5 Quotes to Help You Maintain Entrepreneurial Persistence

Fifty years ago in November, the title character in the film “Cool Hand Luke” was shot in the neck after mocking a prison warden by repeating a line that the Captain had uttered earlier in the movie:

“What we’ve got here is failure to communicate.”

At the time, a young Paul Newman couldn’t have known what an immortal part of the cinematic universe that quote would become. But half a century later, it’s considered iconic.

Likewise, patience and persistence are vital in growing a business over the long haul, especially when it seems like the odds are stacked against you – which they almost always are.

Even Walt Disney was fired from an early gig at a newspaper after his editor told him he “lacked imagination and originality.” Sounds crazy after so many decades of nonstop Disney mania, right? Go figure. If you forget your purpose and listen to the critics, you could end up trading in your dream for theirs.

Getting by with a little help from a quote

As outlined in the intro, quotes are powerful stuff. One that means a lot to me comes from the author of the New York Times bestseller “Life’s Little Instruction Book“:

“Never let the odds keep you from doing what you know in your heart you were meant to do.” – H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Brown’s inspiring outlook on life has helped me persevere through the challenging ups and downs inherent in starting and growing a business.

No doubt you've heard the doom-and-gloom stats about how many startups fail, and if you're mired in the trenches, you're likely tempted to give up multiple times a day. Why don't you? Because that's not who you are. You're an entrepreneur, after all. Sometimes, though, it helps to be reminded of your strength and resilience.

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The following five quotes, selected by five successful entrepreneurs, have also stood the test of time. They'll remind you how crucial it is to stay the course and tune out those critics in the peanut gallery.

1. 'You're gonna die.' – Gary Vaynerchuk

Grim as it is, James Corneille, the 19-year-old founder of IndivMedia, says this is one quote that has always stuck with him. Although he's shared this view since he was young, Corneille said that hearing it encapsulated into one tiny statement by Vaynerchuk, a winemaker and digital marketing guru, helped him put the pieces together.

To Corneille, the sentiment behind "you're gonna die" isn't about embracing death, necessarily, but making the most of life by doing what you love and chasing your wildest dreams. Over time, this quote has become one of his biggest motivators.

2. 'When you're backed into a corner with seemingly no way out…it's the most creative you'll ever be.' – Dale Crighton

Michael Kennedy, founder of Component Wine Company, says that Crighton, a luxury real estate entrepreneur in the Cayman Islands, shared this quote with him as Kennedy was opening up his winery. It changed his entire view of challenges, so when he heard from the state of California that his licensing strategy would not work and his wines would not be available to sell by his target date, he saw overcoming that obstacle as

a thrill rather than a detriment.

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Backed into a corner and facing major delays in revenue, Crighton's comment inspired Kennedy to brainstorm every crazy idea he could think of. Eventually, he created a structure that brought the wine to market quickly, streamlined the company's processes and set it up for future success.

Throughout all of this, Kennedy learned to stop feeling sorry for himself when things went wrong. Instead, he welcomes challenges, gets creative and builds something great.

3. 'I'm convinced that about half of what separates the successful entrepreneurs from the nonsuccessful ones is pure perseverance….You've got to have an idea or a problem or a wrong that you want to right, that you're passionate about; otherwise, you're not going to have the perseverance to stick it through.' – Steve Jobs

Tyson Quick, founder and CEO of Instapage, bootstrapped his company to $11 million in annual recurring revenue without any traditional venture funding. He came across this 1995 quote from Apple co-founder Steve Jobs five years ago.

Having burned through seed capital, Quick decided to pivot to an idea he loved, moved to San Francisco and slept in his car to afford rent. When things seemed impossible, he reminded himself of the truth behind what Jobs said: Those who never give up will eventually surpass those who do.

Even so, it took another two years of constant struggle to find traction with Instapage. Today, it's a 130-person company operating in three countries. According to Quick, it certainly wasn't easy, but he heeded Jobs' advice and persevered.

4. 'The most effective way to do it is to do it.' – Amelia

Earhart

Georgene Huang, co-founder and CEO of Fairygodboss, a job review site for women, is a big believer in not overthinking or trying to plan around potential mishaps. Over time, she's realized that when you launch a startup or build a new business, you're practically always doing something for the first time. So it's important not to overanalyze to the point of paralysis or delay.

Huang's chosen quote from pioneering aviator Earhart is about taking action and learning from your actions (which may indeed be mistakes), rather than trying to come up with the perfect plan. As an entrepreneur, you'll face hard choices and decisions constantly, but you must remember that "doing" is ultimately the answer to many of them.

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5. 'You don't have to be great to get started, but you have to get started to be great.' – Les Brown

This was a life-changing quote for Nathan Pirtle, founder and CEO at digital marketing firm Work With The Coach, which helps leaders engage more authentically with their fans and customers on social media.

What did Les Brown's quote drive home for Pirtle? In his experience, "We are always telling ourselves we are going to do something. The roadblock is usually the 'but' – oftentimes, we're waiting on that perfect moment to get started, that certain amount of money, or someone to give us a chance."

This quote helped him realize that all he had to do was simply *get started*. The best way to grow as a human or to grow a business is to get started and learn from trial and error. As Pirtle puts it, "Experience usually wins."

Ask successful entrepreneurs and founders that you know which quotes have inspired them along the way. I’m willing to bet you’ll hear some enthusiastic recollections about when they first heard that compelling message from whomever it was, and what a big role it has played in their success. Maybe someday you’ll be the one asked by an up-and-coming entrepreneur to provide your favorite inspirational quote.

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