

There is simply nothing more stupid. That guy can just arrest you right there because he doesn't like your face. He'll toss your girlfriend in the back of the van too on some pretext or the other and God only knows what could happen to not just you, but her, when you get to the police holding cells.

You want to be as respectful and humble in that moment as you can be. If the guy says "good evening" to you and it's twelve noon, you should not even attempt to

correct him. Just say “yes, sir” like you mean it. I am well-trained in the art of knowing how to make even the dumbest man think he is lording it over me when, in fact, it’s me ultimately getting what I want. It’s a skill every prisoner worth his salt has in his armoury.

I know of guys who were trying to be funny to passport-control officers at foreign airports and they got blacklisted from ever travelling to that country again. Know when you’re completely outgunned and don’t even twitch a finger, never mind making a move to draw your weapon.

It’s a skill that applies everywhere in life: from dealing with a guy who is about to interview you on TV to the bombastic uncle of the girl you just fell in love with. Know when not to be a smartarse, and know when to act like the super-respectful person that other person wants you to be.

Being a pawn is always perfectly fine, as long as you’re looking to survive the game long enough to be promoted to a queen. If somebody is my loyal servant for ten years only to later leave me to become even more successful than I am by using everything he has learnt from me, by making connections with everyone I know and by using his association with me to further his own future plans I would probably not be pleased. But that certainly would be a pretty good hustle, if he could pull it off.

Fly Below the Radar

People get new jobs and excitedly ask their seniors what is expected from them. It is a good question but it is by far not the most important question. That question is one you can only ask yourself: what am I expecting to gain and achieve with my new job? The answer you give should make your life and your difficult days at work easier because you will know why you sometimes take the abuse that comes your way, because you know where you're heading.

Set yourself a goal, be realistic about it, and then plot the steps required to achieve it. Stop and gauge how far you've come, how much further you need to go, and figure out if you need to make any small changes right now to keep yourself on track towards that goal.

If your aim is to become the boss, it may be wise to check the age of your present boss and how long it took him or her to be there now. Also try to work out how valued he or she is at the company and if the answer is "very highly valued", then ask yourself how far he or she may be from retirement or death's door. If he or she still has a good ten years before retirement and you're willing to wait then you should start executing your rise to the top by doing the one thing that is too much of a paradox for many people to understand: you need to downplay your ambition.

What most hustlers who advertise their ambition from the get-go fail to understand is that they immediately attract not just attention, but competition and hate. Too early in the game they end up spending half their time and energy on fighting wars. They are not even near the top yet but find themselves involved in all sorts of daily skirmishes with colleagues – because only a fool thinks he is the only one who wants to become the boss.

All those people surrounding him, playing down their ambitions, are just as keen as he is – they're just playing the game more skilfully.

Your first task in any new job is to not be an ass and to execute your job, whatever it may be, as flawlessly as possible. Even if it's a less important task, do

it brilliantly and be noticed for all the right reasons. Get your colleagues to appreciate having you around – even if they may feel you have a strong chance of being promoted over them, having you around makes everyone's lives easier and the more they rely on your skills, knowledge and expertise the harder it will be for them to undermine you. It doesn't matter how much people may hate you, if you're great at what you do, they'll be powerless to criticise you and, if they do, it'll just reflect poorly on them and they'll end up being the giant arses at work. Sooner or later it just works out that way.

Know, learn, ask, research and investigate everything that is expected of you in order for you never to be caught not having done what was or is expected from you. In our labour-unionised, rights-driven world few people will tell you this, but distinguish yourself from the rest by doing your job unfailingly. Since so many people are merely going to work to get away with doing the bare minimum, you're at an advantage before you even start the day – just because you're willing to work harder. And, as the saying goes, if you want something done, ask someone who's already busy. More good things will come your way the busier you get. You will earn more money in the long run. Sooner or later it will balance itself out. There are no guarantees that working hard and making self-sacrifices will get you to where you want to be, nor are there any guarantees that you will even be rewarded fairly, but I can categorically guarantee that if you are always lazy and doing the bare minimum you have no hope, miracles aside, of breaking through any ceilings or barriers to get to the next level in your life. The other slackers that surround you will wallow with you in self-gratification, like pigs in mud, and you'll all bump up against each other and feel good together and snort and snigger about how little you are doing every day, but that is taking you nowhere, faster than you could ever imagine.

Life, and real hustlers, will turn you into bacon, when what you should be doing, every day, is bringing the bacon home.

You should get noticed from the top for nothing other than your excellent work ethic, work rate and professional attitude towards your colleagues. Whenever someone mentions that you could be the boss one day, just politely say: "I still have a lot to learn," and walk away. It may not be a trap, but it probably is. Never forget that haters will compliment you on something they actually hate about you, just to gauge your reaction to it. If you say: "A promotion would be nice," the next thing you know, all the hallways will be filled with whispers about you and how you think you're better than everyone else. "Oh, he thinks he can be the boss now, doesn't he? We'll have to bring him down a notch or two."

And believe me, if you're not already keeping yourself on that low notch, everyone around you will go out of their way to do it. The best way to really rise to the top is if the group selects you for the responsibility of leadership. You can only do that by showing your commitment is, first and foremost, the welfare of the group – the company, the brand, the people who work there – and secondly to yourself. People always put their own interests first, and are more likely to back a leader who they trust. And they will trust someone who they think will be good for their own career and development in turn.

But the interests of your job and the company always come first. The golden rule about promotion remains that you must be respected and liked by your boss. Your future is in the hands of your boss or the business' owner. He decides what he thinks about you and what the board or senior management should know about you. Be the first in his mind when he needs a task to be executed flawlessly.

If you can manage it, don't go home if your boss is still in the office. Nothing impresses a boss more than someone who puts a few more hours in, but make sure you have something to show for that time. You don't want to create the impression that you're so slow you can't get your work done in normal office hours.

Don't just do it when he is around either. The security guys at the gate are the biggest spies in a company. Make sure they know that you work late, even when the boss isn't around. Bosses are wise to people just trying to impress them. If you do it when they're not around, or when you think they don't have their eye on you (but invariably, the word will get back to them), then they'll know your commitment is to your work, not to just impressing them.

Hiring Staff

When your business requires you to hire more staff, the best thing you can do is to sit in on those interviews. It's tempting to let other people deal with this time-consuming chore, particularly if there are many people on a shortlist and it might take all day to see them all. But ultimately, as business owners, when shifty behaviour hits our business, the buck stops with us, so the hiring and firing of staff will always be the most important factor in how your business grows and succeeds or fails. Keep hiring the right people and your business will thrive. Hire just one wrong person, and you could spend the rest of your life mopping up that person's mess.

You can learn a lot from interviewing a person. As the owner of the business you know what type of people you need around you to fulfil your dream. It is much easier to say to a person "we'll let you know" and then inform them they haven't been hired than to go through the complicated process of having to fire them later. In many countries, like America, it's easier to fire people – which, obviously, makes it easier to hire them too, because it's not such a high-risk proposition. Here in South Africa, because of the dark political history we have, labour law is a lot heavier and more prescriptive, so before you commit to hiring someone, you need to be pretty sure you're very willing to say "I do" to the question "are you sure you want to sign a full-time work contract with this guy?"

The interview will also make it easy to see if the person you read about on the CV is the same one sitting in front of you. Nowadays CVs are usually full of a lot of bull. Looking through CVs you start thinking that they come from a world where every single player on every team in the world was, somehow, also the team captain. In the interview you'll have a front-row seat to gauge how this person reacts when they're nervous and how they respond to pressure, even if it's just the slightly artificial pressure of an interview environment.

Don't commit the biggest blunder when you're conducting an interview by telling your prospective employee what you require and expect from them without asking them what they expect from the company in return. You'd be surprised to hear

expectations of the heaven and earth and it's far better to hear that before you sign on the dotted line.

If you're not part of vetting the interview process, chances are also high that whoever is in charge of it will hire friends or family. It is easy to say that you're too busy to attend interviews, but never lose sight of the fact that people want jobs much more than you want employees. Interviews can be scheduled around your time, and if a person really wants the job you're offering, they would be willing to meet at midnight in the local graveyard.

Examples of who not to hire are everywhere. Unfortunately, those examples are clear too late. They wear a mask until you've hired them and then, with every task they perform, their mask slowly comes off. These people can talk a good game. When you met them they blew you away with the greatest ideas you had ever heard – the only thing lacking was their ability to implement any of their brainwaves.

These are the kinds of gifted, intelligent men and women who have brought down big companies. They are able to mimic the look, behavior and style of very successful people, but it's all completely superficial and they truly have only one way of doing things, and that's not doing it well.

These people are the inventors of short cuts. They don't give a damn about the future or long-term prospects of the company. They love the saying that if you want loyalty then buy a dog. They are like a hurricane that leaves nothing but destruction along their path. They don't specialise in the normal office gossip. They do the deeply destructive kind that makes good people resign or people who have worked harmoniously together for years reach a point that they can't stand the sight of each other.

They don't even understand the finer points of their own job but they are experts on how your company should be run. Once they know everything about your company and all the secrets of everybody who works there, they will feel or think nothing to unleash those secrets to further their own agenda. They genuinely believe life has dealt them a bad hand if they are not the head of any company they join. They then try to change that by lying, stealing, stirring up all kinds of trouble and plotting against everybody

These are the kinds of people that you should avoid and certainly should never hire, but most importantly, never become.

I also always get asked the question about whether or not one should hire family. My answer is always the same: don't hire anybody you can't fire. You can hire family as long as they are aware they can be fired. I have hired many family members and have fired almost as many too.

In most instances it is the best possible option to work with family members, simply because there are always other avenues to solve arguments than through strike action, the bonds of loyalty are strongest between family members and they can be spoken to and reached through another family member if a problem might arise. Family members don't just see working for or with you as a job but they can feel some sense of shared and pride and ownership in the family enterprise.

Jealousy, however, is something you will have to deal with fiercely, because family members are even more prone to jealousy than ordinary workers – because family members have to constantly deal with questions of how come they don't have their own businesses, how come you pay so little, how come someone else got that promotion when they're not even family ... and so on.

There is also constant pressure on family members to become the go-between between you and your staff and they can become dangerous couriers of gossip, vulnerable to people manipulating them, because everyone knows that they have the ear of the boss. After all, you'll probably be chatting to them around some aunt's dinner table once or twice a month at least. Whenever you hire family it is important to make them understand they have to respect whoever their immediate boss may be. They can't run to you to complain about how they're being treated and you need to reassure whoever you've put in charge of that family member that you not only expect them to be as hard on your family members as they are on the non-family staff, but that they should be even tougher on them. By not dealing with this issue you run the risk of two centres of power being formed. The last thing you want in any business is to feel like you're one parent being played off another by a bunch of manipulative kids – and this applies even if the family member you've hired is older than you. They are the even more problematic staff, because they'll feel that they know more than you do and will take decisions about the business without even consulting with you first, "because it's for your own good". That sort of thing will make you screaming mad – but if you've decided to give people in your family a chance you'll just have to manage them the same way you do everyone else: however you have to do it to get the results you want.

That remains the ancient and golden rule of management: obtain results from other people. Whether those people are family members, strangers, acquaintances or even enemies, getting them to do what you want them to do is the very essence and definition of management. Whatever you have to do to achieve that, you'll figure out. Everyone's different and needs to be managed differently. It's up to you to figure out how to do it and, if nothing you're trying is working, then fire them. Even if it means firing your mother – it's just something you're going to have to ask forgiveness from God for one day when you're dead.

It might seem as if it is easier to hire strangers – but if you have dealt with the first hurdle, which is to be clear that even family can be fired (and you have done so when you've had to) then you have already solved most of your problems with working with family.

Hustlers starting a new business sometimes have to pay the salaries of people working for them on the “34th” of every month. It's always going to be much easier to explain your cash flow troubles to a family member than to a stranger. Family members don't go to unions. They go to your auntie. Fearsome as your auntie might be, the last thing a hustler needs is a union on his back. Your auntie will not bring you and your business to its knees. The union, though, may just decide to make an example of you – and when that happens, a business is lucky to still be standing by the end of it.

Fine Print

You'll encounter more "legal" scams in the corporate world than "illegal" scams inside or outside of it. I call it "legal" because even though companies have a legal foot to stand on they are still merely out to screw you. They will write in big letters what you stand to gain, but the terms and conditions will be racked up for page after page in fine print. This trick is as old as the hills. The phrase "check the fine print" has been around forever, but it's a trick that still works.

They usually trick old people most easily because they struggle to see and read properly even with their glasses on. To read fine print they need a magnifying glass.

The other legal scam is "Ts and Cs apply".

Terms and conditions are sometimes just standard stuff for competitions and promotions, and if it's being offered by a reputable magazine or business, when you read the Ts and Cs you'll just see the same old thing about how the family and friends of the business' employees can't enter, the judges' decision is final and so on. But there could also be seriously unpleasant stuff in there too, so before you enter anything, sign up to any "special deal" or rock up at an event or gathering expecting something for nothing, read those terms and conditions. You're a hustler, it's an extra step most people don't bother with – but they're not trying to be a hustler. You are. You do your research before you get involved with anything – and that's an attitude you need to spread to everything in your life.

To find the Ts and Cs you're often told to visit a website or somewhere else in hell to get the real facts. These things are done to dupe an unsuspecting public and create a legal grounding for a company to say that they have followed the letter of the law, even if the letters they used to do that were hidden at the bottom of some website somewhere or printed so small that a flea could feel like a giant roaming across that page of fine print.

Many people have lost good money where fine print is concerned.

Here's a simple example: a colleague of mine was once very impressed with himself for finding an insurance quote at only half the price of what we were paying on our mining bakkies that travelled to Zimbabwe and back. He had mentioned to the insurer that the bakkies were used for work in Zimbabwe and would be crossing the border regularly.

However, what was only in the fine print was that if any of those bakkies ended up in an accident in Zimbabwe, they would not be insured. Or we would be lucky if we could tow them back to South Africa and perhaps have a chance of getting them repaired at the insurer's expense. Fortunately, we didn't have to make this unpleasant discovery later, because my colleague checked the fine print and was amazed by some of the exclusion clauses he found there.

Suddenly it was a lot clearer to him why these guys could afford to be so much cheaper than anyone else; it would take a miracle to get them to pay anything out.

You don't stand a chance in a court of law if you take on these legal scams. Many have tried, but all have failed. As soon as you put your signature to a contract, acknowledging that you've read and accepted all the terms it contains, you are lost if you haven't. After the ink dries, whether you like what you see in the fine print or not matters about as much as whether you like how the sun comes up or goes down every day. It's not something you have any power to change.

All you have power over is making sure you sign only those things you are one-hundred percent sure of.

As a hustler you should read and reread that fine print. Ignore the advert, no matter how pretty the girl in the bikini might be and how convincingly she's telling you this product is all you need to complete your life – read that fine print as if you are studying for an exam and fine print is your only major subject.

Just because there's a lot of fine print out there, though, does not mean you should avoid anything that has it. All I'm saying is you should always be aware of exactly what it is you're signing up for. Most hustlers don't understand the importance of insurance for a new businessman, or any businessman for that matter. The tendency is to think only car insurance and medical aid matters. We don't understand how critical it is to insure a business as much as possible, at all times.

My Italian acquaintance, who owns a top clothing shop in Sandton one day had a pipe burst right on top of his shop. There was water everywhere. He had just stocked up on a whole new range of expensive imported clothing from Italy. Everything from the boxes in the back to the clothes on the shelves were wet. There was no way he could ever sell any of that stuff as new merchandise after that. Had it been me, I would have been devastated.

But my acquaintance was as cool as a cucumber. He assessed the situation and told his shop assistant to call his insurance broker. I was in awe because I realised, with a mounting feeling of guilt, that I had not insured anything in any of our different businesses. Since then I've invested in some of the best policies around, tailor made for the kinds of things I'm trying to do. When we still had the frozen fish and chicken business, thieves disassembled the bricks in two walls to break into our warehouse. They stole computer and video equipment worth hundreds of thousands – but we were able to replace it all within a week or two because of insurance.

The money didn't cover the full loss, but getting eighty percent of your money back looks like a pretty sweet deal when all you've got left are some bricks scattered on the floor and some footprints in the dust where your office server used to be.

At our nightclubs, too, we were able to put in successful claims for staff stealing from us and even customers skipping on their bills. You'd be surprised what you can buy coverage for. Do your homework. You can even get insurance against cash-flow problems.

You may end up paying for that insurance for years and never have to use it – don't see that money you paid over to the insurance company as a waste. See it as buying piece of mind, which has let you get on with growing your business without constantly worrying that disaster might strike you. Feeling reassured about that will help you to focus on the things that matter.

Insurance is not a luxury but a necessity – but don't be naive about it either. Insurance companies are businesses too, and they want to make as much money as possible. They will use any excuse they can to get out of paying a claim – so just make sure you've read your contract and you understand the rules, and play by them, so that they simply have no excuse to come to the party.

In 2011 I was involved in an accident with my Audi R8 Spyder. The crash was in all the papers and even news sites around the world. That car was a complete write-off and I was lucky to be alive. The car had been insured for R2.2 million, but the insurance informed me they would only pay me R1.8 million for it as they claimed the odometer reading on the car was more than 20 000km. The thing with those cars is that everything is electronic and the crash had laid waste to that car's computer system. They wanted me to give them the car's key so they could fire up the computer and try to extract the data, including not only what the mileage on the car was (and it wasn't 20 000km) – but also what speed the car had been going when the accident happened, all sorts of information they could use to strengthen their case not to pay me out.

I knew they were just taking a chance and I called their bluff.

I told them to cut the crap and stop calling me non-stop for the key. Unless they had an in-house sangoma at their company who knew what mileage I'd put on the car, I quietly told them that they were asking for a fight if they didn't just pay up. I put my broker onto them too, and he knows every law relating to insurance backwards. He quickly put them in their place and, sure enough, I was finally paid the full amount. Insurance and other policies are all very necessary and you'd be a fool not to use them. Just know that they will always look for a reason not to pay and you'd be a fool to hand that reason to them.

So know everything about your policy, or any other contract you sign for whatever reason. Study that fine print and feel free to ask for all the recordings of the conversations that took place between you and their agents, because a lot of contracts are “signed” verbally over the phone these days. Let a professional listen to what was agreed upon and tell you if you might be in for a nasty surprise later.

Leave The Sideshows

With success comes many sideshows.

Sideshows are different for different people, in different areas of life. But a sideshow is any pleasant distraction that keeps you from achieving what you should really be focusing on.

Sideshows are all the people who want to see you all the time just to be seen with you, who shower you with compliments, who invite you to every social calendar event and product launch, who are perhaps astoundingly good looking and will drown you in parties, sex, piles of free crap you really don't need and wouldn't have bought.

Sideshows can also be more personal: it could just be you getting too carried away by what should only be a hobby, a bit of recreation to relax, or a pastime.

Such distractions are things every successful person must face and overcome.

I'm in no way saying that you shouldn't have fun, or attend different parties or show up at lots of invites (unless you are using these events as part of your master plan to network and hustle). Having fun and relaxing is part of what you need to do to stay energised and enjoy your life (it's no good trying to be successful but not enjoying the journey – I have always agreed with Richard Branson that if you're not having fun while pursuing your dream, then perhaps it isn't worth it).

All I'm saying is that if these things are sideshows in your life, they should not overshadow or interfere with what you need to do to become It should remain a sideshow. The problem for some of us is that we unwittingly become the sideshow ourselves.

A perfect example of this is Damon Dash, the cofounder of Roc-A-Fella records with his partner Jay-Z. Damon Dash, in my opinion, showed some of the biggest foresight by sending himself to boarding school because he wanted a better

education than what he was receiving at the time. But later he got caught up in all the sideshow bullshit of Hollywood, while his partner Jay postponed all the Hollywood lifestyle glitz and glam that wasn't doing anything to promote his music career.

Damon Dash should be featured at the top of the Forbes rich list every time. But he's not there, while Jay-Z is.

Instead of using the sideshows for his benefit, Damon Dash just became part of them and he was eventually just sucked up and consumed by the sideshows. Use the sideshows to hustle. Don't just appear somewhere just for the sake of appearing. There is no better example of this than P-Diddy, who turned his sideshows into main events. He is today one of the world's biggest hip-hop moguls. He negotiated heavy endorsements for himself, and his sideshow parties became even bigger than his music career.

Hustlers, unless you have a P-Diddy mentality, then just stick to your game. You should concentrate on becoming better at what you do and what you know. Don't let sideshows rob you of too much of your time.

As a club owner, one of the things that always astounded me was seeing how some people would be willing to wait up to three hours outside a venue when it's full. They stand around, waiting for someone to leave so that they can finally get a space to enter. People can party for ten hours straight without once looking at their watch. People are patient when it comes to things that don't really matter. They will sacrifice time for something that doesn't rake in cash for them but takes it, they are impatient to go and spend their money but they have no patience for making money. They move from dream to dream, they hate being at work and there they do look at the watch all the time. These are usually very bright people who just have their priorities screwed up.

They justify their behaviour by talking about twaddle, like: "I'm young and I'm allowed to make mistakes." As if mistakes somehow stop the day you stop being young (and when exactly is that day anyway? One day, you will wake up and realise you haven't been young for years – you just failed to notice you were getting old).

Another favourite justification is that when you're young you need to enjoy your life. Let me disabuse you of all of those "young is great" illusions. The secret to having fun is having money. The more money you have, the more fun you will

have. It's got exactly zero to do with your age. So prioritise. Don't waste your time and your good night's sleep standing outside a club week after week. Rather expend your time on doing something that might teach you valuable lessons or give you tangible returns.

Fools still believe that they are working to help their parents. But if you have no trust fund then you are doing it for yourself. Your parents will inevitably pass on and by then you will be a parent yourself. The world is full of Mark Zuckerburgs who have used their youth constructively. Youth exists so that you can use that boundless enthusiasm and energy to make something that will be big and strong enough to last you for the rest of your life and look after you when you're tired and old and just want to chill.

You will never be stronger, brighter and more full of ideas and passion than you are right now. So use it before it's gone.

Drugs

Even worse than the sideshows are drugs.

You might wonder what cocaine has to do with a book like this. The answer is everything. Cocaine, or any drug, is one of the biggest dream killers in the world. As this book is predominantly about dreams it's necessary to speak about dream killers. I have seen greater careers than I could dream of enjoying myself being destroyed by the use of cocaine. I single it out, because it's what successful people use. It can take them from something to nothing in no time.

But any drug addiction will do it too. Addicts or users have one thing in common when they speak about how they started. They all agree that they never went searching for cocaine. It was just there during their first try. You might think it was just there but if you were successful or up-and-coming, then it was a carefully orchestrated plan executed with military precision to get the cocaine at the right place for the right target to get hooked.

Drug dealers will never go to a poor kid's party to donate lines of cocaine. They choose their parties and gatherings very well.

They'll target the most popular kid in school or university, the top-selling artist and actor or the high-flying executive. They have perfected the art of getting you hooked, there's probably a beautiful girl or two involved, or guys if you're female, and their bait is fooling you into thinking that it'll only be this one time. But you have no guarantee you won't get hooked on it.

The entertainment world is awash with drug addicts. They can't come out to ask for help because it will mean losing jobs and status. A few brave souls, like the musician Kabelo, came out and stayed out, but most advertise their addictions and use their "getting help" for more publicity, while others foolishly think they can keep it under control forever. But the only person with the control is your drug dealer. I have seen beautiful girls who reside in Sandton being made to have sex

with stranger after stranger, for one more hit, which costs the dealer less than a dirty Hillbrow prostitute.

It's not a pretty truth, but it is the truth.

Believe this, if you'll believe nothing else you'll read in this book. Drugs will find you. If you move in circles where drugs are readily available it's time to move away from that circle or find a way to limit getting too involved with it.

Believe it or not, people you consider friends will get paid a fee, or be paid in drugs themselves, to get you addicted. Your band members and hangers-on are sometimes in on the deal to make you a customer for life. I have seen Ferraris, yachts, mansions and family fortunes disappearing up people's noses. Who do you think you are, if you couldn't even stand your ground to say no the first time, how will you do it for the second, third or thousandth time?

The original hustlers were people like Jay-Z, who started out as young drug dealers on the corners of their hometowns. Those guys were selling the shit, but the greatest shame for any hustler was being discovered using it. Your status would instantly drop – the other hustlers would know you weren't serious about the game and you'd be looking at a life of only trouble and disappointment.

I'm certainly not saying go out there and be a drug dealer, but understand the point that if you are using drugs, then you are not a hustler. You are being hustled. And that thought alone should fill you with revulsion.

The saddest part for me is that every female and male drug user is a prostitute in waiting. The moment your money to buy finally runs out your body will have to be sold, unless you take the other road, which is stealing. That's even worse, because that way ends in prison, where you will be turned into someone's sex slave anyway. There, though, you'll be doing it for free.

So take it from a guy who has seen life from the very bottom of a hole in a prison, where almost everyone's on some kind of drug, to sitting on the board of listed companies to notice that bit of white powder on the CEO's black suit and the way he's fidgeting with his nose.

No one is bigger than an addiction, so don't be the next fool who thinks he could be. You'll be kissing your dreams goodbye.

Do It Now

I know only too well how every sentence of guys in prison starts with: “I should have done this or should have done that.” When I left prison I thought I had left behind the Temple of I Should Have Done, but outside I was surprised at how frequently I kept on hearing the tune played by the Should-Have-Done-It Band.

I get bombarded with good ideas from young people wanting my help, but upon closer inspection I almost always realise that my involvement is not really required. When I ask these young people why they can’t do it on their own they will give me all sorts of reasons of why they can’t make it work on their own, when it’s plain as day that it will work if they only put in the necessary effort.

Procrastination, to me, is the number one reason many people are poor. They usually have no good reason for postponing things but they do. They believe that tomorrow is always a good time to do something.

It makes me think of the famous example of the bar with the sign that says: “Come back tomorrow for free beer”, but that sign is such a part of the décor that it’s permanently framed and mounted on the wall.

If you’re always going to wait to do something tomorrow, you’ll reach that horrible moment in your life when you realise you have less time ahead of you than what you have behind you, and you have nothing to show for it. Don’t let such a common fate befall you.

Tomorrow becomes the day after, the day after becomes next week, next week becomes next month, next month becomes next year and next year becomes never. That is the story of most people, and it will include some of you hustlers too if you don’t make a conscious choice to fill your every day with productivity and things that matter to you and to the world.

Procrastination is not just about signing deals but it covers everything in life. If you find yourself with half an hour to do something you really want to do, then use

that half an hour to do it. You'll never get that time back, and good time management is key to the success of all people who make positive things happen in life. They plan how they will sleep, what they will do in the morning and how they will do it, the same for the afternoon and the evening.

They set mini-targets for themselves, draw up to-do lists and don't allow themselves to do anything else until all those mini-targets are achieved.

Great novelists will sit in front of their word processor every day for as many hours as it takes to write the number of pages they set themselves to do before they allow themselves the freedom to do anything else. So many people with really good stories never get to write them because they simply don't follow this basic rule.

So don't fall into the postponement trap. Don't be like everyone who thinks that some other time will always be the best time. You will rarely ever feel truly inspired, or at your best, or even near to your best. That really doesn't matter. If you just knuckle down and do what you have to do, you can turn that moment into your best. By just starting and refusing to stop going, you will find your zone and you will find brilliance and inspiration in that moment. And if you don't, it doesn't matter. Next time it will work.

Procrastination's biggest tragedies happen mostly with ideas. So many people sit with brilliant business ideas but can't really find the time to put them into even just the form of a business plan, let alone implementing them. I'm not referring here to people who don't have funds but people who believe in "another time", as if somewhere on the calendar exists a day when all of us will suddenly become geniuses with limitless energy and resolve and if we just wait long enough that halcyon day will arise.

Well, it's not coming. All you have, and all you ever have is a whole lot of Right Now. And you, along with everyone else, have less Right Now left all the time. You must not look forward to being able to do something in the future. The future is not your friend, because it doesn't exist and never will. All that exists is this very moment and if you're not using it, you're not really on the road to anywhere. You're just sitting on a train platform somewhere, called Procrastination, waiting for a train that may never arrive.

You have to get up, leave the platform and get walking and running to wherever you need to be. You'll find the opportunities while you are busy. A man on a hike

will catch rides from other people along the way, but the best way to ensure you reach somewhere is just to commit to the journey and leave the comfort of the rest stop.

It's human nature to procrastinate, but it's up to you to rid yourself of that curse. Being a "doing person" comes from having a certain discipline that will become a habit when you enforce it in your life.

I think one of the greatest frustrations of anyone who's ever worked with me is the impossible timeframes I set to get stuff done. I think it's both one of my strongest and weakest points. I love deadlines – I set them for myself in every aspect of my life and I set them for anyone who is doing anything for me. I will often also ask for a project that would normally take three months to be completed to be finished in one month.

Sometimes this backfires and we just end up spending more money to create something less perfect in the process. So, over time, I've had to learn the lesson of being patient and not expecting Rome to be built in a day, every day. But, where possible, I still like to make deadlines as tight as possible to avoid Parkinson's Law, which says that "work expands to fill the time available for its completion". I've seen it time and again. When we built ZAR on top of the Radisson hotel, we started with only a concrete floor on top of a building. We had to build everything from the bottom up and it was essential to get it done in time for the opening of the 2010 World Cup.

Most people told us it couldn't be done in just six weeks, but it had to be done and so it did. We launched the club the day before the tournament's opening game and during that month of the World Cup we made millions in turnover – a bumper season that was truly a once-in-a-lifetime thing.

You'd be amazed what you can achieve once you put your mind to something. Don't wait for anyone to give you permission to start your hustle. Don't wait for anyone to come along and cheer for you. If you can't find someone to join you in your hustle then remind yourself that there's lots of research that proves that a single, dedicated person working without distractions can sometimes outperform teams and much larger groups of people because all those people are spending more time talking to one another and hanging out than working. Get started even if you know everyone thinks you may just be wasting your time.

You see the same thing everywhere – people who could graduate in six months are told they have a year to do it. So they take a year to do it and fill the rest of their time with parties and fun – there’s nothing wrong with that, but as a hustler you need to demand a higher standard of yourself – if you can do as Rudyard Kipling once advised, to fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds’ worth of distance run, then you will edge ahead of everyone else and achieve the sorts of things that most people say it is impossible to do in one lifetime alone. But we are all only given one lifetime, so we had better squeeze as much as we can into it, because there are no do-overs.

I postpone nothing that I can do right now, and I sometimes give myself impossible deadlines just so that I never have an excuse to rest easy or think that I may be able to give myself a day off.

I take hours and days off when I believe I’ve earned them and I’ve put another worthwhile project or task behind me. I take time off if I think it will help me to recharge and tackle whatever lies ahead of me with renewed vigour. For a hustler, even his or her relaxation is performed with a purpose. And I can only rest completely easy when those projects I’ve completed are working for me even while I’m doing nothing – or they have become part of a legacy I’m happy to leave behind.

That’s how I live my life and it’s the main reason why I’ve done more in the ten years since I’ve been released from jail than most people do in fifty years.

What You're Signing Up For

I find it very common to hear people saying that they're going to be wealthy when they graduate and become a lawyer or a doctor. But hustlers should know the uncomfortable truth that even some of the most highly respected careers will not make you wealthy unless you own the practice or the hospital, or go on to become a respected specialist. That will require even more money and time invested in your career. That's cool, but don't have any illusions that it will be easy. Many young doctors or lawyers start their work with heavy student debts and very modest salaries. It takes years to finally start making big money – if ever.

The main reason most lawyers, medical doctors or accountants never become super-rich in spite of the exorbitant fees they charge is simply because they sell time. They can't bill for more than eighteen hours or so in a day, maximum, hence even some of the best of them will only become moderately rich.

They only rarely attain super wealth through these careers, aside from the few who are able to add an entrepreneurial slant to what they do by inventing a new cure, winning a major legal contract or massive civil lawsuit or, as I've said, owning their own practice or hospital. The moment you have employees, then you're not just selling your own time, but the time of many other people, and all of that adds up to wealth for the boss or the owner.

The truth is that not everyone wants to be rich. So people choose careers that give them fulfilment instead of endless billions. If you want to be a billionaire stay away from careers where your income gets worked out by the hour. In a career like that you will always have money but not wealth. Your safest bet if you want to be a billionaire is also your riskiest career move: become an entrepreneur whose one big idea can make billions. Some entrepreneurs do sell time, but it's different. Let's look at the guys who started Nando's. Their first outlet in Johannesburg only sold chicken and they hustled away, making a marginal profit for every chicken they sold. Today they've franchised a popular and massively successful business model that's not just doing well in South Africa but is spreading all over the world.

An entrepreneur finds a model or a product to make money and once that is working well he can adapt it, repeat it and expand it into new markets.

It took Colonel Harlan Sanders sixty-five years to figure that out. He only opened the first KFC at an age when most people would consider their working life behind them. But he was so passionate about his first Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant that he just kept selling franchises of his cooking recipe, and he did it based only on trust. He gave people his idea and then merely asked them to pay him his share of all the chicken they sold. He never audited anyone and rarely had to. People just kept paying him what they knew they owed him, and he died a billionaire, aged ninety.

When choosing a career you also need to be honest with yourself in what is it you hope to achieve. Success and money are not the same thing. Doctors mostly don't join the medical fraternity to become wealthy and in spite of all the lawyer jokes, they also don't. They join these careers mostly for personal reasons. Some have a great sense of service, others want to make a difference in society – still more may have believed the career was the sure path to riches.

Most of the doctors who were once misled into believing that their career would translate into an easy path to wealth are easily recognisable in their conduct. They don't respond to call-ups when they are on standby. They are forever drunk, sleep on the job, and just become generally truant. They are rude and impatient with patients.

I attribute all this to their expecting a certain outcome, only to get slammed hard in the face with the reality of their career. Becoming a doctor is a long, expensive and very difficult challenge. I refuse to believe that a person can study for five to seven years and then just wake up one day and hate it. They hate what they are harvesting because it's not what they hoped to harvest when they started out. They had the wrong expectations and just set themselves up for disappointment. It's no one's fault but their own. Before you get into anything, understand not only the good that comes with it, but all the bad too.

It is very important to know what you are going to harvest before you start planting for seven long years. You don't only encounter this in the medical fraternity, but across the whole spectrum of careers. Someone who apparently knows from the outset how much, on average, he could have hoped to expect in a salary is toying within a week of starting at his new job. This is the same guy you interviewed last week, who seemed merrily happy about his new salary.

A real hustler knows exactly what the reason is for choosing a certain post or career path. Don't enter a career and hope that it might change with you. Most of all, don't enter a career blindly in the hope that it will turn out just the way you wish.

Be certain, be secure in the direction you choose to follow, and know what to expect. Also always carry with you the fact that however you did your research, things might still not turn out the way you envisaged or hoped for. Be willing to tough it out even if it's harder than you expected.

The Meaning of On Time

I was always taught that arriving early for a meeting is very impressive. I believed that, I lived it and I never deviated from it, until one day I had a scheduled meeting for 8am with an elderly Jewish gentleman. I might add that he had years of business experience and was very successful. He had graciously agreed to meet with me at his offices to discuss a number of things I needed to ask him about.

In my quest to impress him and ensure I wouldn't be late I rocked up a full hour early. I was sitting half deliberately in his office building's waiting area on the couch there where I knew he could not miss me. His staff were only due to come in at 9am, so present were only me, the gentleman and the security guard who was manning the door.

The old man asked me if our meeting had perhaps actually been scheduled for 7am and I loudly and proudly proclaimed I was an hour early, hoping to chip away at the "African time" perception and also firmly establishing myself as a man who is not only never late, but super-early. The old man eventually decided to see me at 7.45am, but what he told me then shocked me as if I'd been slapped in the face. It stung and hit home because I obviously couldn't argue with his point.

He started by telling me that he, like me, considered it very rude to be late. He then told me that I had imposed on his prayer time by coming so hopelessly early. Also, by being so early I had merely demonstrated to him that my time management skills were very poor.

He told me that he hated making anyone wait and seeing me sitting there pointlessly bothered him to such an extent that he couldn't focus on anything else he was doing and he couldn't ignore me.

He used all the time leading up to 8am to lecture me about the merits of just being on time – not late, not early, just on time. He used the example of train timetables, which function well not because the train comes early, but because it arrives on time and leaves on time. Messing with one is as good as messing with the other.

He told me, in a kindly spirit, that I could have done something constructive in the hour I had spent waiting for him – perhaps gone to a coffee shop where I could have read through all the morning papers.

He berated me for not showing respect for his time and his morning ritual, because if I insisted on being early so that I wouldn't be held up by traffic, I could have at least had the courtesy to remain out of sight. I honestly couldn't fully understand his tirade until several years later when I had my own business and I was the one person people were lining up and waiting to see. Now I understand that if our appointment is for 8am, then you're demonstrating good time management by rocking up ten minutes before the time. Anything more than that and you're just kind of annoying.

I once set up an appointment to meet a guy at 8pm. He knocked off from work at his own office at 4 pm and then immediately went to wait for me at my office. It was the most annoying three and a half hours imaginable, because I was still busy with my own schedule of meetings and calls, but I was forced to continually check up on this guy and offer him coffee and biscuits. I even had to act as points man to show him where the bathroom and smoking section was.

I could go on, but the point is pretty clear. Punctuality should not be your main focus. Be punctual sure, but your punctuality should be a consequence of your ability to manage your time and your schedule, to cram as much usefully into your day as you can manage, and still never be late for important events. If it's 8am, never rock up at 9am or 7am.

You should never think yourself so important that you can be late, and nor should you think yourself so unimportant that you need to demonstrate your eager-beaverness by showing up far too early. Some people might be impressed with that sort of thing, but the people who matter will rarely find it even amusing. Being on time means being on time. If you have to be early, at least stay out of sight – and off people's nerves.

Borrowing from Peter

There are many things hustlers can avoid but unexpectedly needing to borrow money is not one of them. I'm not talking about huge loans that need financial institutions but money to cover rent, petrol, salaries or some unexpected cost. As a hustler you will never have all the bases covered all the time. You might think you've got them covered but you have no control over everything in business. Nobody does. Shit really does happen and when it happens it mostly needs cash to sort out. Your money will not always be readily available.

Unexpected cost will follow unexpected cost. Just as you've sorted one thing out, something else will rear its head. That's when you call your friend Peter. You might have heard the saying: "Borrow from Peter to pay Paul", which means that you go into debt with one guy just to get rid of another debt with some other guy.

It's not the best or even the right way to do things, but that's how most of us survive in our early hustle days. Most hustlers concentrate too much on getting rid of their big debts when it's their smaller debts that cause them to trip up and fall. A close friend of mine once owed many people big money, but he was working hard to stay ahead of his creditors' phone calls. He diligently spent just about all of his profits to repay his debts. He had to make do and survive with almost no money left, but he at least felt secure in the knowledge that the big-debt guys were not going to shut him down because of non-payment. He ignored the many small debts he was building up, but he did not consider what could happen to him in small-claims court. More than twenty of the small creditors took him to court and he spent so much time in these small legal battles trying to sort out the mess that his business suffered dramatically.

Like many hustlers, my friend was constantly operating on the verge of bankruptcy. His numerous court days put the rumour mill into overdrive and word got out that he was probably no longer on the verge of it but actually bankrupt – he wasn't really, but the mere mention of the word 'bankrupt' from everyone was enough to finally push him over that cliff. Nothing makes people rush to get their money back from you like that word does.

In the end, it's not always how you've been struggling that finishes you off. It's the perception of everyone you owe money to that they may never get it back that breaks the camel's back. They will all come to you for their money at the same time. They will find out about each other and even team up against you. Not even a big bank can survive a run on its reserves.

You are no bank, so the same goes for anyone who's ever invested with you or who you've borrowed from. Make sure that you don't forget to talk to the little people you owe money to. Someone may only have lent you R500, but to that person their R500 is far more significant than the R500 000 you borrowed from the big institution. Don't let someone you owe a pittance be the reason the business community stops trusting you and dealing with you. Rather make arrangements to pay the big debts with the big institutions over a period of time – consolidate what you owe – and make sure that when you walk in the mall there's no risk of you bumping into five people in a row that you owe money to.

Make arrangements with the big institutions to pay them back, and keep to that as well as you can, but also keep the little people happy with regular payments if you just can't take care of all the little debts quickly. If you owe someone R10 000, even just giving him R300 a month could be enough to keep him off your back and off the rumour mill.

You can get away with borrowing from Peter to pay Paul, but if you don't also get back to repaying Peter sooner rather than later then you're eventually going to get convicted for running a Ponzi scheme. I'm sure some of the guys who do end up creating Ponzi schemes didn't set out to do that in the beginning. But they just had to keep borrowing from one person to pay back another, and to do that they have to start lying and making promises that are very hard to keep. That kind of thing can get out of control very quickly – and the next thing you know a few years have gone by and you're a convicted fraudster.

As for people who owe you money, I've learnt through being on both sides of the equation that there's nothing more reliable – aside from going the legal route – than just being the biggest nagger on the block. I've always tended to pay the people who pester me the most first – and whenever my accountant or my PA catches the nagging disease, regularly phoning and emailing people who owe us money, the money does come in. If you want to get your money out of someone there's little better you can do than just going out of your way to be the most irritating, but painfully courteous, creditor your debtor has among all his contacts.

You should never be so rude that you get your debtor's hackles up and that person then makes a point of "fighting you to the bitter end, come what may" because people can be very self-destructive once they feel insulted. A good creditor must walk the fine line between being someone a debtor actually feels bad about not paying back – while also not taking you for someone they can get away with avoiding and bullshitting forever. If they make a commitment to pay next week, send a reminder on the day. Have meetings with them if they don't deliver. Ask them to sign an acknowledgment of debt form that will give you legal muscle if you have to get a judgment eventually.

Make sure that somewhere along the way in all your hustling you befriend a lawyer or a registered debt collector who'll be happy to send out the occasional demand letter that won't cost you more than the money you're owed. Be prepared to eventually take someone to court and get a judgment against them if you have to. If it's the kind of person you just can't do that to – a friend, a family member or someone you can't afford to make an enemy of, then regular nagging and reminding will make sure you move to the top of the list of people that person will want to pay back first. Debtors just want their phone to stop ringing all the time. If it doesn't ring or doesn't beep, they don't pay.

If you're anything like me, then you should probably not be the one phoning people who owe you money. I hate feeling like I'm nagging – I want to ask someone for my money once and if that doesn't work I start getting agitated. So I get people who are good at nagging professionally to keep on nagging until we get paid.

Having debt is something that, to most hustlers, is simply unavoidable when they're starting out. Debt like getting a student loan towards a career that will eventually see you having a regular income is good debt – it's debt that's part of a plan to eventually make you not just debt-free but able to save money and become an investor. That should always be your ultimate goal, to build wealth and capital.

For "good debt" people will be willing to wait to have their money returned over many years because they can see that one day you will be in a position to make good on what you owe, to pay them their interest and perhaps do even more for them. Taking money from an investor to fund your business project can also be good debt, because that business can start to make big money in future. A hustler knows it's better to take money from someone you know and who you have an open and trusting business relationship with than to deal with monolithic financial institutions that just look at spreadsheets and balance sheets. To them you are just

another name and ID number and if you fail to pay on time you'll be blacklisted faster than you can say: "I'll pay you next week."

Once you get caught up in the machinery of a big bank's legal department, the fees and penalties will just keep adding up and you'll struggle to keep your focus on achieving your long-term goals. You don't want that sort of thing to discourage you.

For people who know you and understand who you are, as long as you are "still in the game", making and spending money, getting contracts, working all the time and being perceived as a man on a mission, the people you owe money to may be willing to wait for you to "have your day" again. At times when my businesses were going through slumps and I was struggling to meet all my debts or I was having to incur further debts just to stay in business, I often found creditors I spoke to would tell me they had faith I would bounce back and not only be able to repay them, but would continue to be a good customer, partner or confidant to have on their side once I was back on top.

I can't tell you how motivating it is to wake up in the morning knowing that not only do you have friends and family believing in you, wishing you every success and relying on you to make it, but that even the people you owe money to feel the same way – and they're on your side.

Along the way there have been many people in my life who've owed me money and I've felt the same way about them. For them I wasn't willing to ruin a relationship over money – I knew that such people would find a way to repay me someday, even if not in money but with a favour or a recommendation to the right people at the right time at some point in future. Hustlers know that sometimes lending a person money means you won't ever see that money from that person again, but through the complex network of relationships, and the favours human beings owe one another, that loan is an investment in a person who could return it to you much more rewardingly in other ways later.

As I've said, what you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabout.

Potholes

When you're on a journey you always want to be on the lookout for potholes. Even better is being forewarned about a possible pitfall around the next bend. Business is the same. When you decide to enter into a new business, know what might go wrong.

Black hustlers have this funny superstition that talking about what might go wrong is inviting it to happen. When you're trying to warn them about about a potential problem, I'm always flabbergasted about how people will openly spew nonsense about how it's bringing bad luck.

Business is about getting it right while fully knowing or pre-empting what might go wrong. The advantage of discussing all the variables is that you give yourself ample time and space to adequately think of possible solutions before it happens. Cities all over the world have disaster management plans in place for every conceivable calamity. Everyone, from cops and firemen to nurses and the air force know what's expected of them in the case of floods, earthquakes, bomb attacks or riots. There is no business where things just always go right. The top companies don't even have to press the panic button in an emergency – they merely take out the manual that's already been written to deal with whatever particular thing is going down. Not only was every crisis foreseen long before, but time and money was already spent to devise the best possible strategy to deal with it.

We hustlers don't have the luxury of opening business after business after failure after failure. We can't burn capital and we don't have limitless access to it.

That's why getting as much as possible right the first time around is as important as guarding your own life. Treat your business with the same respect you treat your own ability to breathe all the time. Just as you won't be getting a second body and a second chance to live if you make the mistake of walking in front of a moving train, your business might not get a second chance either. The nice thing about business, though, is that you can start again, wiser than before – but don't think that's a guarantee.

That's why it's important to go over everything that could possibly go wrong. Excitement shouldn't blind you to the realities. Problems don't go away because you wish them away. They mostly get planned and discussed away – or if not completely away, massively minimised.

I have lost millions because of being overly excited about new ventures. I started spending less time with the people who were trying to show me reason and more time with the ones agreeing and cheering me on. I falsely told myself that the realists were just being too negative.

But there is a big difference between someone who wants to succeed, believes he will succeed and is willing to do everything possible to make that happen (including reflecting on every possible thing that could go wrong) and a negative person who's just too afraid to try anything in the first place because he's already accepted it will never work. Learn to tell the difference between these two kinds of people. Listen to the former and avoid the latter.

A true friend is someone who will give it to you straight. Napoleon Bonaparte, the great French emperor and European conqueror, admitted, while he was seeing out his days in prison, that he also blamed most of his closest friends and commanders for everything that had gone wrong towards the end – because they could see he was getting too carried away and far too confident, and yet they were too scared to warn him and try to reason with him. He admitted that he probably would not have listened to them anyway, but they should still have tried to warn him, because that's what a good friend does.

Once again, it's up to you to figure out who is giving you good advice about a real threat you need to plan against and be wary of, and who is just being demotivational. A real friend will never try to squash your dream, he will just point out what's standing in the way of you achieving it. The person who does that deserves your full attention.

Unfortunately, when we think we're on a roll it's hard to listen to the voices telling you to slow down. We get mesmerised by the chants of the choir cheering us on. Being bold does not mean you should dispose of any and all caution. It's okay to be scared, it doesn't mean you're a coward. Courage can only exist if you are scared to begin with, and then you find a way to overcome that. And if you're never scared of anything, then that does not make you courageous – it makes you a fool, because the world is, and always will be, a very scary place.

One easy example I can give of a regular piece of advice you'll hear from people – who then don't tell you about all the potholes – is the advice to invest in property and become a landlord.

Where I come from, this is seen as the ultimate investment and everyone aspires to buying houses, flats, land and office buildings, thinking that if you can be a landlord or just buy property for the sake of it, you've got it made. It's seen as a less risky investment and business model and a way to get “the bank's money to work for you”.

But nothing is ever quite that simple.

Being a landlord is extremely risky. Your building can be in the best condition but if your tenant is in financial trouble then you are in financial trouble. Your payments mostly depend on how well your tenant does. The many times when I have been struggling with cash flow, it was always my landlords who were first in line to not get money but excuses and promises.

Landlords have their own expenses, like maintenance and bond payments, and many a landlord has gone bust because his tenant went bust. The few months it takes to get a new tenant is enough time to have everything repossessed, particularly when the bank has an appetite for your property. The bank will weigh up its options carefully and repossess those assets that will provide them with a higher resale value first. They let the people with their run-down homes and old jalopy cars get away with a few months more. But in the end the bank will always come, no matter how sorry a state your assets may be in – and if your property gets sold on auction for far less than its worth (which is often the case) the bank will just slap you with a big bill to repay whatever's left on the mortgage you took in the first place. You'll still be liable. You can be paying a debt for the rest of your life with no asset to show for it.

Tax laws have also changed drastically over the last ten years, especially with respect to capital gains tax on properties, so properties are not the same attractive investments they used to be in our parents' day. Rates and taxes have also shot up over just the last five years, so be aware of those more subtle costs too. If your tenant doesn't pay the water and lights the municipality could come after you for that bill too if you haven't moved the account into your tenant's name.

When deciding to become a landlord don't celebrate that you have your first tenant – because if you do not put the correct checks and balances in place that very same tenant can go from being a tenant to the person responsible for your downfall. Do your due diligence on how sustainable their business model is if they're renting business premises and do background and credit checks on the business owners. If they have other assets and they sign surety for the rent, then you can sue them later to recover whatever losses you may have incurred. If they have a bad credit record, then chances are that they are going to struggle to pay you on time every month too. Sign a lease for as long as you're comfortable, and renegotiate the lease three months before it runs out – the last thing you want is for them to up and leave in the last week and you've got no one else to hire the property.

If you can, ask for a proof of funds to check how strong your tenant's cash balance is. In business, it doesn't always pay to be shy or too diplomatic. There's a reason the most successful landlords are merciless – though not unfriendly (always be a tough businessman, but keep a smile on your face).

Big companies can shoulder the burden of a few clients who can't afford to pay all the time, but as a hustler entering the market you simply won't be able to afford such a luxury.

Most hustlers are not only paying off the bond they took on the property by using the tenant's rent but they live off the few dollars that are left – though realistically there never is any money left, unless you were somehow able to put down a big deposit on the property when you bought it.

The biggest and best advice I can give any hustler wanting to enter this market is never ever have a family member as a tenant. You'll never win. If they fail to pay you, not only will you have to deal with banks but also with family members who will be almost impossible to put out on the street. Lastly, hustlers should know there are laws against just evicting people. It can take up to two years to get someone evicted legally and the legal fees to do so can run into the tens of thousands of rands. Realistically, you're going to be watching your bank account with dread every month, praying to see that deposit.

I've used being a landlord as just one example, but all businesses and investment ideas come with their own potholes. Listen carefully to people who know what they are talking about and can advise you on exactly what all these pitfalls are – and that way you can either decide against whatever the project is or put your

checks and balances in place to ensure that you're the one doing the hustling, not getting hustled.

Make sure that the person advising you is capable of giving you the right advice for the issue at hand. You can't take a donkey to a horse race, unless losing is what you crave. Never has this been demonstrated to me more clearly than when we met a guy in Zimbabwe who owned a gold mine. He was a very ambitious young guy who inherited the mine from his father. We agreed that we would get his mine going again and, in return, take half the equity in it. He wasn't very schooled in mining so he decided to get his lawyer friend to negotiate on his behalf, which, at first, seemed like a sensible-enough move.

Our lawyers met his, but his poor guy was so out of depth with mining and investment law that no deal was ever signed. His lawyer foolishly demanded a large upfront cash amount, and the more my lawyers tried to show him the error of his thinking and that no serious investor would ever even consider doing that, the more adamant he became about it. Negotiations eventually fell through. The lawyer could not understand that until you have asset results done by a reputable firm you don't have a mine.

I met the owner of the mine again a few years later. He was still broke and still searching for funding. I told him his lawyer had robbed him of a golden opportunity to get asset results done by a reputable geologist and confirmed by an international firm. I mentioned to him the whole range of mistakes his lawyer had made, and I drove home the point that his lawyer simply had not appreciated the most important fact, which was that the political uncertainty in his country was not exactly bringing investors in their droves. The guy heard me out and said everything I'd told him was exactly what all the other investors eventually also said to him. He explained that he had trusted his lawyer because the guy had also handled his divorce and had been very good at that.

By now, I wasn't working with the same investors looking for the kind of gold mine this guy was selling, so even though I still wanted to help him, the horse had bolted.

If you have a toothache you don't go to a chiropractor to sort it out. The same rule applies in business. The world's best divorce lawyer will probably still not know one damn thing about mining and will approach a mining deal with the same adversarial approach he does a divorce. That just doesn't work in mining, which has many more nuances and intricacies.

His friend had been totally and completely out of his depth and our deal sank along with him. I'm convinced that deal would have been signed if my lawyers had sat down with a guy who understood the industry. That mine would be producing gold today instead of standing fallow, gathering dust and rust.

The deal fell through because the mine owner brought a donkey to a horse race. Most of my lawyers are mining lawyers – if I asked them to help me out in a divorce, I'm pretty sure my ex-wife would own all my mines.

So don't assume that because somebody is good in one area they will be competent in all areas. As a hustler, you want to be able to dabble in as many areas and fields as you can, but you can only get away with this if you understand and acknowledge the full extent of your ignorance and surround yourself with people who know exactly what they're doing in their particular areas of expertise – and you feel sure you can trust them fully.

Lastly, if you see a pothole coming, you are duty bound to do everything you can to avoid hitting it. When we took a decision at ZAR to join the entertainment industry we realised the best way of doing that is to have a slice of the media market. So we came up with the idea for a reality show centred on Kenny and his fame and notoriety, called So What. We immediately involved a production company, Waterfront Studios, in our plan and started shooting a pilot. The pilot came out looking great. We put lots of time, money and creative thought into it and everyone who saw the episode agreed we were onto a winner.

We met with a few executives at the SABC who felt the same way.

After a few meetings we had a deal and a date on which our first episode would air. We hit Twitter, Facebook and the entertainment blogs to tell everybody about our new reality show and the SABC did the same.

We started shooting more episodes and went crazy on the project. We soon spent more money than had ever been budgeted for, but we were okay with this based simply on the great expectations we had for the show, and because we were overwhelmed by the huge anticipation for it from the public.

Kenny started doing marketing interviews on TV and radio. The public broadcaster's marketing campaign was also being worked on, and, as a start, the

SABC tweeted about it. Their website confirmed that So What would soon be part of the SABC1 line-up.

Kenny was then invited to an e.tv function at The Venue in Melrose Arch. We debated whether he should even contemplate going. We finally decided it might seem disrespectful towards the SABC. But an hour after Kenny and I parted ways I got a call from one executive at the SABC telling me he would like to have a meeting with us, but before that could happen we should prepare evidence of all the good social upliftment work we had done along with providing copies of all the other recordings for the show we had already shot.

When I asked him why, the executive refused to divulge more. I immediately sensed there might be trouble. I also knew, judging by his tone, that there was the distinct possibility our show might be canned.

That outcome would have left us near bankrupt. It would also have made us a national laughing stock. The financial hit we could survive. But our reputation was something that, at that stage, we couldn't mess with.

Even though we'd come this far, no money had changed hands and no contract had yet been signed with the broadcaster.

I could have kicked myself for, once again, acting on faith before the ink on the dotted line was dry – but there was nothing that could be done about that now. If the SABC was having second thoughts, we would need to come up with a backup plan, and fast.

I called Kenny and we agreed that perhaps now was the best possible time to have him be seen at the SABC rival's big bash. Kenny rocked up and subtly announced we were actually not very happy with the public broadcaster. At this stage, we weren't even entirely sure we needed to woo e.tv, but if all it meant was both broadcasters eventually making us an offer for the show, we'd be infinitely better off than having to approach e.tv to bail us out after being dropped, humiliatingly, by the SABC. This wasn't just about trying to dodge a pothole. We were trying not to go off a cliff.

So we had nothing to lose by flirting with e.tv.

We were doing ourselves a huge favour.

At the SABC meeting, later, a young guy in a suit showed us some old PowerPoint presentation about the “norms and values” of a public broadcaster and how there were now serious doubts that the format of So What would be suitable for SABC 1. We would perhaps have to start shooting all over, with a whole new angle on the content that would leave us with a show that indeed checked all the SABC’s boxes, but which would render each episode boring as mud – and Kenny would look like a sellout. News within e.tv, fortunately, had travelled fast and the day after the Melrose Arch party we had lunch with a board member from the channel. She was shocked that no deal had been concluded with the SABC.

She immediately made contact with the relevant people at her channel and, boom, the following day we had a meeting with the channel head of e.tv, Monde Twala.

I was in awe at how decisive and loyal he was. He told us about everything they hoped to achieve as a channel. He told us that their strategy was all about taking big risks and experimenting.

Whether or not So What was going to work, whether it ticked all the right boxes or none of them, our show was exactly the kind of bold, crazy project e.tv was looking for and they were willing to let us enjoy the full creative freedom we needed to make it.

A deal was soon concluded. Everything Monde had said worked out exactly as promised. When the news arrived that there was an insurmountable problem with the programming and producing head honchos at SABC we had long searched for cover.

We could politely thank the Auckland Park people for their time and, with a smile, head for the shelter of a deal at Hyde Park that was twice as good as what the SABC had been willing to give us in the first place anyway.

So sometimes the threats and potholes you need to be aware of are just the regular things that come with the sort of business you’re in – and sometimes they’re unexpected and blindside you.

Hustlers are always ready and willing to think ahead, and on their feet if they have to.

Complaining

I've often heard workers, especially older ones, speaking nostalgically about the places they used to work. In these places they used to be paid for their overtime, their boss used to acknowledge their efforts, they didn't have to pay for their own coffee and there were a dozen other special company benefits.

I was once confronted by one of my workers who was complaining about the fact that at her previous job she was entitled to a staff discount whenever she purchased something from the bar. At ZAR Lounge she was horrified that staff had to pay full price for everything except sodas. She caught me on a day I just wasn't in the mood, so I looked her straight in the eye and asked her if she had any eye or reading problems. She said "no" to which I replied: "Go look at the sign on the outside and you will see you actually no longer work where you used to work. If it was so wonderful there, perhaps you should never have left."

To be fair, when people constantly make comparisons with their old jobs, there can be some positives to come from that. Prior experience of good industry practice can be helpful, especially in new businesses that are learning the ropes – but if you do it too much you're just likely to irritate your co-workers and your employer, sow discontent and make yourself seem ungrateful.

If you really happen to have a few good ideas about a better way of doing things, then you should pitch those things on their own merits, not just because that's how it works somewhere else. For example, I actually took some time to go and see how things worked at this other club where staff got discounts to buy booze. There, if nobody tipped them during their shift they would just go home with nothing. At ZAR, we gave a basic top-up shift payment to every waiter and waitress if they had a tough night. Everywhere you work will have some things that are better than the previous place that helped to pay your bills, but it will also be worse in some ways. It's the same thing with a new partner. She may not be as sexy as your last girlfriend, but maybe she's smarter and more fun to hang out with.

You should appreciate what you've got and work to make that better instead of complaining your toast is not perfectly buttered on both sides.

A new job means new rules, new people, new patterns and sometimes a new attitude.

Whenever I hear people complaining I always ask them two questions: "Do you hate it here?" If they say yes, I ask them: "Do you have other options?" If they say yes again I'll tell them that it's time for them to pursue those other options. If they say no, I might hear them out. Maybe they have a good reason for thinking they should be paid more money or have something else change for them. Sometimes, though, what they're asking for just isn't realistic. At which point I'll tell them they either have to leave without having another option confirmed or they'll just have to suck it up and try to make the best of the job they appear to be stuck in. And the brutal truth is that they better then do that, because at that point I especially keep an eye on them. If I see any slacking, or actions that might be sabotaging the business, or the continuation of the kind of complaining talk that just demotivates the other staff members, I grudgingly ask that person to move on.

You may think this is a tough and unsympathetic attitude to have on my part. It probably is, but the fact is that there will always be people who are unhappy, regardless of what you do for them. You can make an effort to create a workplace that is supportive and humane, but certain people will still find a reason to whinge and complain. That may have been okay at the place they used to work. It is not okay at a place where someone has the good fortune or misfortune (depending on who you ask) of calling me boss. When I was in jail I was once asked to join a hunger strike. When I asked what the reason for this severe course of action might be, I was told that it was because warders still referred to us as "bandiets", which was a term used during apartheid to insult prisoners. I then asked if anyone had so far gone to the trouble of laying a formal complaint about the matter against any warder who was guilty of this offence. Nobody answered. They just stared at me as if I was somehow the one missing the whole point of their incredibly noble campaign.

Needless to say, I refused to participate.

A lot of the dissatisfaction in the workplace gets heard only in the court of gossip. Someone will rarely formalise their concern or do anything to bring it to the boss' attention with valid reasons explaining why something needs to be changed. Petty complaints will just look ridiculous once they're committed to paper and are

scrutinised by anyone with half an iota of sense. The whingers know this only too well and so keep their voices down. True hustlers understand the reasons behind why they have joined a particular workplace. They understand they are on a mission, and anybody who has ever been on a mission of any value understands that trivialities should never have the power to distract you from your mission.

They know that complaining is a luxury that they have to reflect on deeply before they will commit to it. They will never demean their unhappiness by not following through with a complaint to the maximum extent that whatever applicable law allows. And they will never demean their own social currency by joining a cause that isn't worthy of them.

When a hustler complains about something, that thing is serious, it gets escalated, it causes waves, it calls people to account, it makes heads roll and it changes things irrevocably. Beware the determined hustler who has something he wants to get off his chest. You better hope his complaint doesn't involve you, or you might be about to get royally dealt with.

Institutionalised

The first time I watched *The Shawshank Redemption* I couldn't stop crying. Tears were flowing silently but with force from my eyes, because I wasn't just watching a movie, I was filled with memories of what I, and millions of prisoners, were going through and are still going through. The scene that touched me so is the one in which an old, gentle and friendly prisoner called Brooks, upon hearing that he is going to be released, tries to kill a fellow inmate.

It was hard to understand the scene until it was explained that Brooks is an important man in jail. He fears the unknown, which is everything on the outside. In the many years he had been in prison, the whole world had changed. He had never even seen a car when they first sent him to jail.

The story took me back to the day in jail when I first heard that I was going to be released. Unlike Brooks, I jumped for joy – but the nearer the big day came the bigger my fear and uncertainty grew of what was awaiting me on the outside.

You find yourself asking a million questions in your mind all the time and you begin to doubt your ability to survive out there without crime. In the movie, Brooks kills himself after he finds he can't deal with life on the outside. Closer to home I have no official statistic of how many released prisoners actually kill themselves, but I do know that more than eighty percent return to jail. Most of that is directly related to having been institutionalised, like Brooks.

Let me disabuse you of your notion that this is a prisoner problem only. It's a problem everyone faces who has been in the same place for so long and fears not being there anymore. It is most common in the workplace, where you can hear people talking daily about opening their own businesses but they are held back by the fear of leaving their present workplace. They will forward you endless reasons for why they need to leave their place of work but will never take that step. Some of them have been telling people, for twenty years, how they're leaving tomorrow – or maybe the day after that.

I see people who would, without a doubt, do very well in their own businesses but they are so institutionalised that their bosses don't even worry that they will leave the company any more.

These are many of the same people who only discover their entrepreneurial qualities after being retrenched and being forced to fend for themselves. For others, that day never comes, and they keep working towards that day of retirement, in the hope someone will give them a little party and a gold watch – but by the time you get to that age you'll be one of the last surviving members of the people you started working with years ago, and you'll be lucky if any of the young lot around you even shake your hand to wish you well as you leave with your boxes, or if they bump into you in the lift on your way out.

So we come up with all sorts of excuses as to why we cannot leave the company, even though we are so unhappy. We know our potential but we see people with lesser capabilities than us making it big on their own or in another job and we are deeply unhappy and unknowingly make everybody around us unhappy. We may not be hanging ourselves but we are slowly killing ourselves by entering the gates of work knowing this is not where we belong. Greatness cannot, and will not, be found where you are unhappy.

This is not a book that will tell you to wish that things will get better, but you need to do whatever it takes for you, your health and your legacy. What is stopping you from taking that chance, to prevent yourself from wondering all your whole life: "What if?"

When I was released from jail I was scared – damn scared. But I took that chance. Others didn't. They opted to stay behind. One of my closest friends in jail robbed a lawyer who gave him a lift and his wish was granted. He is still in jail. Even with a book as thick as this one, I can't go into everything I have achieved and enjoyed in just ten years by taking that plunge. So many things brought me tremendous joy and fulfilment. I look at my kids and their little faces alone make me extremely glad that I took that chance when I did.

Remember, only fools don't fear the future. Nobody knows what it holds, so it's only natural to be scared of the unknown.

But if you show some insane courage once in a while, I promise you that wonderful things can come from that.

Gratitude

I can tell you many stories about people I've helped along the way and who finally achieve something in life, only to forget about our old friendship. It's a form of betrayal, sure enough, but its by no means unique to me and I've also been guilty of it along the way, much to my shame. Many of the people who've asked me for my help seem to have one thing in common and that's a short memory (when it's convenient). They are quick to forget who assisted them at a critical time when, without that help, they may have been finished.

Prison has many sayings but the one most regularly used is "the road is long". This can mean many things, but chief among its manifold meanings is because people live for a long time and experience many ups and downs we are likely to meet one another several times, in unexpected ways and surprising places, over the course of a lifetime.

When that happens, those people can either help you or hinder you – and it all depends on how you have treated them in the past. If they helped you and you failed to show gratitude, it'll be harder for them to help you again.

Upon my release from jail a gentleman in Bloemfontein, who owned a few exclusive clothing shops, gave me a pile of brand new, expensive clothing. He had heard about who I was and how I'd almost been killed in jail for exposing warder corruption. He wanted to help me out because he found me inspiring.

His name is Cornel Snyman. He didn't know it but at the time it was the greatest gift I could have asked for. After I moved to Joburg our contact became minimal and we hardly ever spoke any more. I became increasingly successful and later managed to get my hands on top-category tickets for the 2007 Rugby World Cup in France. These were highly sought after, so I called him from France and invited him to join us for the final. He brought his brother-in-law along. Along with my friends we had the time of our lives. It was obvious that, for Cornel, all of this had

less to do with rugby than about having helped a guy who would stay eternally grateful for that help.

Many years later I, competing with about a thousand other guys, was trying to convince someone that I was, in fact, a suitable partner to take on board in his ventures. He chose me over all the other bidders and one night while we were having dinner my ego and curiosity got the better of me and I couldn't help but ask him why he chose me over all these other, more well-known and experienced investors who were all interested in his business.

He told me: "Oh, it's because I already knew about you. My very good friend Cornel Snyman had already told me what sort of guy you are." In that moment you literally could have blown me over without a feather. How the hell did this black guy, who hails from and still stays deep in the mountainous areas of Lesotho, not only know Cornel, but count him as a close personal friend?

That's what the saying means. The road is long. The connections between people are complex and highly unpredictable. Someone you think has no connection to anything you're worried about can easily tarnish your good name. And if you've done somebody in, or failed to show gratitude for help received, that bad karma is going to find a way to bite you in the ass.

The worst part is you will probably never even know how often it happens if your name is mud with too many people.

Do good by people who have done well by you.

And if you have a chance to lend a helping hand to someone who has touched you, as I must have touched Cornel, or who you think deserves it, then be the one initiating the good. Either way, stay grateful for everything you get. One of the first words our parents instilled in us was to say thank you. Food or sweets will be withheld until we utter the words. It is a powerful phrase that says so many good things.

I was renting a building from a very wise old man. Every month, after I paid the rent he would call me to thank me profusely. I asked him one day why he was thanking me as if I was doing him a favour by paying. He said that business is just another part of everyday life and in everyday life we say thank you when we are grateful. Business, he said, is no different. He said there would always be some

people who don't pay so it's only fitting for him to thank the ones who do. He gave me advice on a range of other things I also normally took for granted.

Some of you reading this book are probably working in bars and restaurants. Ask yourself how many times after you got a tip did you go back and thank the person for it. Not all waiters will do it. It is easier to concentrate on the people who don't tip. We'll talk about them long after they've left, while neglecting to properly thank the ones who did tip. I can't tell you how many times I tip waiters and don't receive a thank you. It doesn't stop me from tipping, but it's not how I would be if I were a waiter.

When you are invited for dinner, don't thank your guest in passing. Take a minute to thank your host for the food, the invitation and the good conversation. When you're in a restaurant thank whoever paid the bill and if you paid the bill don't wait for anyone to thank you. Rather, you should thank them for their great company.

One of my mentors was once buying perfume in the plane for his wife and daughter. He asked the airhostess what type of perfume she would recommend and he then paid for the bottle and handed it to her as a gift. She made a note of who he was and later wrote him a letter in which she told him all about how bad her day had been that day, and how he had just lit up her day. She told him that in the sixteen years she had been in her job nobody had ever once thought of buying her something. The letter was a heartfelt thank you. My mentor showed everybody he knew her thank you letter. It did something for both of them.

Don't underestimate how powerful gratitude is. People who are grateful get more of what they are grateful for – people who are not grateful will get less of it and will eventually get nothing.

Showing gratitude says so much about you. Whenever you go for a job interview don't forget to write a thank you note, whether you get the job or not. Thank them for considering you for the job.

The bigger some of us grow, the more important we become, the fewer thank you's we seem to utter. Getting a thank you from a person we don't expect it from or who doesn't really need to say thank you is always more special and so much more appreciated. It makes us look at that person with new eyes. Hustlers don't think that because they deserve something it shouldn't be accompanied by a thank you.

Shhh...

Excitement is something worth sharing. We all have this burning urge to share good news with the people close to us. We don't want other people to hear our good news from others. We want to be the ones telling it. We do it in all areas of our life, be it a personal matter or business.

As a hustler, though, you should be able to keep your excitement contained. You need to keep your cool.

A sportsman friend of mine was overjoyed to get a call from his coach asking him if his passport was in order. The coach didn't say: "You've made the team," but he may as well have. There would have been no other reason to ask that. He asked the coach to confirm it and he did.

My pal was so excited that he couldn't help calling some of his friends on the team. Within no time, all his team-mates knew that he had made the team a week before the official announcement of everyone else in the team. A few team-mates got so incensed about it that they confronted the coach wanting to know why he gave preferential treatment to my friend. The coach, obviously, denied it. Needless to say, come Saturday my friend didn't make the squad that was meant to travel to Europe. Only his big mouth had kicked him off the team.

Shooting our mouths off in a moment of excitement doesn't just happen in sport. Many of us will blurt out something about a soon-to-be-concluded deal, and even if it's to people we consider friends, jealousy is a dangerous thing. It is the very people we trust most who have the power to scupper our biggest projects when they are closest to being realised.

I was once pursuing a girl and I started texting her and sending her flowers. She told her friends about how excited she was that I was sending her poems and letters, but then one of her friends approached me and warned me to stop making a fool of myself – every time I had sent a message to this girl she had read and even distributed it to her whole hockey team.

I was livid and immediately stopped all contact with her. I didn't answer her countless messages. Many months later she bumped into me and finally confronted me. The truth was that her friend was lying. She'd only shared my poems with her, because she had trusted her alone – but it had given her friend the ammo she needed to mess everything up, out of nothing but jealousy.

So, hard as it may be, don't say a word to anyone except those who are in the deal with you. You can send out a big press release once everything is signed and the money is in the bank, but the business world is full of cancellations without reasons. Upon closer inspection, it is always clear someone was spreading rumours about whoever was to conclude the deal.

Not all our friends want what's best for us. Not all our friends appreciate seeing us flying higher than them.

The greatest thing about good news is the sharing part. We all have some burning desire to share our good news, and we do it mostly because we want our family and friends to feel the same feeling of euphoria we are feeling – and sometimes we do it just to brag and make other people jealous.

The biggest problem with this is that, firstly, we think we can tell who is really happy for us, but we also don't know who among those we tell are far from happy and what they might do with their unhappiness. You can never predict the extent that jealous people will go to to find an outlet for their jealousy.

Kenny and I have learnt it the very hard way. We were once approached by an investor from a large coal company. He wanted us to form part of his entry into Africa. We were elated and were already counting the dollars in our minds' eyes. We started to tell people we considered close to us all about it. We also must have dropped a few foolish hints about what was going on to our “frenemies”.

When we got a call that we should meet in Dubai with the investors, we were as excited as kids. At the Hilton Hotel in Dubai, though, our hearts were broken. The investor said that because they had got so many negative reports about us they had to reconsider their initial offer. They even told us about people who were flying in to tell them all about what a big mistake it was they were about to commit.

So until the seal is on the deal, say: “Shhhhh...”

Ridicule-Proof

Many of us have an untold story inside us. We so badly want to tell the story but are scared we will be ridiculed for it and it stops us from ever telling or writing our story. Some of us want to be models walking the ramps in Paris. Some of us want to be musicians and are really good at singing or playing an instrument, but we would rather see average musicians doing their thing on the world's stages instead of stepping up ourselves. So many people are held back by the fear of being ridiculed. I like the way people in the Western Cape say: "But what will the people say?" To me, it just has that added ring of being terrified of other people's ridicule. "Wat sal die mense sê?"

I'll confess, when my closest friend Kenny Kunene told me about one of his dreams, I secretly wished he'd just let it go. He has always liked music and partying. He told me one day that he used to be a DJ about twenty years ago and it was his dream to become a DJ again. At first I thought and hoped it was just drunk talk, but the next day Kenny bought himself DJ equipment. I asked him if he was aware how much music had changed in twenty years. People are no longer DJing with cassettes and vinyls and he just said "yes" and ignored me. He invited two DJs at different times every day to teach him everything they knew about how to mix tracks using the best modern technology. By now I knew there would be no turning back. The next day he dropped an even bigger bomb, that he now had plans to release a house CD. I swear I would have been the first person killed by a rice krispy at breakfast. My cereal actually got stuck in my throat. My secret prayers and hopes that he would forget his childish plan – which is what it seemed like to me – were certainly not being answered.

Kenny went ahead as if he had just gotten the biggest stamp of approval from me. After he left I interrogated my feelings. Why was I so against him DJing? I realised I was scared people would ridicule his efforts and hurt his feelings. Kenny, on the other hand, was not about to ask for anyone else's opinion on the matter. He just went ahead full steam. He didn't give a rat's ass about being ridiculed, and my admiration for him grew as I saw him being willing to be tutored by much younger

men. He subjected himself to their criticism happily. He showed no ego or an I-know-it-all or I-know-anything-at-all attitude.

It didn't even take him that long to get his act together and release that album. It sold like crazy. It's still doing well.

Kenny today is undoubtedly one of the biggest crowd-pullers on the club scene. It's all still kind of unreal for me. We had to cancel taking our family holiday in December with Kenny because he just couldn't leave – there were so many bookings streaming in for him.

Being ridiculed can't kill you. Go out and do your thing. They say that it's very hard to meet a successful stand-up comedian today who wasn't terrible at his first live gig. If anyone was laughing, it was probably at him, not with him. But the really brave ones kept coming back and learned something every time until they could control a room.

Many of us have failed at what we most badly want to do only to then move on to something that we find we love even more and are very successful at. How will you know how good or bad you are at something if you don't just go for it and become ridicule-proof?

The only thing you have to lose is misguided pride. And that's something all of us could do with having less of.

So many people go out of their way to uncover the bad stuff that's being said about them and then try to defend stuff that is a complete waste of time. They try convincing people that what's being said about them is not true, while most of these people they are trying to convince either don't give a damn or don't believe them anyway.

The only way for bad stuff not to be spoken about you is to do nothing. I have learnt that gossip and rumours being spread about you are often impossible to defend and will only get worse the more you deny them. Time is the only thing that can vindicate you, and so you have to show patience. I have also learnt that no matter who you are, the opinions about you will be broadly spread and unpredictable. Some people will not stop loving a politician or a film star no matter what is written or found out about that person. Other people, no matter how much good they may do in the world, will simply always be hated by a certain group.

I'm from a place called Heidedal, and most of the people in Heidedal probably still see me as a big drug dealer. To them, there's just no other conceivable way that I could own a nice car and have money.

I used to get very angry about this and try defend myself. I told everyone who cared to listen that I was not a drug dealer. I would advertise my business deals loudly until one day I realised that I was spending more time defending these rumours than actually working. I realised that the people of Heidedal had never before encountered such a big success story without drugs or crime of some kind being involved, so I just accepted that the rumours were nothing personal, just plain ignorance.

So get on with your hustle. Don't let talk slow you down. People will always talk, and don't take it personally. It happens to the best among us. The higher you climb up the success ladder the better view of you the gossipers will have to take shots at you. Answer the rumour mongers with more success.

Slowly Wins the Race

Dr Dre is one of the pioneers of hip-hop. No history of hip-hop music can be written without mentioning his name. In his time, Dr Dre has seen thousands of hopeful rappers come and go. Dre just kept on doing what he had always been doing, which is to produce good music. The newcomers insulted him, acting as though they were born into the game – each one saw himself as the new generation and styled the likes of Dr Dre as has-beens.

And sure, many of these guys did amazingly well in a short space of time. Their arrogance would triple with every double-platinum record sales award. Pretty soon, they knew it all, splashing money all over the place, insulting whoever came their way. They'd begin to see themselves as untouchable and, pretty soon, stopped honouring contracts. They'd be no-shows at concerns or stand backstage demanding loads more money be paid, in cash in bags, before they'd even step out to do one song.

They'd leave the fall-out for the promoters to deal with. I know what that feels like, because I've been a promoter myself and I've had to deal with the serious aftermath of a major no-show. These "new sensations" end up showing scant regard for everybody and anybody but themselves, and they think they're being "real", showing "toughness" and "street cred".

They said they were the kings, the people with real talent. While all this was happening, year in and out, guys like Dre just kept on doing what they do best. They produced good music and ignored all the sideshows.

Fast-forward ten years and most of the instant rappers are either in jail, broke, dead or sucked dry by an industry that used them as much as it could and then spat them out. Most are worse off now than when they started out, despite selling millions of records. Almost all of them owe the revenue service millions of dollars. They go back to the very same promoters they once treated so shabbily to beg to do gigs at a tenth of the cost of what they used to demand in the past.

The hard years that Dre put in are now finally being returned to him in cash. Last year he was the highest-earning musician in the world. I don't mean he was the top-earning hip-hop musician. He beat the likes of anyone you can mention. Justin Bieber, one of the biggest new-kids on any music block in history, was only ninth on that list.

The guys with him through it all are still around: guys like 50 Cent and Eminem would never have dared to say a word of disrespect against Dre, and they are big-name players who've done it all and will come around every year to do it again.

Respect the people you find in any industry. They were there before you, but you don't want them to still be there long after you've been kicked out. Learn from them, and don't let beginners luck fool you. Just because you had one big hit is no guarantee you know the secret to lasting success. Take a look at the people who do know that secret and try to make their secrets your own.

Being successful never means you have to know everything and be the best at everything. You will never be that anyway, but one thing you can do is keep learning and keep getting better. You simply have to be good enough, most of the time, and stay in the game for as long as you can. The rewards will come, the important thing is never to run away.

I once sat with old friends of an uncle of mine who passed on. We were just chatting and one of my dead uncle's friends introduced me to his best friend. I was a bit startled because my uncle's friend was doing very well financially but the friend he was introducing me to was clearly not very well-off at all. I couldn't help but ask why is it was that most of these guys were doing so well, but a man who they said had been their friend all these years was evidently lagging far behind. I asked this question because I knew they all come from a culture of showing strong brotherhood.

It turned out my uncle's friend had an explanation. He said the reason their friend was always broke was because he was a runner. I was startled, because the guy we were talking about was pretty fat. He didn't look like he'd run a mile in his life. But what my uncle's friend meant was that the man had never been able to concentrate on one thing for long enough and could never stick with one project for long enough. As soon as he concentrated on some business and the first signs of a storm appeared, he abandoned the venture. And so he lived his life, running from venture to venture – always running from the first signs of trouble.

One day, years ago at Home Affairs, while I was changing the surname of my son to McKenzie I met another gentleman there also changing his surname, to Mkhize from Zuma, I asked him if he was family of the former deputy president who'd just been fired and was facing corruption and rape charges? He said, "unfortunately yes", and that was the reason he needed to change his surname.

He was worried the Zuma name might deny him opportunities in the future. I wanted to tell him that family should stick together in turbulent times. I should have, because if you fast-forward a few years Zuma is today president of the country and I can tell you about many guys who've had doors open for them because of that surname.

It made me think of my uncle's friends.

There is a brilliant saying that speaks of "running from a distant roar, into a crouching tiger". Understand that storms can be braced. We come out of them stronger and wiser. If you lack patience and courage to face difficulties, then you will run from company to company, from friend to friend, and won't stand for anything – like the old saying that if you don't stand for something, you fall for everything, I think that you can also just fall. It's better to stand and fall, so you can stand again, than to never get up off the floor in the first place.

As the saying about the tiger tells us, we run away from what seems like danger, but then walk right into the real danger. Just because we can't clearly see the end, it doesn't mean we are doomed. So don't be a runner. Stay the course.

And keep your eyes on the prize.

Success Is Rarely Endless

In jail, we used to club money together daily to purchase food. One day one of our friends told us we should keep our money today because he alone would take care of our meal. He arranged the best meal we'd had in years, including dessert, which is no easy feat in prison. We ate and felt like kings, and we couldn't stop praising our generous friend. That was in January, and for the remainder of the coming days and months he contributed nothing more. Whenever we dared to mention the fact that he was no longer contributing to the daily meals, he would say that we had short memories. He constantly reminded us of that day he had bought food for all of us. Whenever we were sharing stories or jokes, his stories would always somehow function as a subtle reminder of his "great food day".

All of us will have a "great day" or a "great year" at some time. Once you have achieved something or the other at work or in your personal life, it's easy to start resting on that laurel – to constantly want everyone to remember us by that and to ride that bit of reputation to death.

The only thing I had when I was released from jail was a bit of fame for having orchestrated the Grootvlei exposé of warder corruption, which was shown all over the world. People were fascinated by the story of what drove me to make those secret recordings at great risk to my life and the lives of fellow conspirators, and then release them to the world, putting us at even greater risk. There were several attempts on our lives and the story gripped the public imagination. For my first few years out of prison, I was able to use that bit of fame to get bookings for motivational talks, and it was part of what made the book about my life so successful.

For some people, having a story and a bit of fame would be something they'd end up trying to live off of for the rest of their life. But the hard truth of it is that eventually everyone would have heard my story, would have gotten tired about me always banging on about it and even if a movie was made about me, eventually even that would have run its course – and then what would have been left? After a

few years, I would have run out of money and the world would have moved on to the next big thing and newer, fresher stories.

I knew I had a limited window of opportunity to use my initial successes as a launch pad to move on to other things. My motivational talks introduced me to influential people in business and I never let go of my dream to finally have my own businesses. Many of these people were willing to invest in me and my dream.

You can't forget that life is about continuously rising to meet new challenges, goals and ambitions. Achieving something is great, but continuing to achieve is the true measure of your character. The brutal fact is that your past achievements may not be enough to keep you on the level you've dreamed of. Even if you wrote the most popular song of the year, there's no guarantee anyone will still be listening to it and buying it in five years' time. Sports stars can set a record and try to live on that glory for the rest of their lives. Some do, most don't. Some businesspeople make one deal that makes them for life, but unfortunately it doesn't work that way for most people, who must continuously keep on striving, working and performing, setting record after record in order to stay relevant. I'd also argue that those are the people who stay happier for longer, because working to realise your dreams can be the most rewarding experience for anyone. The more deeply I think about it, the more I understand what Henry Moore meant when he said: "The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for your whole life. And the most important thing is – it must be something you cannot possibly do."

What I love about that is he was recognising the fact that for many people achieving their dream can be a terribly confusing moment. Because once you've achieved it, and you don't have anything else to do after that, your life loses a lot of its meaning. You should make sure you have more than just one dream, and that you have smaller ones inside of bigger ones, and that perhaps your biggest dream is, as the great sculptor suggests, impossible. But maybe what seems impossible in the beginning will not seem so impossible at the end of your life. As Muhammad Ali told us at the start of this book: "Impossible is nothing."

How many times have we been told the reason a person has lost their money, sports title or a position in life is "because he lost his hunger". It's a reason that sounds vague, but it's perfectly true and very important to understand.

Losing your hunger can be seen in all the small disciplines you used to be so careful about. It's something I have seen happen so many times. It's something

that's happened to me, too, and it's something that can quickly turn kings into beggars.

When I started to work at Chubb, I was elated. It wasn't about having that job in particular, I was just happy to have any job. I was the happiest person in the world. I rocked up two hours before the time, I was the last one to leave and I never missed a day of work. I attended all meetings and answered every email and message left for me. I attended things where my absence wouldn't have made any difference. Overall, I was just truly happy and satisfied with building a new life. I wasn't earning the world's best salary – I started out below minimum wage – but my hunger for success and for more money drove and guided me to maintain all the small disciplines all the time, every day.

If you fast-forward seven or eight years you'll see me owning a few chrome mines, three sports cars, living in a mansion, consulting for millions and owning two well-known nightclubs. I started to slack. I started avoiding meetings, no matter how important they were. I would think nothing of just taking the whole day off. I started not even scanning my email message box thoroughly any more.

When I was at Chubb I was hungry for opportunity and the results that come with it, but a few years after reaching a few good milestones I lost my discipline, which is the same as saying I lost my hunger. I fooled myself into thinking I had “arrived”, but the truth is no one ever “arrives”. The only day the threat of losing everything should no longer matter to you is the day after you die. There's no fortune too big, no reputation too perfect and no talent too well-honed that something can't come along and wipe out in the blink of an eye.

Don't even think of complaining about the unfairness that everyone is only as good as their last mistake. You can do the right thing a thousand times. One mistake can be enough to make all of that irrelevant. It doesn't matter that you obeyed the traffic light on the corner near your house religiously for twenty years. The one time you rush through that red robot and crash into a minibus carrying eight school kids and kill them all – that's what you'll be remembered for.

When I was “at the top” I told myself how I was a big boss now and it was time to start behaving like one. I fooled myself into thinking I knew what the correct behaviour of a big boss is. I must admit that on most days I even became a little prima donna. I thought I was entitled to act like a diva and even though the words “do you know who I am” never actually came out of my mouth, I was tempted to fall into that trap on numerous occasions.

My life started descending on what could have been an inevitable spiral to the bottom. Fortunately, I saw the dangerous pattern I was falling into and I fought my way back to being sharp and hungry for success before I lost it all. Because I came closer than I ever should have to losing absolutely everything.

The stars of many fields fall into that trap. Sports stars start training less, musicians miss rehearsals, employees start calling in sick when they're not. It happens to the best of us. We only do this because we are too stupid to see that the only thing that can keep us at the top is what got us there in the first place. There's a difference between just being famous and being a star. You may be famous today, but only time will tell you whether or not you really are a star.

You have to admire young billionaires like Mark Zuckerberg – who could have retired at twenty-five – but only work harder because they believe in what they're doing. Having lots of money is no reason to stop working if you're hustling and doing what you love.

The people who make it, year after year, are the ones who remain consistent. They don't stray from their path. To them, it doesn't matter how good they may be, they don't strive to stay the same. They want to become better, as hard as that may be. They certainly don't let ill-discipline sabotage their dream. They know where they are coming from and they never forget it. They know that there are younger people who want to be just like them who they can't disappoint and they know that there are even more young people who want to replace them at the top.

They are the true hustlers, but they also accept that, no matter what they do, it could all come to a crushing end anyway.

You may be one of the rare exceptions but you should also accept that few people can stay on top forever. It's rare that you will consistently make truckloads of cash. I'm not talking about consistently making your monthly salary – I'm talking about making “endless millions”.

Fifteen years ago there wasn't a person alive who would have thought Macaulay Kulkin would not have a career today. He was the ultimate child star. It must never have crossed his mind that the work would just dry up. And when the work dries up, the money dries up. He's just one of hundreds of examples of child stars you can read about who are, in effect, nobodies today – but it's a risk anyone who's suddenly hit the big time faces. African, particularly South African artists, will

make one hit song and then start to live the life of a person who is going to have another three hits in a row. That second hit never comes and they fall so hard they end up worse off than before their “success”.

The biggest song ever made in this country is Mandoza’s Nkalakatha. It knew no race or radio station preference. It was played all over the country, from rugby games to weddings and with the hit came a hit lifestyle for Mandoza. He bought cars, houses in golf estates and, of course, cocaine. As we now know, that second hit song never came, and he is not the only one. MC Hammer has to be one of the most famous examples of a massive star who couldn’t possibly have made more money from one or two songs. He blew it all in the sure-fire knowledge that he would always be able to produce another big hit.

I was making just as much money as Mandoza a few years ago, and one success just followed another for me. I thought it would last forever. I was saved only by the fact that I didn’t have any drug addictions and I had luckily made a few investments that kept me afloat (and only barely) while I was trying to recover lost ground.

So it doesn’t just apply to the music world, but celebrities are the best examples because we all know them and when they’re flying high they’re obviously flying high. When they crash and burn, it’s just as obvious. Vinolia Mashego was one of the first big TV personalities in South Africa. She was vibrant and adored by all. Today she is broke and almost unrecognisable in her obscurity. The first local sportsman who won R100 000 was the boxer Terror Mathebula, in the 1980s. I am tempted to say that he can be forgiven for turning into a pauper, but what is our excuse in this world that’s full of financial advisers and the endless examples of other sportsmen? If you’re making good money in sport and not thinking about the day it will end, then there’s something wrong with you. But it’s still easy to find examples of soccer players, rugby players, crickets players, you name it, who spend as though they’ll still be playing when they’re seventy.

It’ll be easy to write a whole book about such people and their various blunders, but the one thing they all seem to have in common is the dangerous thought that “it” will all never end, that “it” will only get bigger and better. They’ll dish out another hit, break another record, write another bestselling book, get hired by another law firm, invest in another set of top-performing shares or sign another multimillion-rand deal.

The only evidence they have for that is that they were able to do “it” before. Unfortunately, though, it doesn’t matter who are or what you try to do. The end will come – so just make sure that what may mean the end of your success in one part of your career or your entire career does not mean the end of your financial wellbeing.

When you’re on top and the praise and the money is streaming in, know how to build a dam. Let your dam be in the form of investing in something sensible. You don’t have to put all of your money away, but put most of it in a trust fund, buy shares in the top companies, buy well-respected art or just make that money start to work for you in ways that you’ll be grateful for later when you’re suddenly not the hottest ticket in town. Also, take insurance on what you’re relying on to make money. If you’re a guitarist, take out insurance on your fingers, singers take out insurance on their vocal chords. You’d be crazy to think you might not get into an accident and not need disability insurance of some kind. I’ve already told you about the importance of insurance – just make sure you use that lesson.

If you’re constantly forced to go big or go home, sometimes you’ll just be made to go home – and maybe when you do get home the bank will be there telling you your house is being repossessed. That’s too tragic to bear thinking about, but you must think about it. It’s an avoidable fate. Take steps to avoid it by, first of all, not losing your hunger, but secondly accepting that there are things about failure and success that we can’t always control. The paradox and the irony is that by accepting the fact that your success is likely to end, your success may, in fact, never end. That’s how it seems to work in life. The people who think it will never end are the cannon fodder. The ones who know “it” always ends can blind-side those cannons and live to fight on. They take nothing for granted, they save water while it’s raining, they never rest easy and they certainly never rest on their laurels.

Know and Prove Your Worth

A journalist I've already mentioned earlier once wrote a series of articles revealing that not only was I an ex-prisoner, but the highest-paid person employed at Central Rand Gold. This, to the publication concerned, was damning stuff. He wrote this despite never having sat me down to ask me what it was I actually had done to warrant being paid R260 000 a month. The journalist just couldn't get his head around the idea that an ex-con can command such a hefty salary every month. And really, I don't blame him. He is one of many who would have acted and written the same about my salary if they had a newspaper to write it in.

Prior to being paid R260 000, I was paid R150 000 a month. I looked at what I was doing and decided to resign. The board, in effect, begged me to stay on and I told them that the only amount that could make me stay was R260 000 a month. They agreed to that and I still left them after working for them for two years so that I could go build my own company, which, after its first year, started making R1.5 million a month.

Hugh Hefner used to work at Esquire magazine. He wanted a raise of five dollars, which was refused, so he left the company and started Playboy, which became bigger and even more well-known than Esquire. Hefner is still today one of the most recognisable faces in the world, with a huge fortune, and his empire has grown to include reality TV shows and endless merchandise.

Kenny likes to say that "you don't get the deal you deserve, you get the deal you negotiate". In a way, I completely agree with him, but at other times you're just going to get a raw deal and no one is going to want to listen to your attempts to negotiate. In the business world you are only truly underpaid if you can get paid more working somewhere else.

I have seen thousands of workers resigning, only to reapply at the same company after being in the jobless wilderness for a year. When you approach your boss for a raise, you have two options: if he says no, you can go back to your desk and keep on working while shutting the hell up or you can leave like Hefner and go do your

own thing. If they offer you a sweeter deal to make you stay then take it if you want to, but know that is possible also the greatest validation that you will be able to make it somewhere else or on your own anyway. They can see your worth, so you should be able to assess your worth that way too.

Never do what most people do, though, which is threaten to leave when you actually have no other plan or any real intention to follow through on your threat. When I told Central Rand Gold that I was leaving I was fully committed to seeing my departure through. I didn't want to leave because I was angry with the company. I wanted to leave because I truly believed that I could earn more elsewhere.

Never leave a business thinking that because you are a star in that particular workplace you will be accepted as a star somewhere else. In the big wide world you are just another jobseeker. Cultures are not the same from workplace to workplace. Never leave your present job because you're angry about your raise or the lack of one. Rather take a day off, calm down and think about your options. Remember, good workers are constantly headhunted with better offers from competitors and if nobody has been beating down your door go back to your desk and do your job as well as you can. Your headhunting moment may still be waiting for you in the future.

Otherwise, put your money where your mouth is and walk out with a grand plan, like Hugh Hefner did.

I have seen so many people getting angry at work and then deciding to resign, totally forgetting that their only other alternative is not having a job.

I have seen people walking out of deals because a certain person offended them. His walking out would make you think he had endless alternatives to pick from. But later you find the same person shopping the same deal around at a much lower price.

So hear me clearly: let no insult, accusation or emotion rob you of your plans and your opportunities, especially if your alternative is worse than anything you have to get through right now.

Never make a decision because of emotion. Walk only because you have found something better or have something better in mind.

Ironically, some people have to go through the drastic and painful step of being fired before they understand their true value.

In career terms, there is little worse than being fired unexpectedly. But nothing can be worse than being fired from a company you started. It happens. I can't think of something more humiliating and saddening, but the outcomes of some of that have been nothing short of inspirational.

The most famous example is Steve Jobs. Not only was he fired from Apple, what made it worse was that the person who got him fired was the CEO Jobs had personally approached and persuaded to join the company.

Most of us would have been embittered by that for a long time, perhaps to the extent that it would have finished us. Steve Jobs was bitter, all right, but his bitterness didn't make him slit his wrists about it or cry forever. He went on to get involved in another business and start other ventures. As the years went by he made it abundantly clear to Apple that it had been the business world's greatest mistake to let go of him. He was eventually brought back in to save Apple from the brink of bankruptcy – which he not only did, but when he died it was the world's most successful company.

One guy I respect even more is our own “Boere Buffett”. He was fired from his job at age forty-eight, when most successful entrepreneurs start looking forward to an early retirement. How do you even start again at that age, entrepreneur or not? But not only did Jannie Mouton start again, he founded PSG Group Limited and is today the ninth-richest person in South Africa.

Maybe you got fired from your job and think it's the end of the world. If you are sitting at home and feeling sorry for yourself, doing nothing with your life, maybe you are only proving that you in fact deserved to be fired. If you think I'm wrong then get up like the men I've just described, and go show them what a huge mistake they made by ever letting you go.

When Is ‘Too Late’?

How many times do we hear people talk about their missed opportunities? How many times do we hear our uncles and parents saying that they didn’t get an education because they had to pay for the education of their younger siblings? It’s easy to hear a long list of excuses for why people didn’t do this or that.

“It’s never too late” is a phrase we all know, but do we practice it?

One person who epitomises that phrase is an example to young and old alike. He changed my whole perception on saying it’s too late and it’s Mr George Dawson. He always wanted to know how to read and write. Before he died, he wanted to be able to read from the Bible. So he went to school aged ninety-eight, at the age of one-hundred he was able to read his own birthday cards (of which there were many). And he fulfilled his lifelong ambition to read the Bible.

Think of that again. If someone could achieve a dream after ninety-eight years, then what’s your excuse? There absolutely is no excuse.

It’s true that we live in a world where younger people achieve most successes, while they still our own President Jacob Zuma, you could say life really began for him at sixty-five, when he became president of the ANC well after everyone had written him off. I’ve already mentioned Colonel Sanders, who only opened th978-0-620-55772-6978-0-620-55772-6All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

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e first KFC at age sixty-five.

And Roger Waters was the world's second-highest-paid musician in 2012. He actually made more money from music than Dr Dre, who got most of his from headphones. Most of Roger Waters' money was from his world tour – and he's sixty-nine. There are many young people walking around who don't have the faintest idea of who the hell Roger Waters even is. But he's not about to say his time has come and gone.

So don't for one moment believe that the bus has left you. Being older, you have numerous advantages over anyone younger. Don't say: "I wish when I was twenty or thirty I knew what I know now." Just say: "Now I know what I know. And I'm going to use it."

Walk over to your fridge or kitchen cupboard and chances are it's full of instant coffee, instant noodles, instant pudding and even microwave dishes that get prepared instantly. We are living in an age of convenience.

It's small wonder then that so many believe they can get instant wealth. So people try something new for a few months but drop it because their expectations just don't match what they're getting. People want to be mentored and believe that after the mentoring program if they are not rich then it was not worth the effort. Today they are musicians. After releasing one song that didn't sell they'll go around saying the music industry is dead.

Tomorrow they are car salesmen. If there aren't any results they believe that the car-sales industry is as dead as the music industry.

The fault is never theirs, they are the people who say: "The bus left me." They never just missed the bus.

As I've said before, all anyone has is the present. It's the same present everyone else has, whether they are nineteen or ninety-eight.

George Dawson truly showed me it's never too late. Go out there and do your thing. For George it was education, maybe for you it's starting a business, acting, dancing, singing, car-racing, whatever. Don't let another moment be lost or pass you by.

Just in case you think it only happens in America, our own Sipho Hotstix Mabuza wrote his matric at age sixty and entered university aged sixty-one.

So go get your education or start that long-postponed dream. Never use your age as an excuse to not live out your life's purpose and your dreams.

Too many people pass a point in their life and then decide they're too old to keep moving with the times, adapting their hustle and staying young at heart. It's got nothing to do with how old they are, and everything to do with their attitude. There's no reason why you can't learn new tricks at any age. You're not a dog, you're a human being, the most infinitely adaptable creature on earth.

If you become a pot plant, you've simply allowed that to happen.

In every company there are people who have made peace with the fact that they are never going to be promoted. They have stopped trying and the only reason they're not being retrenched is because of the "last in, first out" model. They've been there so long the only way to get rid of them would be to either get rid of their post entirely, retrench everyone until you finally get to them – or slip them some poison in their coffee. I call them pot plants.

They may not be working very hard, some of these people, but they are experts at keeping their eyes on everyone else's doings. They seem to know everything that's happening in the company and they are the matches to most fires. They have seen an army of staff come and go, but they are like the furniture and they are brilliant at sabotaging whoever they despise. They rarely dish out good advice and warnings, but they're first in line to point out when someone needs to be blamed.

Age is not on their side, though. Technology has not been kind to them. They are experts in stuff that no one needs any more. They belong to the old era and, somewhere along the way, stopped caring about keeping up with the Zuckerbergs. They resent anyone young and ambitious, and they still believe your pay should be related to how long you have worked at a company.

To them, their greatest achievement was when they finally got their long-service certificate. Their greatest memory was being employee of the month somewhere in the 1980s, when awards like that still existed. They may have a cup engraved with their name and a framed photo against the wall. They cannot fathom or forgive the big bonus payments doing the rounds now.

A hustler is duty-bound to never become a pot plant, no matter what. Your duty is also to assist younger hustlers as you move up the ranks.

The real hustlers are those who have been with a company for years, but have changed with the times and prepared themselves for the future. They can exchange tweets with a sixteen-year-old just as easily as they can reminisce over a whisky about the old days with other old guys who've also seen it all, done it all, but know that tomorrow they're going to have to keep on doing it all, all over again.

A Letter from an Ex-Con

When I was released on parole it was not just a matter of letting me off the leash and allowing me to roam free as a bird. Many conditions were placed on my release, but the most stringent of them was a letter that I had to get signed and stamped every day at whatever was the closest police station to me. That letter was the bane of my existence.

I was required to present it to the local constabulary every morning and every evening. I can't even put into words all the questions you get asked when you present your letter. First of all, you must explain why you went to jail in the first place. Then they want to know, but why are you a criminal? Yes, they don't ask why did you commit crimes, just why are you a criminal. They make a point of being as rude and abrasive as possible, to make the experience as infinitely belittling as they can. And this regular interrogation happens in front of everyone who happens to be in the police station. This all gets easier if you happen to strike up a relationship with a particular police station and its staff, who see you every day and sign your letter as a matter of routine, perhaps later even becoming friendly about it, but because of my travel schedule I was always visiting a new police station every day. The worst part of the letter was that the department of correctional services, in its sadistic wisdom, had typed it in Afrikaans. Try translating that to a cop in Umgababa in Kwa-Zulu Natal. He won't listen to a word you have to say. When he gets his own translator, you just hear whistles and the inevitable dawn of understanding: "Ohhh, he is just a criminal."

It was hell. I can't tell you how many times I just felt like saying: "Fuck this I'm leaving." The problem was that I would have gone straight back to jail. That was my only alternative. It was the letter or jail. Even on my worst letter-bearing days, when that bit of paper felt as if it weighed a ton, I bit down on whatever clever comeback I might have for whatever rude constable was standing behind the desk trying to make my life a misery. I just ate it up, smiled and even managed a thank you for the eventual stamp and signature that got added to the rest.

That piece of paper was my passport to eventual freedom and I was not about to start messing with the customs officers standing between me and my future. They could easily have sabotaged my whole life – refusing to sign and sending me elsewhere, and perhaps even warning the next police station that a big, black asshole was on his way.

I'm mentioning this because no insult or judicial interrogation I had to face could have compared even slightly to going back to prison. I would have carried twenty letters in twenty different languages to face twenty different cops a day if that kept me from going back to jail. I've included this story because I have seen so many people getting angry at work and then deciding to resign, totally forgetting that their only other alternative is not having a job.

I have seen people walking out of deals because a certain person offended them. His walking out would make you think he had endless alternatives to pick from. But later you find the same person shopping the same deal around at a much lesser price.

So hear me clearly: let no insult, accusation or emotion rob you of your plans and your opportunities, especially if your alternative is worse than anything you have to get through right now.

Never make a decision because of emotions alone. Hustlers don't work that way.

I also included that story because I want to speak my my former niggas, the guys who are now like I used to be: doing crime, thinking the consequences can go and get damned. The criminal network in South Africa is a community operating not that differently from businesspeople when it comes to referrals. When someone stole my car, I made one call to a guy I had once shared a cell with and within three minutes my car was located and returned. This is a community in which bank robbers order cars from car thieves for a robbery and locksmiths get booked for housebreakings. All the different crime departments work in tandem with each other, and I was once a young manager of not just one, but two gangs, filled with guys who had the full range of crime skills and specialties.

Many criminals show a greater work ethic than anyone doing straight business. They get up early, work all day long, and sometimes through the night. Young drug dealers standing on corners are strictly monitored to keep to their shifts and if they take time off, they have to work it back.

Respect in any gang is based on guts. The more courage you show in doing crime, the more respect you earn and the higher you step up in the group.

The worst crime you can commit in any gang is to call it quits, to turn your back on crime. Not only do you get taunted, ridiculed and called every name on earth – that is if you're lucky – but many of the quitters get killed, hurt or intimidated because they know the secrets of the gang. It takes guts to even contemplate a move away from crime. It takes a heart of iron to actually do it for real.

I lived as a highly professional criminal for most of my life. I decided to step out of it for real, into a world that was completely unknown to me. I was scared as hell – far more scared than I'd ever been even minutes before we robbed a bank and spotted a nearby police car.

I thought that in this world outside prison and crime I would have to learn everything anew, but I came to find that the rules that apply to success as a criminal are not that different to what could help you to be an honest man. Most of the good things we've learnt on the streets are applicable in business: there's getting a good lead, showing courage and tenacity, loyalty, planning, dealing with backstabbers, doing the job on time with everyone performing their function, and so on.

It's not that big a step to take the lessons of the street into the boardroom. I've done it now for many years since my release and I've always felt very at home in corporate environments that would easily intimidate someone else. If you come from the places I come from, if you've seen the things I've seen, then a boardroom can hold no fear for you.

It's possible to do honest business despite being a criminal. Take that rare step into a world that rewards business ideas that don't leave victims behind.

When I would hear the names people were calling me behind my back, I knew that some of the people calling me those things were actually admiring me secretly. If you go to any maximum-security prison and give all the guys you find there a chance to relive their lives, almost all those guys would choose the life of someone normal, possibly the sort of life that you are living right now – a life where even if you haven't achieved anything much, you haven't made too many disastrous choices either, you don't have that much to regret and the world is still lying wide open before you, waiting for you to step up and take your place according to the great potential you possess.

I can't tell you what so many of those people, who've made the sort of mistakes it's almost impossible to come back from, wouldn't give just to have a clean slate again.

Your life is probably a greater gift than you could ever hope to understand. Don't wait until your life is almost over to understand just how much potential you had, and how little of it you actually lived up to.

And even if you have been convicted for the most heinous of crimes, you still have a chance to build a life. I am the living proof of what is possible. I'm not going to lie and tell you it's easy. It's damn difficult. It needs guts to take the initial decision but it takes everything else you're made of (and more) to stay the course. I have travelled the world attending meetings. I have made the kind of money that people who spend a lifetime in crime don't make, and I'm telling you that anything is possible if you are determined enough.

Jay-Z made that switch a long time ago and today books are being written about him calling him the King of America. Make that change. If you think you are too deeply involved in whatever you are involved in, you are mistaken.

Prior to jail I had never done a day's honest work in my life. In prison, the place I'd been sent to supposedly be rehabilitated, I became an even worse criminal. I really perfected the art of crime in prison.

Worse than me you would have been hard-pressed to find. If you can't or are unwilling to do it for you, then do it for your kids – or if you don't have kids do it for the rest of your family.

If you die or get arrested it will affect them. Your real family is not the gang. That's a lie, the biggest you are told. No family member who truly loves you will want you to endanger your life, time and again. Few criminals get visits from their old gang friends when they are incarcerated. I know. I truly know.

Crime is not a lifestyle. It's a bad decision that has made a few rich, but put most in jail, in wheelchairs or into early graves. I counted forty-three of my fellow gang members who died because of crime. Three eventually got rich and two of those three are still involved in crime – which means that they still have a great chance to go wherever the other forty-three have already gone.

This chapter is not just written for the criminals, who know that they can, in their own way, learn from and be like me. It's also for all the young people who want to take that step into crime, or who are being tempted or forced into it.

Don't. It is a decision that will destroy you and everybody who loves you. Don't. Go find a job. Open a business. Do whatever you have to do, but don't join the gangs and don't do crime.

My Dream for Africa

Africa has been getting hustled by the rest of the world for centuries, and continues to be hustled today. We Africans allow it to continue, instead of calling time on the game and rewriting some of the rules. It's high time we true hustlers of Africa show that we can hustle back.

First, the world came here and took us to be their slaves, to build their cities and till their fields. The African tyrants and warlords who held the power at that time also willingly participated in selling off their own people. To them it was a roaring trade.

Later, especially after slavery was becoming unfashionable, the foreigners needed to be less obvious about their exploitation. They continued to build their colonies across the length and breadth of the continent, though, always with their eyes firmly on the prizes of what Africa can give: bountiful harvests and most of the world's minerals. These colonial masters imposed a strict rule of law wherever they governed, which kept the black man in his place – his place being to serve his masters.

When such direct rule became unfashionable, the strong governors of Africa returned to Europe and wherever else they'd come from and the continent fell victim to the warlords and tyrants, who enjoyed the support of the former masters, as long as these tyrants were men it was possible to continue to do business with. The flow of resources out of Africa and into the rest of the world continued even faster than before and only the tyrants grew rich, their accounts filled to bursting point in Swiss banks.

Once again, they were happy to subjugate their people for a buck.

The colour of the man holding the whip over Africa had gone back to being black, but the results were not only much the same, things were worse. Because now everybody wanted to replace the tyrant at the top, so war after war followed, the rabble of Africa joining one warlord after another in an attempt to help yet

another man become the new tyrant so that his bank account could also begin to overflow, and perhaps they could be there to enjoy some of those spoils with him.

That's how it is in Africa.

As for the “developed world”, in the final assessment it has never stopped hustling the continent and its people – and few Africans have been able to rise to the challenge to stop that hustle. Even well-meaning people who may be trying to help the continent can find themselves falling into the trap of keeping Africa subjugated.

From the 1960s onwards, richer countries came to understand that giving aid to poorer countries was not just a generous gesture. It could be used to impose control on those countries. They could “buy” the loyalty of poorer countries by giving them aid. By the 1980s, everyone was using the same language of aid, that richer countries must donate money to poorer ones in order to alleviate poverty and promote development.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) became the primary decision-makers in the matter of where aid money goes and it favoured countries that “liberalised” their economies and basically did as they were told. The aid always came with firm conditions attached and most global donors imposed their own economic and political policies on developing countries in return for the aid. The World Bank and the IMF, which are of course run by the richer countries, call the final shots on where most of the world's aid should be spent, and the poorer countries don't get much of a say in the matter.

The track record of all this aid has, as we all know, been pretty mixed. The tyrants in our African countries are more than happy to live off the aid that keeps streaming in and dispense it only to those people who profess loyalty and admiration for the tyrant. Donor money has kept many a tyrant in power.

Even when the international aid community bypasses the governments of those not considered “pro-poor” enough, the implication is that their aid then doesn't then even reach the people who are in most need of it.

Even if you forget about the aid, the leaders of African countries have taken huge loans from money has been spent in African countries is hard to find.

So-called leaders have mortgaged the wealth of their nations, placing future generations in a bondage of debt that is as crippling as the slave trade ever was. These debts have to be paid, and so wealth flows out of Africa each year in the form of, mostly, its minerals.

I am writing about this because I've been all over Africa doing mining work. I've seen first-hand that companies could not give a damn about the welfare of the nations where they work – and why should they, really? It's all about the bottom line. Even those that do give a damn – and there are many of them, including mine – struggle to make a difference because corruption is so widely tolerated by African leaders who are mainly out to line their own pockets. They want bribes to keep paying their armies and weapons to keep their people in their place.

It discourages the “good investors” from wanting to get involved with a country. Because every time the corrupt leader they've been dealing with gets toppled they have to either abandon their projects or go and bribe the new guy all over again. This sort of thing does not discourage the sort of people Africa does not need to invest in it. When good governance structures and institutions are in place, the good investors can do business with a country and their money helps to make the people rich, not just the tyrant.

I once read a report by the European Network on Debt and Development that \$600 billion of wealth flows from poorer countries to richer ones each year, but very little of that ever makes its way back to the poorer countries. The same organisation revealed, a few years ago, that a third of all aid was simply an accounting trick, with money moved from one donor ministry to another, but never reaching any starving mouth of any child anywhere.

Aid figures are falsely inflated in many other ways, too, such as via debt cancellations and spending on refugees and foreign students in donor countries. Almost half of all official development aid gets tied up in paying for “products and services” offered to poor countries by richer ones (a lot of it in “consulting fees”, where people from rich countries are paid a lot of money to advise people from poor countries on how to spend what little aid money remains after the aid agencies have taken their cut, defrauded even more and after the regimes running the countries have looted as much of it as they can).

I'm not talking here, about the emergency aid that saves lives in the midst of famine, flooding, earthquakes or other disasters (everyone needs that, no matter who you are or where you're from), but about the development aid that was

supposed to build on our continent and actually develop it. The New York University Economics professor, William Easterly, was quite right to ask the following question: since more than \$2.3 trillion in aid over the last fifty years has not really improved the conditions of living in Africa for most of its people, what has really been the point of it all? Africa has continued to make richer countries richer, while it has become undoubtedly poorer, because with every passing year there is less natural wealth buried in African soil, with little industrialisation on the ground above it to show for it.

I should know. I've travelled all over Africa. Many of its capital cities make Soweto look like New York. At the airport in Ghana, there were just a few fans, not even an air-con. Maputo looks like a squatter camp. In Uganda you are driving along a road and suddenly just can't continue any more. It would be a joke, but it's not really funny.

Young people all over Africa, including South Africa, are happy just to win a catering tender, while their heritage and their inheritance is being pillaged from under their noses. It's like someone stealing all your savings out from under your bed.

If you look at Saudi Arabia, the UAE and its towering city Dubai, and many other Middle Eastern countries, they are revelling in the wealth afforded them by the blessing of the oil beneath their feet. Those Arabs don't just allow just anyone to come in and help themselves to whatever they desire – even in Iraq it was impossible for foreign-owned companies to extract oil, even with the might of the US army protecting them, because the rebels came in time and again to blow up their infrastructure. Arabs have built skyscrapers in Dubai that nothing can compare to, and they did that with their own money. They didn't have to beg anyone for it.

It's incredible to me that Africa should be any different. I read in a book about Congo by Ben Lawrence that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has more than eighty percent of the world's remaining mineral resources. That's despite it already having been exploited for centuries. But the DRC is today still one of the world's most divided and war-ravaged places. It has been the setting of the worst human conflict since World War 2, and yet it's a place that should have skyscrapers taller than Dubai's. It seems that in Africa what should be our blessing becomes our curse, but we allow this to happen.

Even the African Union relies on funding from countries outside of Africa to keep itself going. How is that acceptable, when you consider how rich our continent is? How is an entity that is supposed to exist to further African unity and the growth of the continent supposed to be able to do that when its paymasters are not from Africa? Even the headquarters of the African Union, which was built in Addis Ababa, was a gift from the Chinese government. The fact that we needed a foreign country to do that for us seems ridiculous to me. I can't explain it, and I've found no one else who can do so satisfactorily either. Angola alone produces almost as much oil as Norway, and yet its people live in squalor. Many other African countries have such blessings, but Norway and other Scandinavian countries have given more aid to Africa than Angola has ever done.

Everything about the way the world is currently set up favours no change at all. It suits the richer countries to keep the poorer countries poor. Poor countries use less of the world's diminishing energy resources. They pollute the atmosphere less. They do not pose any great military or security threats to the balance of world power. They can remain sources for primary natural resources that can be easily extracted and resourced from badly run nation states incapable of setting up secondary or tertiary industries and service sectors that would cut into the market share of developed nations.

They are enormous pools of cheap labour that can be exploited by industries around the world and by transnational corporations in those countries.

Aid is a huge industry in its own right, with enormous amounts spent on aid, very little of which actually reaches the poor. Professionals and "experts" in the aid industry line their own pockets. Keeping Africa poor keeps it this way.

It sounds cynical, but it's a bit like someone coming up to you with a picture of a starving, dying child and saying: "Look at this. Now give me some money." So you give that person the money, thinking it will perhaps get to that poor, starving child, but the truth is that you just don't know.

Many of the nicest, most well-meaning people do work and contribute to the aid industry, but I'm not talking about the Bonos and Peter Gabriels of this world who really do sympathise with all the suffering and the hunger in Africa and who want to help people. As much as we should be grateful for the good intentions of people not from Africa who want to see it blossom, as Africans we cannot rely on anyone else to help us.

It's all a big hustle, like so much in life, but it's one that I believe Africans can get wise to, to do some of their own hustling right back. Those of us who live in Africa, who have nowhere else to go, and don't want to go anywhere else, must decide the fate of our own nations. If someone wants to help us, we should tell them how we wish to be helped, but more importantly it's high time that we stop looking for help from anywhere but ourselves and find our own solutions to all our own problems.

When I was growing up I was told the stories about how the early colonists came and swapped beads, mirrors and livestock for vast tracts of land, given away to them by chiefs like Dingane.

Looking at the state of Africa today, not much has changed. The Chinese go into the DRC and build a few roads and schools and in return are allowed to mine diamonds, copper, rare earth minerals, uranium, gold, iron ore, manganese and whatever else catches their fancy. We are still giving away our birthright for trinkets and for promises.

One of my dreams for Africa is to see it arise as an industrial power to rival China, Europe and the USA. I feel as strongly about this as I ever did about any of my dreams. You may say it is impossible. I say it is not only possible, it is the only thing that remains for us to do and it is our only option. Already there are signs of governments that actually want to serve their people. There are countries that are starting to arise and take their place on the world stage. To achieve this on a bigger scale, though, in a way that benefits the majority and not just the "elite", is among the greatest of all the world's challenges. But we must do it.

It is the only way we will ensure the respect that everyone who comes from Africa, or looks as though they come from Africa, deserves. I am tired of being seen as just another beggar-in-waiting just because I have a black skin. Everyone who travels as a black man anywhere in the world and has to pass a border crossing and its customs officials knows the suspicion you are viewed with, because most people from Africa would rather be anywhere but Africa.

Here in South Africa, too, don't even begin to think we are exempt from any of the rest of the continent's concerns. But at least one of the best things about South Africa is that we do have a level of industrialisation and development to show for the wealth and blessings we've been given. The main reason for that is because those who originally came here to colonise us never left – not in the same way they did in the rest of Africa. European settlers became African too, in their own way.

They decided they were here to stay – not just to take what they found, to go back and build foreign cities higher using African wealth.

The white settlers eventually went on to build modern cities and plough back wealth into South Africa's towns and cities. Of course, they excluded black people from enjoying the wealth and they used rivers of sweat from black labour – that was almost like the slave trade all over again to achieve all that – but that is old news. The white tyrants who ruled until twenty or so years ago served only the interests of the white population and ensured that, once again, black people knew their place was to serve. But still, that is old news and it is time to move past it, just as all of Africa must move past complaining about the wounds of postcolonialism as an excuse not to achieve greatness.

All of that is only our pain. We must turn our pain into champagne.

Apartheid is an undeniable part of our history and overcoming its legacy remains the biggest challenge for anyone from South Africa who knows that the huge inequalities that now exist between our people must be reduced. Those inequalities were once based solely on colour, but are now far more complex.

But that has changed and continues to change, though we still have a long way to go.

I can at least say this: this book alone would not have been possible thirty years ago. For a black man like me to write about how it is possible for anyone to achieve his or her dreams in South Africa, or even in Africa, regardless of what colour you may be, would have been laughed at and scorned as ridiculous. But now South Africa has a Constitution that enshrines values of universal rights and equality at its heart. There are other signs of progress everywhere, if you care to look for them and if you look in a way that helps you to care.

The fact that those ideals are still so hard to realise practically is something that should serve as a daily challenge and an encouragement for us, not as a discouragement.

Nowadays, anyone can make it, no matter how tough their beginnings.

When you hear about Patrice Motsepe's decision to give half the future income from his investments, which are worth R24 billion, to charities in South Africa, and perhaps some day also the rest of the continent, you can only stand back in

admiration. He, more than any of us, hustled his way quietly into being Africa's richest black man. I can't say that I fully understand all the motivations for why he agreed to share his fortune, but I do know that one of those reasons is his commitment to his country and the ties that bind him to it. He started out with nothing too, just like almost every other rich black guy in South Africa today. He showed greater wisdom in his hustle than almost anyone else – many of his acquisitions of small, underperforming mines years ago and the way he turned those businesses around was pure brilliance – but he was also given help by the changes in government policy. Had apartheid never fallen, Motsepe would never have been allowed to grow wealthy. Without Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), his road to the top would have been far trickier and taken far longer. BEE was first envisioned as a way to empower a few selected men and women, who would then invest their fortunes back into the country and back into the people.

Whenever those who have been the beneficiaries of BEE fail to do this, they are failing in their most fundamental duty. Being the beneficiary of BEE is not just about being able to show off your new Land Rover and your fancy renovated mansion in Sandton. It is about serving the people who struggled through decades of subjugation so that some of us could have the opportunity to make it some day – and then give back to others.

He shows that we don't need to beg for aid from outside of Africa. We can make our own billionaires, who don't forget where they are coming from. problem starts when that doorbell rings all the time, and it can start to get very annoying. I know that Rhona can't afford to give them all food parcels but she gives every child at least a sandwich.

When those children knock there they know a sandwich is on the other side of the door. They are part of Rhona's grocery list.

She gets no donation from institutions. She has never appeared in newspapers publicising her magnanimity. She has never received an award. I don't think anybody except the hungry kids and we people who've been to her house know what she is doing. I have seen her making those sandwiches for almost ten years. I never once saw her getting angry or annoyed. I have seen thousands of sandwiches leaving her hands with only one demand, and that is for the children to say thank you. A giving heart doesn't need deep pockets. Giving is sharing. It may be bread or a huge donation, but it is still giving.

All of us can be involved in charity and we should be. It's not just a matter of leaving it to rich people to take care of poor people. Or judging rich people harshly if you think they're not doing enough for charity. It's no good becoming a billionaire in a country that will in any case head to a violent revolution if the haves do not help the have-nots. If violent revolution comes, all of us, aside from a few vicious warlords, will be worse off. As hustlers, we dare never forget where we come from – and if we make it we must accept that we did not make it on our own.

Even if you think you did, you did not. You are a product of your society and the way it is structured. There are no self-made billionaires in Cuba because under Communism it was not possible to become a self-made billionaire – no matter how smart or determined you may have been.

Kenny and I have never received BEE shares, but we have still benefited from BEE. We benefited from the big changes in South African life, affirmative action policies and the new black middle class. Even white people have benefited from the new black middle class, who have spent money faster than anyone else and have stimulated many businesses. Not only that, but the new economic policies and the dropping of sanctions against South Africa made it possible for everyone to be richer today. The wealth is very unevenly spread, but it's there – and if you're black and you have anything to show for yourself today, then you have benefited from BEE and employment equity in some way or the other, even if not directly. You will admit that fact if you have any honesty at all.

Those who have done well out of BEE may like to think they deserve it somehow, but for most of them their newfound riches were simply a matter of luck. None of us can say we owe our country nothing. All of us must be humble in our success.

That is why I admire Patrice Motsepe's gesture of ubuntu more than I can even put in words. He hasn't forgotten where he's coming from but – more importantly – he is a man with a vision of where we should all be headed. He cannot do it alone, but if everyone who has made it in their hustle, even if it's just in the smallest of ways, can give back, then Africa will be the greatest place on earth.

There's a white farmer who now willingly sells sections of his family's land to his labourers. He trains them on how to farm the land and they buy it from him using the profits they make. That man is an example to the rest of us, but he's not just doing it out of selflessness. He knows that in order to continue his farming

hustle, he has to share and adapt to changing times. If he can do it, who are we not to?

There are far too many black people who are quick to point the finger at white people in South Africa and merely assume that just because they're white they must be racist and exploitative. That's too easy to do.

Almost all my mentors and the people who have helped me most since my release have been white people who believe in this country and would only leave if forced to. These people do more for charity and social upliftment than almost anyone else I know. Our country would be far poorer without them. A man I think of as a father is Gavin Varejes and he loves South Africa more than anyone I know. He has made more people love this country than anyone else I can think of. His is the kind of passionate patriotism we need more of – it doesn't matter what race you may be, what age you are, what gender or what class.

Another of my mentors, Greg James, left South Africa as a younger man to work for a big mining company in Switzerland. When he made big money he decided to come home and start a sports and education foundation called Jag, which does great things in the Western Cape to bring hope to underprivileged kids.

Anyone who loves this country and this continent knows that we do not have an unlimited amount of time to build a lasting legacy. As you saw on the quote by Abraham Lincoln on the back of this book when you bought it: "Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle." Africa has waited long enough. It's time to start our hustle. We will not have many of our blessings forever. The same goes for the rest of the continent. We must think well ahead, to what we must be when the mines run dry. True hustlers think ahead, they have a plan B. Already we have wasted far too much time and money on things that really make no difference and create no lasting legacy. But there is still time to build better industries that revolve around more than just digging in the ground. We can become a population of strong hustlers who can run world-class businesses that lead the way for the world, and for generations to come.

Half of South Africa is below the age of twenty-five. We need to hand the country over to the youth in the most well-thought-out and productive way we can. A niche must be carved out for them to ensure they have a future they can look forward to, because that's the only way we will all have a future to look forward to. In China, children spend their whole day at school. All over the world better methods are being investigated for schools to produce better results. On our

continent it's not unusual to find kids of school-going age practising to shoot with an AK47, wearing an oversized soldier's uniform. While other kids are being taught science ours are being taught how to shoot a gun. In South Africa, too, our children lose years of schooling because of teacher shortages, teacher strikes and teacher absences – not to mention overcrowding and poor facilities. How could we have spent R100 billion on hosting the Fifa World Cup when in some places in South Africa children are still taught under trees? When it rains, school gets cancelled.

We now have football stadiums that cost us a further R100 million every year just to maintain, as if the future of our country lies in those stadiums, when we should know it lies in the minds of our young children. It's easy to blame government for all these problems, but no one picketed against the building of the stadiums. And we don't really know what to do with those stadiums now. I could give many more examples but the main point is that we don't take education seriously enough and we allow politicians to set the bar too low for our children. How can we possibly think our kids will be able to compete with children from China, when we call thirty percent a pass? We may as well just hand kids who pass with thirty percent an AK47 too, because we're clearly not expecting them to amount to much more than future mindless soldiers who'll be easy pickings for some crazed rebel leader. Schools throughout the continent are much the same.

Education remains the key to solving Africa's problems. We need to change our attitude toward education. It's not just government's issue, it's everyone's and we should all do more.

All of this is my wish for my country and for Africa. But only an army of young hustlers, armed with business ambition and better education – not guns – can make it happen. I pray that this special army will transform our continent's societies into places that do not need aid. Because Africa is the world's last place that can still grow at a phenomenal rate in every way. It is the final continent of great opportunity. And we are the ones who should create those opportunities and enjoy their benefits.

My hope is that this new army will change the old slave culture of letting the tyrants and the warlords decide what our future should look like – and that they will put leaders in place who are servants of the people. As a leader you are only there because of your ability to improve the lives of the people in your country, not just the ones who call you boss and bow before you – otherwise you should give way to someone who can.

So my wish is, bottom line, that you will join that hustler army to create a better country for yourself and everyone else, and a better continent. And that perhaps you will become one of the visionary leaders, and willing to serve.

You Are Not Dead Yet

Tough times don't scare hustlers simply because most of our lives have been a recession. We were born into our own recession, we lived through it and survived it, which means that we are better equipped to, and should, strive more strongly than anyone else during recessions. We should be calm when everyone around us is panicking.

A guy I know once lost everything and came to me with his last few cents to ask me to help him buy a firearm (sure, just ask the ex-bank robber if you want to know where to buy an unlicensed firearm). Fortunately, I had no way of helping him. I asked him if he was in some sort of trouble with debt with the wrong people. I thought perhaps he was being chased.

He said no. He told me, quite frankly, that he needed the gun only because he wanted to take his own life. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and asked him why. He gave me a million reasons for it and even made me commit to a promise that I would look after his ageing mother, as she was all he had left to worry about. His kids had already left the country with their mom.

He also told me that his business partner had already shot himself. I told him: "Look, I kind of understand why your partner would choose to end his life but I will never understand why you could think of doing the same."

He found this statement very odd, so I told him that I was merely basing my observation on having met his business partner. His partner had never been poor and had never been in the kind of situation where you simply have no idea where your next meal might be coming from. He had always seen having money as his birthright.

I told my suicidal friend: "You, though, were always poor. You were born poor, grew up poor and poverty doesn't know only your address, but it knows where each of your family members live. Poverty is the mayor of your town."

He nodded. It was entirely true.

I told him he had made it out of poverty the first time, and that experience would be a priceless advantage to make it out of poverty again.

I told him to get the hell out of my house before I killed him myself.

He wasn't really scared of being poor again. Poverty truly held no fear for him. It hadn't killed him before, and it wasn't about to now. All that he'd been worried about was losing his pride and being laughed at by the people who'd envied him while he was coming up in life.

He had his fair share of debt, but he was among millions in the country with the same problem. No debt is big enough to kill yourself for. He eventually got over both his death wish and his debt – although it took him some time.

Today he's more successful than ever. When I remind him about his request for a gun he struggles to believe it was really him.

I've told you his story because many things have happened to me that would have made someone else suicidal. I can't even list them all. On a single day, someone who worked for us was conned, and that cost my business R4 million. It was such a blow right then, many a man would have jumped off a building.

But the dog was not dead yet.

A few years after my release from jail, I was wrongly rearrested for a crime I'd known nothing about. An old gangster former comrade had lied and made me the prime suspect in a robbery. Someone else would have panicked and thought everything he'd been working so hard to achieve was about to be undone, but I stayed calm, I worked out how to get the cops to see the light, and the matter was cleared up in two days.

The dog was not dead yet.

I was once, not long ago, convinced I had a terminal illness, but I'd actually been misdiagnosed. I walked around for six months, convinced I would be dead within two to three years. I even bought a wheelchair to prepare for the inevitable, sudden decline in health that seemed to be awaiting me.

Only one other person (who I not only trusted with my life, but my death) knew what I was going through. I had to keep the news to myself because if word got out that I might be dead soon it would have jeopardised all my businesses, all my upcoming deals and, most importantly, my ability to look out for the future welfare of my children. Instead of falling in a heap and cursing my fate, I just worked harder than ever, determined to achieve all I could in the time that was still available to me. I knew that life may have been treating me like a downtrodden dog, but I would not allow it to kick me as I lay there. I would snap back and fight on.

I was not dead yet, and there were too many people relying on me to stay alive for as long as I could.

When I eventually found out all I had was a bit of a thyroid problem and I was, in every other respect, as fit as a fiddle, my lease on life doubled. Someone else may have been tempted to sue the doctor for a misdiagnosis – instead I wanted to go back to the guy and kiss him. I felt I'd been given another chance at life.

And I've already had so many chances in life.

My good friend, Angelo, has cystic fibrosis and has been given until the age of thirty-five before he will, in all likelihood, die. He not only has to live with his illness but the certain thought that he will die young and leave his children behind. He used to tell me how he would give anything for a longer life. After his diagnosis he became so busy that I hardly got to spend time with him any more and I confronted him about it. He explained that he was trying to squeeze seventy years' worth of life into his thirty-five years. He told me to do the same as tomorrow is promised to no one.

Every time I hear anyone complaining about how they hate being alive, or how shitty their life is I want to tell them about Angelo and the millions of others who have terminal illnesses, who are fighting daily to stay alive. And, of course, in the long run, we are all terminal. We will all die.

But we are not dead yet.

So do the most with your time here. Laugh louder. Dance more freely. Do more of the things that make you happy. Most importantly, love people and try to leave this world a better place than you found it. Live the kind of life that will cause those who knew you to fight for a chance to carry your casket. Feel sorry for

yourself for only an instant. Don't dwell on past hurts for too long. Understand that your life is a blessing and in life you are going to find people who think nothing of you but there will always be one or two who think you are everything. Pablo Casals famously said: "To the whole world you might be just one person, but to one person you might just be the whole world." Try to be that world for the people you love and who love you back.

Life is precious and it's not just about being alive but about what you do during those years of life. So never curse your life because there will always be someone worse off than you, and who would trade positions with you in an instant if they could.

That hitchhiker from the story I told you about in the beginning of this book only had a bucket and some rags, but he was going to try to use that to keep his dog alive. Many of us are given far greater opportunities and are much better equipped to deal with the challenges that come our way, but we don't face our problems with the same sense of optimism and faith.

The best of people simply don't know how to give up. They fight the odds to the bitter end, and they do it using only what they have.

They are prepared to lose minor battles along the way – they suck up disappointments and try even harder. I'm sure that even if my hitchhiker's dog had died that day, he would have gone to get himself another dog, to try all over again. Too often, we let our setbacks set us on our backs for good.

Someone once asked me: "Don't you have an off day?" And I told her I can't allow myself to have an off day. I love and appreciate my life too much to insult the gift of my existence and my freedom from jail by feeling sorry for myself and allowing the cloud of depression to pass over me. It can be so tempting to fall into such a daily trap, as so many of us do. So I take on every day as if it may be my last. Because one day will be my last, just as every day is a final day for somebody on this earth. Right now, someone died. And there will be a final day for you too.

But in the meantime, you are not dead yet. And between where you are now, and the last time you close your eyes, you have a lot of hustling to do.

So you better start getting your hustle on. Do it as if you've got a train to catch. The clock ticks mercilessly for us all. Let those sand grains of your life leave

scratches on the inside of the hourglass as they go – make yourself cling to every moment of precious life that you have.

Because you are not dead yet.

After the success of this book's first print, due to popular demand *The Choice: The Gayton McKenzie Story* has been reprinted and is available countrywide. It is also now available as an ebook online.

If you have not yet read Gayton's groundbreaking autobiography about his life as a criminal, his remarkable time in jail and the prison exposé that he and six other men risked their lives to film while in Grootvlei prison, here is an extract from the newly updated book.

This extract comes from Chapter 13:

A Criminal Grows Sick of Crime

Prisoners are always allocated to certain cells but they frequently visit other prisoners in other cells. It's often done for purposes of having sex or just for seeing a friend, perhaps someone recently sentenced who can help you to catch up on fresh news from the outside.

So, because prisoner movement is not very unusual I don't suspect anything when I see all the new faces in Maximum Cell B7, where I am with Esto and Neil. The evening seems to be another normal, humdrum one in the cell. Most of the men are minding their own business and others are minding it for them.

I am busy reading, Esto, my cousin, is smoking and Neil is gambling. I'm having trouble reading my book, and instead have an argument with a guy playing Monopoly in a group. Someone has lost or used as toilet paper the game's community chest cards and some creative prisoner decided it was a good idea to write his own. Instead of saying things like: 'You have won a beauty pageant, collect twenty rand,' they say humorous things now, like: 'You have robbed OK bazaars of all its profits. Collect one rand.' I have a suggestion or two of my own, but the players tell me my jokes are rubbish. 'Don't even try, Gayton.'

This is all part of what we do to just let time pass.

Then, a voice I'm not familiar with shouts "chafkop!" That basically means you should put your head under your blanket immediately in order to avoid being a witness to whatever crime is about to take place, which, mostly, is murder or a severe stabbing.

Neil, Esto and I don't heed those sorts of instructions. It turns out that thirty of the guys in our cell are members of the Air Force gang, whose only mission, as always, is to escape from jail. By the exchange of deathly glances they share, I figure that the last thing they need is an argument with us that might attract unwanted ears, particular the warders' unwanted ears, so they just let the three of us watch them as they go through with their escape plan. The other forty or so guys in the cell are dutifully covering their heads, though.

The gang members take out hacksaws and start to cut through the bars. It will probably be a six-hour job. Others are standing guard armed with mirrors. It is obvious that they have been planning this for some time and are executing their escape with military precision.

Most of the other forty guys in the cell, under their blankets, fall asleep. The cell is quiet except for the Air Force guys chatting about what their first actions will be once they are free. A few of them say they are going to kill the guy who ratted them out and they will rape his pretty twelve-year-old daughter. Rape is clearly a dominant thought in most of these hardened criminals' minds. Some of them have already served thirty years or more. I realise that most of them are lifers, guys who should never, ever, see the outside of a cell again.

Most of them don't want revenge. They all plan to rob someone but not before they have found themselves a young thing to rape. Suddenly I'm thinking that young thing could be my cousin, sister or just a friend or someone I used to know.

After five hours they are close to breaking out. I look at my friends and, without saying a word, I know that they understand my intentions. They perhaps don't know why I want to break prison's golden rule (don't interfere), but I just can't allow these guys to escape. Esto and Neil will do whatever I ask.

The truth is that we are shit scared. There are just three of us and thirty of them, and most of them have done more evil than we can even imagine.

We don't have long to act before these guys, with a collective sentence of thousands of years, go through that opening. Despite my fear, I ask Neil if he still wants the tomato sauce. Esto immediately sees what Neil and I are planning and says he wants the Worcester sauce. Condiment bottles are the only things we'll be able to use as weapons. Neil and I each have a weapon. I tell Esto to scream as loud as he can to get the attention of the warders.

Right then, the last of the prison bars is removed and the aspiring escapees leave step away from it for a second to fetch the bags they've packed.

I get up and stand in front of the opening they've created. I smash the base of the Worcestershire sauce bottle against the wall. At the sound, all the Air Force guys stop and look. Neil crosses his arms, his broken tomato sauce bottle in his hand. Esto runs along the wall, breaking the windows that face the prison corridor, with a

flick of the wrist each time as he goes. The sound echoes through the prison. He screams for help like a man possessed.

‘Gayton McKenzie, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?’ It’s a general of the Air Force gang.

‘There’s no way you’re leaving this prison today.’

‘What’s it to you? Stay out of our business, man.’

‘I’m making it my business.’

‘We’ll kill you, do you understand me?’

One of the lesser-ranked men comes for me and I duck out of the way and shred the front of his shirt with a hard, downward-stabbing motion. I hit his face with the back of a balled fist and he spins out of the way.

For the moment, no one else comes near. Then there’s two of them. I slash at them again, feel the impact of something on the side of my torso, but then those two have stepped back too. I can feel sweat, heavy, thick and burning its way down my shaved scalp, into my eyes. I shake my head and scream.

Beside me, for the first time, I see that Neil has managed to look after himself. He takes another stab at an Air Forcer with his broken bottle, but the guy avoids it. ‘Kenzas, where are those fucking warders?’

‘They’ll come.’ As I say it I hear footsteps in the corridor again. In a moment I’m looking at the sun-reddened face of Ossie Venter. He takes one look at the scene and draws his gun. The first man he points it at is me. I’ve never felt more relieved to see a white man pointing a gun at me.

‘McKenzie, what the hell are you doing? I’ll shoot you! Get away from the window!’

The Air Forcers have retreated to their beds. I hear a shout from one of them that I was trying to escape.

‘Shoot him, Mr Venter!’

Ossie does not have a key and there's a wait of several minutes, a wordless wait to begin with as he keeps the gun trained on me and I drop the Worcestershire sauce bottle. Backup is on its way, with the head of security. When the panic of the situation has subsided for Ossie, I tell him: 'Mr Venter, the truth is I was stopping these guys from escaping.'

'We'll see about that, McKenzie.'

By the time the key arrives, Tatolo Setlai is there too. Neil and I are taken to the single cells for the rest of the day. By the end of it all the prisoners not in on the escape have explained it all. Soon, everyone knows. Mr January and every warder in sight calls me a hero.

Setlai comes to talk to me. 'Why did you do it, Ntate?'

'I don't know, Champ.'

He shakes his head. I can see his thoughts. Why would a prisoner risk his life? It's unheard of. I simply don't have an answer for him.

'Look after yourself, McKenzie.'

'Thank you, Champ.'

We did risk our lives that evening, and the department of correctional services gives each of us a three-month remission of sentence, which isn't much. But I'm not disappointed because it isn't the reason why I wanted to stop those men.

At the time, I didn't really know I was changing. I told myself it was partly just about showing a lesser gang who was really in charge, and perhaps I was trying to show I was scared of nothing, even though I have never been as scared in prison as I was on that night.

I make a lot of enemies for my troubles, though, and it is just the beginning of racking up even more foes.

To Neil, Esto and the rest of the 26es I explain the madness of that evening. I tell them that the Air Force have forgotten their place.

‘I’m telling you, we had to teach them a lesson. They were getting ahead of themselves. Nobody does anything in this prison without our say-so. They escape when we want them to escape.’

‘Ja, Kenzas, you’re right.’

I believe it myself, not willing to consider that there is much more to what I’ve done.

If you'd like to interact with Gayton McKenzie, follow him on Twitter
@G_XCON

To sign up to join the hustler's army, visit <http://www.hustlersarmy.com>
