

INTRODUCTION

THE UNDERTAKER

It all started with the undertaker, George.

You see, there was no plan to write a second book. But you know how these things go – one little event is the spark that takes you on a completely new adventure in your life.

My spark happened on the golf course when I caddied for George from Chicago. The time I spent with him led me to write the book you are currently holding in your hand (or reading on your tablet). However, before I tell you what that spark was, I think I should explain how I ended up caddying for George in the first place.

You see, 12 years ago I was a successful entrepreneur. In 1996, I was the co-founder and CEO of an internet company, Company Net, based in Edinburgh. My company led global internet projects with some of the top 100 international companies (for example, BP, The Coca-Cola Company, Disney and Microsoft). I grew Company Net to a point where it was bought by one of our major clients, because we were doing so much work for them, and then, two years later, I organized a team to help me buy it back when the client was bought themselves by BP.

And then, at the age of 41, on 19 October 2006, I had a significant stroke and my life hit the pause button. My time as a CEO finished that day. The doctors told me that my stroke had been

caused by a blood clot in my leg (a deep vein thrombosis) that I had developed during a flight to Boston, in the US, for business.

For about a year after the stroke, I couldn't effectively communicate. Words that were in my mind just wouldn't come out, even though I knew what I wanted to say. Also, for a while, my memory was incredibly poor. Something that had occurred an hour previously could have happened a year ago, or vice versa. I felt very confused and highly emotional. I had difficulty expressing my thoughts, feelings and emotions clearly. And trying to focus on more than one thing at a time was just impossible!

It was probably about 18 months after my stroke when my neuropsychologist told me that, because of the effects of the stroke, I would never be able to be a CEO again. I had to acknowledge that what I had thought was going to be a temporary pause was in fact going to be a full stop.

So, what on earth was I going to do? Well, about two years after my stroke, my wife and I watched a TV programme about the caddies at Scotland's Old Course, St Andrews, and afterwards my wife suggested that maybe I should think about caddying. She felt it would keep me fit and give me the opportunity to meet the types of people I'd previously worked with. She knew I would be able to relate to them and that it would be good for my confidence.

I'd always loved golf and was a member of a famous and historic club, North Berwick Golf Club, located about 25 miles outside Edinburgh. It attracts thousands of visitors each year. And, so, I started caddying and, over the next three years, I caddied for doctors, lawyers, judges, pilots, venture capitalists, millionaires, billionaires,

sports champions, bankers, truck drivers, politicians, entrepreneurs, investment managers, professors, senators, estate agents, brokers and CEOs – from all sorts of locations around the world.

It was caddying for these people that eventually inspired me to write my first book, *Changing Course*, about starting again in life. The book was based on my experiences of being a CEO, stroke survivor and caddie. I eventually secured a publishing deal and the book hit the shelves in September 2013.

But, crucially, during this time I gained something even better than a publishing deal. Through conversations with the people I was caddying for, I began to realize that, even though I would never be a CEO again, I still had talents, skills and experience that other companies and individuals might benefit from. The people I caddied for, without ever knowing it, encouraged and motivated me to once again get involved in the world of entrepreneurship – the world I had known before my stroke.

PRESS 'PLAY' AGAIN

With their encouragement, and that of my family and friends, I pushed the 'play' button again on my entrepreneurial career. As a result, over the past eight years, as well as caddying, I have been involved with many innovative and exciting businesses, whether as a director, coach or consultant. All of these businesses are 'entrepreneurial'. They are led by people who had an idea, whether it was for a product, a service or both, and then took the risk of turning it into a business. Some of these businesses are run by solo entrepreneurs, whereas others employ a lot of people. Because of this, I have met some fascinating people who were willing to

share stories, insights and ideas on many things, but especially entrepreneurship. Some of these conversations took place on the golf course when I was caddying, but others were over lunches with CEOs and entrepreneurs, at board meetings with leaders of innovative businesses, or while coaching a variety of successful (and not-so-successful) entrepreneurs.

Through my own experiences and my reflections on these conversations, I ultimately decided upon what I think is the route to success (or failure) for an entrepreneur. Success relies heavily on understanding and answering what I call the ‘why’ questions, as opposed to focusing on the ‘how’ questions.

You see, there are countless business books that ask and explain the ‘how’ questions: how to write a business plan; how to run a social media campaign; how to win a pitch; how to get extra investment into your business. While I acknowledge that the ‘how’ questions are important, I believe that asking and answering the ‘why’ questions leads to successful entrepreneurship. This equally applies whether you are thinking of setting up a business or whether you are currently an entrepreneur (for example, a freelancer, a solo entrepreneur, the leader of a social enterprise or the CEO of a limited company). ‘Why’ questions focus on topics such as why to embrace love, why you will be lonely, why it will be tough, why you need to learn how to steal, why purpose and not profit, and why you will get hurt.

When I was writing this book, sometimes these ‘why’ questions made me aware of the classic mistakes I made as an entrepreneurial CEO, when I thought I was doing everything right. At other times, I learned new things about entrepreneurship, things I did not know but that are crucial for success. And finally, I am pleased to say,

some of the people I talked to reinforced my existing ideas and thoughts about successful entrepreneurship. For me it is a given that, if you want success as an entrepreneur, you need passion, creativity, spontaneity and bags of energy. Sure, you need to know **how** to run a business, but it is identifying and answering for yourself the **why** questions that will lead to successful entrepreneurship.

And so, back to George. It turned out that George was a very successful undertaker who had built up a large business, employing many people. When I explained my story as I caddied for him on a lovely autumn day, he said to me, “What a great opportunity to find out not *how* people you meet became successful, but *why*.” And that was the spark – the spark that led me to meet many people who helped me to discover the answers to the core ‘why’ questions that any entrepreneur should understand and put into action if they want sustainable success. This book that you are holding explains what these ‘why’ questions are and why they are important.

By beginning with a ‘why’ question, each chapter will focus on a core ‘fundamental’ required for successful and sustainable entrepreneurship, such as purpose, drive, love, desire, failure and luck. Each chapter starts with a story that highlights the ‘why’ question based on an experience from my life, whether from my time as a CEO, a stroke survivor, a caddie or an entrepreneur. Then the chapters explore the reason this ‘why’ question is important for successful entrepreneurship using practical examples, tips, simple illustrations and case studies that reinforce the message of the initial story. If you want to know more about George, you’ll find him in chapter 14.

I hope you find the stories, ideas and insights in *The Entrepreneur’s Book* helpful on your own entrepreneurial journey.