



Running with the Pack

By Brian Acord, Young Entrepreneurs of America

Big ideas do not come from individuals sitting in a room thinking about what the next big idea is. Big ideas come when people are anxiously engaged in a good cause. Big ideas come from focused, passionate individuals who notice an anomaly while already working in their chosen field.

Because of my background and love of teaching, I do a fair amount of public speaking on entrepreneurship. I am amazed how many would-be entrepreneurs tell me that they want to start a business but aren't sure what kind of business to start. They don't have a great idea and so they are paralyzed. (See my article on [3 Real Reasons Why Entrepreneurs Don't Start Their Own Businesses](#)).

People are enamored by the hype and fantastical stories of rise-to-glory entrepreneur stars like Michael Dell, Oprah Winfrey, Sergey Brin, Sam Walton, Walt Disney, etc. They are rightfully impressed by the accomplishments of these great individuals and want to follow in their footsteps. They look at the empires built by these titans of industry and rack their brains trying to figure out how to create something similar. If only they could come up with the next big idea, then they would begin their entrepreneur journey.

WRONG!

While these individuals dreamed of a successful future, they never had their big idea until **AFTER** they started working on it.

Bill Gates never would have thought about the Windows GUI if he hadn't been passionate about technology **AND** involved in writing software. It was the combination of the two that kept him involved in programming and eventually the chance meeting that became the foundation of Microsoft.

Walt Disney created newspaper advertisements and had his first big character stolen by his business partner long before Mickey Mouse.

Sam Walton ran his first store for nearly a decade before he opened his second. And he lost both of his earlier stores before re-starting the first of what would eventually become the Wal-Mart chain.

Michael Dell used to take apart and re-build computers for fun long before he considered it could be a viable business model.

Oprah Winfrey worked her way up the ranks just like any other journalist. Using her dedication and her natural abilities she developed a strong understanding of how the broadcasting system

worked and eventually started her own businesses in television, production, distribution, print, and more.

It is safe to say that if these individuals had sat in the conference room until they came up with the ultimate idea of what their empire would look like before they started their businesses, none of us would recognize their names today.

There is a lot to be learned about running a successful business. Most of the lessons come from first hand experience and by learning from your own mistakes. Big opportunities arise only when you are actively working in one market and you recognize a slight shift in the marketplace and are able to take advantage of it. If you weren't already in the marketplace, you never would have realized the slight anomaly that hinted at a newer, better opportunity.

So pick a simple idea that interests you and focus on execution. Learn from your mistakes and keep your eyes open for new opportunities while you are out there running with the pack.

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