

TiECon 2007 Panel: Turning in the Badge to Work in Your Garage

Dilip's Remarks

Of all the dreams we dream, the most seductive is the one that prompts us to launch our own venture. It is a primordial human need to be in charge of your own destiny and a successful venture can certainly afford that need. If I ask for a show of hands, especially in this room, on how many are interested in their own venture, I would not be surprised if twice as many hands as there are people went up instantly. Everyone further dreams of taking their venture to heights of achievement, impact, and wealth and of making yet another Google or a Microsoft. Despite the fact that the percentage success rate of a venture is in single digits, many flirt with the idea and some even pursue launching their own venture while they are doing their corporate jobs, planning, scheming, and dreaming.

I use metaphors to describe and explain human trials. Metaphors have the ability to crystallize our thoughts and galvanize us into action. To me pursuing a dream of your venture is like being tempted by the rain: Some walk in the rain and others just get wet! The panelists I am going to introduce to you in a minute all have walked in the rain. Did they get wet? I'll let them tell you directly.

As a career and a life coach, I see budding entrepreneurs who bring their dreams to me seeking advice. Some are tired of their dead-end jobs, some do it for revenge, some get inspired by their own idea of a venture, some want the independence, and yet others simply want to make an impact. A common wish they all express is to be wealthy beyond their wildest hopes and live happily ever after. I think that in some cases their priorities are skewed.

I find that those who set out to pursue their venture merely for the sake of striking it rich almost invariably end up dusting off their resume a few years later and going back to their corporate jobs, distempered by their "failure," looking for yet another opportunity to venture out yet again! But, invariably those who pursue their ideals and go after their dreams in a thoughtful, studied way, ready to enjoy the adventure, invariably run into serendipitous success and end up making something of their venture. I also believe that we are placed here to serve our purpose and when we pursue it the Universe has a mysterious way of lending you a helping hand; it is magical! The message here is: Go for the adventure and not look back. If the money and power come, enjoy the fruits and if they do not, you have learned something valuable! You have lived your potential! In the process, learn to fall forward! I have always held that life is hammered out on the anvil of adversity, challenges, and learning!

I see many here from Indian origins. Somehow, we are brought up to heed the views of others and surrender ourselves to this expectation of conformity and to conform to what is expected of us. Remember that the reward for conformity is that everyone liked you except yourself. To go against the dominant thinking of those around us you see every day is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you will ever undertake! One thing we struggle to protect in our lives is a positive self-image. If you are afraid of a possible defeat in your new venture then you must rely on your strong sense of self-worth and competence. Believe me, if you have come this far, and you have come to the right place, your self-image can take hits but remain largely intact

I think that the chances of success of a venture can be greatly increased if we changed the way we look at how we go about it. If we go for the achievement rather than the success, for embarking on a path of self discovery than for pursuing the one that makes us wealthy and powerful, the impact we can make more than our own fame, and for having achieved our purpose, your chances are far greater than otherwise. In the words of FDR, Happiness is not in the possession of money, it lies in the joy of achievement, in the

thrill of creative pursuit. Many famous people from the past died modestly, some even penniless despite their fame and impact that they made at the time and since: Charles Goodyear, Thomas Edison, Samuel Johnson all lived a life of hardship for all that they contributed to better the human condition. So, I will end my remarks on a rather macabre note by saying that if you nurture a dream of launching your own venture don't die wondering, beset by unfulfilled ambitions. And, while we are on the topic of death, I'll say one more thing: No matter how rich you are, no matter how famous you are, no matter how powerful you are, the number of people coming to your funeral will depend on the weather that day!

On that existential note let me introduce to you the members of the Panel: