

## **Starting a Business is a Passion**

by  
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When a friend of mine from New Kensington told me that he was going to start his own business seven years ago, I thought he was crazy. John had a wife and four kids to support. His idea sounded incredibly risky. I did my best to convince him that he should reconsider. But he had his mind made up. All I could do was wonder why. Why would he give up a relatively secure job to do this?

John struggled at first. He lost the biggest customer he was counting on right off the bat. I knew that had to be terribly discouraging. I was sure that was the end. In fact, I told all of our mutual friends it was all over except for the crying. But instead, John brushed himself off and kept on plugging away, day and night, literally. From my vantage point, the whole thing seemed insane. It appeared to me that he and his family were barely making ends meet. And it didn't have to be that way. John had a choice to go back into the corporate work force. He chose to keep trying.

While I sat behind my cushy desk job, I felt like the guy watching Noah build his ark. All I could see was a half-built ark and not a drop of rain. I shook my head. I wanted John to succeed because he was such a good guy but I knew he was being foolish. And I tried again to convince him to quit yet. But John would not hear of it.

As I watched John hustle, struggle, get knocked down and overcome and then again hustle, struggle, get knocked down and overcome, I became fascinated. Like the Little Engine That Could, John kept going up the steep tracks repeating "I think I can. I think I can."

Months turned into years and John somehow began to succeed. What he had started out doing had transformed a bit. And he found himself occupying a niche that was not part of his original plan.

I began questioning myself. "Wow, I'm not sure I totally understand this but I think this guy is really doing what he wants and being who he wants to be. Meanwhile, what am I doing? I'm living in a Dilbert cartoon strip taking orders from people who don't know what they're doing. Who is the fool here?"

Far better than reading any books on how to start a business, John had shown me the way. First and foremost, John had a very supportive family. While John was putting out all the fires around him, the last thing he could afford was any trouble on the homefront. And John was fortunate. He had a wonderful family. His wife was not only the glue that held things together, she was also his business partner. John's wife ended up playing a prominent role that has continued to expand as their children have grown older. She also was behind him all the way as she often reminded him that she loved him no matter what,

even if things didn't work out and they had to live in a shoebox. Today even John's kids pitch in where they can. Second, John worked hard, very hard. He had that unquenchable human spirit that would not quit. He knew failures could happen. But he somehow turned obstacles into steppingstones. Third, John had an idea of what he wanted to do that wasn't quite the same as what he ended up doing. He had to be flexible enough to recognize where the best opportunity was and change direction if necessary. Last but not least, John was honest, reliable and credible. John's advertising was the best kind of advertising -- word of mouth.

Before I watched John's business unfold, I spent many years convincing myself why I couldn't do it. After watching John, I started thinking of how I could. And somehow I did, too.

So you want to start a business? Check to see if you have those key ingredients. And like the Little Engine That Could, believe that you can.



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