

Consulting and Entrepreneurship - *First Person* Interview with Dan Kuntzman

A JOURNAL OF STRATEGY & BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Ashish Kothari

[Dan Kuntzman](#) is an entrepreneur. He is also a member of the Entrepreneur's Source—a leading North American business and franchise consulting organization that focuses on helping people build rewarding careers, take control of their lives, and create financial freedom. Dan has over 25 years of experience in management and business consulting. Prior to joining the Entrepreneur's Source he worked as an independent business consultant and as a Senior Consultant with Computer Science Corporation. He earned an MBA from the Kellogg Graduate School of Business at Northwestern University.

How did you make your way to entrepreneurship?

While completing my MBA, I transitioned from engineering management roles to marketing for manufacturing firms. The marketing work included new product development, marketing services, sales support, and marketing/sales force strategy. These roles employed many facets of my MBA education and varied business experiences.

Why did you choose to be an entrepreneur?

The use of these skills and additional experiences led me to the business consulting world, which I really enjoyed. However, as a result of the business downturn over the past few years, which had a negative impact on my consulting work, I began searching for other career options. As part of my search, I networked with someone who coaches people on career options. One thing led to another and I went into entrepreneurship almost kicking and screaming. The idea of self-employment had been in my mind at various times over the years; but then I found a business investigation process that I followed, and here I am with my own business.

What attributes make a successful entrepreneur?

I like to refer to Michael Gerber's book *The E-Myth Re-visited*, which advises the entrepreneur to build a business plan, define work roles/responsibilities, time lines for actions, etc. The book stresses that most successful entrepreneurs move to the management of the business and away from performing the technical tasks of delivering the products/services of the business. You need to run the business, avoid having the business run you!

What do you believe are the necessary elements for a business venture to succeed?

As with most endeavors, a solid business plan with goals and check-points is a key element of success. The goals must be measurable so you know when you attain them. The plan needs to include timetables for activities and financial goals. Structure and organization are also important to success. These elements will ensure that the means (roles) to accomplish the goals are defined and in place. Desire to succeed and discipline to work the plan and to measure progress in delivering the plan brings the entrepreneur's passion into the mix.

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What are the three important lessons about business and entrepreneurship that you've learned in your life?

First, keep a positive attitude, the world is full of possibilities and you may as well focus on the good ones! Second, people will surprise you in ways that can be hard to imagine. Often, our thoughts and ideas are limited to direct experiences. But the interactions with others bring many new ideas and experiences to us. Learn to use these for your benefit. And, third, being willing to assist others often brings more in return than you give. The acts of consideration and kindness are usually rewarded.

Could you describe some challenges that you have encountered as an entrepreneur? How did you overcome them?

My biggest challenge was deciding to become an entrepreneur; the second biggest challenge was learning how to spell the word! To overcome the first, I had to understand that I was becoming a business owner and not buying a job. I sought insights and advice from several sources to come to an understanding on this issue. So far, so good at this point. Another challenge for some people is trying to be 100% sure of their decision to become an entrepreneur. One way to overcome this is to accept 80% to 90% comfort and trust in your own skills to deliver the rest. After all, you must bring some desire to the game.

Any advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Find a mentor or reliable associates with whom you can test/trade ideas: a few more minds are often a good thing. Also, learn to separate facts from emotion when making decisions. Try to keep emotion out of play as much as possible. Business is business after all, and not everyone will deal with you just because there is an emotional attachment.

What are your thoughts about the Entrepreneur's Source and franchising?

The Entrepreneur's Source is America's leading independent consulting company offering a full range of services to individuals interested in self-employment and companies searching for methods of expansion. Using a proven proprietary success system, developed by the founders who share more than 40 years experience in all aspects of franchising and business success, The Entrepreneur's Source helps individuals find successful franchise and business opportunities that meet their goals, needs and expectations.

The Entrepreneur's Source has no exclusive ties to any company. We are client focused in our consulting role. We help guide individuals to business opportunities that "fit" or meet the client's goals, needs, and expectations. In our development role, we assist companies adopt franchising as a method for business expansion.

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What trends and changes do you see occurring in business today? What new technologies and industries will everyone be talking about in twenty years?

More and more services are being franchised. The opportunities are way beyond fast food and retailing. Also franchising is becoming a global phenomenon. Australia is a huge market for franchising as a means for business growth, even more so in the US. Now, other countries are joining.

Is franchising on the increase?

Yes, it is. Each year more than \$800 billion in goods and services are sold through franchises in the US. Although only 8% of all retail outlets are franchises, 40% of the dollar volume for all retail goods and services are sold through these entities. Each working day, a new franchise opens every 8 minutes.

Can you tell us about the process you take clients through as they explore the idea of franchising?

The Entrepreneur's Source's core business is helping individuals discover the possible business that will meet their goals, needs, and expectations. Clients undergo an education and evaluation process that elicits information that goes well beyond just transferable skills, vocational preferences, and financial capabilities. The result is an in-depth, multi-faceted "possibilities profile" that points to a wider range of businesses for the client and a better-informed, more-prepared candidate for a franchisor. The goal is to help the client discover and understand his/her options from the exploration and initial validation right through the transition to entrepreneurship.

For what kind of people does franchising make sense?

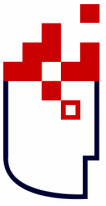
People who have the desire to be their own boss (are tired of working in corporate America) but may not have the GREAT idea or direction to start a business. Franchising can provide a proven product/service with a successful delivery system (which many people view as a lower risk endeavor).

Is there a recipe for success in the franchising business?

Once you own a franchise, the recipe for success is generally to follow their systems and plans. They have worked before and should work for you. Also, remember you are the business owner and behave like one. Delegate the day-to-day details and focus on making your business better and stronger.

Any particular success stories?

In my business, which is a franchise, I am a little ahead of the curve in success. I am working with clients



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who are at the moment of signing purchase agreements for businesses I presented to them and we explored together--all within 4 to 5 months of starting my business. Now, the key is to keep moving clients through the system and managing a steady flow of various activities. That defines on-going success for me.

Have you any parting comments?

Self-employment can be very rewarding. However, I believe a person needs to perform some soul-searching to understand what motivates him/her to consider this career option. Talk to people who are self employed about their successes/challenges, and perhaps seek the assistance of a life or career coach to obtain another perspective on options.