These 8 States Will Pay Out the $1.8 Billion Powerball Winner the Most After Taxes

This weekend's Powerball drawing is one for the record books — the $1.8 billion jackpot is now the game's second-highest prize of all time. (The world record is the $2.04 billion Powerball jackpot, which was won in California on Nov. 7, 2022.)

The winning ticket has an estimated cash value of $826.4 million.

"Excitement is building as players look forward to tomorrow night's drawing for this historic jackpot," said Matt Strawn, Powerball Product Group Chair and Iowa Lottery CEO, in a statement. "We encourage everyone to play responsibly and take pride in knowing that every $2 ticket also helps support good causes in their community."

Related: Thousands of Lottery Players Were Mistakenly Told They Won Millions

Saturday's Powerball drawing will be live-streamed on Powerball.com, broadcast live at 10:59 p.m. ET from the Florida Lottery draw studio in Tallahassee. Powerball tickets cost $2 and are sold in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

How Much Money Will the Winner

Receive?

A 24% federal tax is imposed immediately. Then, since the winner has skyrocketed themselves (if they weren't there already) into the highest tax bracket (37%), the leftover tax will be paid when filing 2025 taxes.

CNBC notes that many states then add on a 2.5% to 10.9% income tax, though eight states (California, Florida, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming) don't tax lottery winnings. In all of the above states, the winner would take home the most money available, with a lump sum of $520,674,980 or an annuity of $1,135,289,400, according to USAMega.com and CNBC.

On the opposite end, the states where the winner will receive the least after taxes are:

- New York (lump sum: $430,597,380; annuity: $939,089,400)
- New Jersey and Washington, D.C. (lump sum: $431,836,980; annuity: $941,789,400)
- Oregon (lump sum: $438,861,380; annuity: $957,089,400)
- Minnesota (lump sum: $439,274,580; annuity: $957,989,400)
- Maryland (lump sum: $442,166,980; annuity: $964,289,400)
- Massachusetts (lump sum: $446,298,980; annuity: $973,289,400)
- Vermont (lump sum: $448,364,980; annuity: $977,789,400)

Related: I Won $28 Million in the Lottery When I Was 21. It Changed Everything.

This weekend's Powerball drawing is one for the record books — the $1.8 billion jackpot is now the game's second-highest prize of all time. (The world record is the $2.04 billion Powerball jackpot, which was won in California on Nov. 7, 2022.)

The winning ticket has an estimated cash value of $826.4

million.

“Excitement is building as players look forward to tomorrow night’s drawing for this historic jackpot,” said Matt Strawn, Powerball Product Group Chair and Iowa Lottery CEO, in a statement. “We encourage everyone to play responsibly and take pride in knowing that every $2 ticket also helps support good causes in their community.”

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/powerball-jackpot-which-states-dont-tax-the-lottery/496786

Brand New $1 Million Yacht Sinks Seconds After Hitting the Water for the First Time, Video Shows

The owner of a luxury yacht worth around $940,000 had to swim to shore after his brand new 85-foot vessel, dubbed “The Dolce Vento,” launched for the first time on Tuesday off the coast of northern Turkey.

After hitting the water for its maiden voyage, the boat turned to its side and began to sink a couple of hundred feet offshore. A video widely shared on social media captured the

boat being led into the water, and one person jumping as it sank.

Related: Video Shows Las Vegas Billionaire Traveling the East Coast With Two Megayachts — One Just Carries the Toys

> *#DolceVento is a motor yacht with an overall length of 24 m. The yacht is the largest built by Medyılmaz Shipyard from Turkey, who launched Dolce Vento in 2025. The superyacht has a volume of 160 GT, has a steel hull and a steel superstructure.https://t.co/FqFaN1nLIt pic.twitter.com/synkRUC07j*
>
> *— Claudia Lozano (@clokslozano) September 4, 2025*

So far, no cause has been officially determined, but *Boat International* reports that an investigation has been opened, and local outlets are blaming a "stabilization issue."

Local reports also said the captain and two crew members swam to shore without injury.

Related: These Luxury Boats Are Owned By Some of the Wealthiest People in Tech and Include Swimming Pools and Basketball Courts

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/luxury-yacht-sinks-first-time-it-hits-the-water-video/496784

OpenAI Is Creating a LinkedIn Competitor to Help You Find a

Job

OpenAI is creating a jobs platform with an AI focus to take on LinkedIn, and expanding the ways AI users can verify their skills for employers.

Fidji Simo, OpenAI's CEO of applications and former Instacart CEO, announced in a blog post on Thursday that the ChatGPT-maker was working with employers like Walmart and Boston Consulting Group to develop AI solutions for companies. (Walmart is the largest private employer in the U.S. with 1.6 million employees across the nation.)

The first initiative is an OpenAI Jobs Platform, which will connect businesses to candidates and tap into AI to filter through recommendations.

Related: Almost 100% of Gen Zers Surveyed Admitted to Using AI Tools at Work. Here's Why They Say It Is a 'Catalyst' for Their Careers.

"We'll use AI to help find the perfect matches between what companies need and what workers can offer," Simo wrote in the blog post.

She gave the example of the Texas Association of Business, which wants to use the jobs platform to link Texas employers with potential employees who can assist with their IT modernization efforts.

An OpenAI spokesperson told *TechCrunch* that the company is aiming to debut the jobs platform by mid-2026.

OpenAI CEO of Applications, Fidji Simo, during an interview in September 2024. Photographer: David Paul Morris/Bloomberg via Getty Images

OpenAI also announced new certifications for OpenAI Academy, a free platform focused on helping individuals develop AI skills. The ChatGPT-maker is expanding the Academy, which has reached more than two million people, by allowing learners to obtain certifications in AI, from mastering the basics of applying AI at work to learning how to engineer prompts.

Related: You Can Get Paid $18,000 More a Year By Adding AI Skills to Your Resume, According to a New Study

OpenAI is aiming to hand out 10 million certifications within the next five years, per the blog post. The company told *Bloomberg* that it is collaborating with Walmart to create

certifications, which will initially be available for free to Walmart’s 1.6 million U.S. employees.

With certifications and a jobs platform, OpenAI takes on the likes of LinkedIn and Indeed. LinkedIn, which has more than one billion members, is the most expansive professional network in the world. Indeed is also a dominant player in the job hunting space, with 615 million job seekers and 27 hires per minute.

OpenAI is creating a jobs platform with an AI focus to take on LinkedIn, and expanding the ways AI users can verify their skills for employers.

Fidji Simo, OpenAI’s CEO of applications and former Instacart CEO, announced in a blog post on Thursday that the ChatGPT-maker was working with employers like Walmart and Boston Consulting Group to develop AI solutions for companies. (Walmart is the largest private employer in the U.S. with 1.6 million employees across the nation.)

The first initiative is an OpenAI Jobs Platform, which will connect businesses to candidates and tap into AI to filter through recommendations.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/openai-working-on-linkedin-rival-ai-to-match-jobs/496787

I Had the Right Answer in a Room Full of Decision-Makers — But No One Backed Me Until I Did This

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Here's a moment every technical leader knows too well: you're in a room full of executives, creatives, agents or business leaders — and you're the only one who speaks "tech." Maybe you're a new CTO. Maybe you're just the most technical person in the room. You have ideas that could solve real problems. But no one gets what you're saying.

I've been there more times than I can count — at UTA, the Clippers and now as co-founder of SkaFld Studio. And here's what I've learned the hard way:

It doesn't matter if you're right if no one understands you.

Your job isn't just to solve complex problems. It's to help others see how those solutions fit their world. Harvard Business Review backs this up: the best leaders use clear, resonant language to make complexity approachable. That requires more than just communication skills — it requires empathy, strategy, and what I call the *Translator Mindset*.

The instinct is to lead with jargon, credentials or cleverness. But that only creates distance. The Translator Mindset is about meeting people where they are, then guiding them somewhere new. Clarity matters more than ego. Connection matters more than correctness.

Related: How to Build and Sustain Deep, Meaningful Business Relationships (and Why It's the Key to Long-Lasting Success)

What the Clippers taught me about influence

One of my most valuable lessons came during my time with the LA Clippers, at a moment when the entire league was embracing analytics. We had the data. It felt like we had the answers. But I was walking among legends — Jerry West, Doc Rivers — and when they have an opinion, you listen.

During a tense draft season, the analytics team wanted to cast a wide net, calling dozens of prospects to increase our odds. But the old guard insisted we focus only on the top few. And more importantly, they wanted those calls to come from someone with real influence — one of our big names.

They were right. Every player who got a call from one of our top voices came on board.

The data team wasn't wrong. But they were missing the bigger picture: it wasn't about efficiency — it was about influence. That moment showed me how instinct and data don't need to compete. But someone has to bridge the gap.

Why tech initiatives really fail

Most tech ideas don't fall apart because they're flawed — they fail because they're misunderstood.

I've watched engineers try to bury doubt with detail. But doubt isn't rational. It's emotional. Disruption often feels like displacement. Confusion can trigger fear. And fear doesn't get solved by specs.

Empathy is a strategy. Before I pitch anything technical, I ask myself:

- What does this audience actually care about?
- Where might they feel threatened?
- How do I make them feel like co-owners of the solution?

In the early days of my career, I used jargon as a defense mechanism. It made me feel competent. But it didn't build trust. I had to unlearn that habit and retrain myself to reframe, simplify and connect. Once I did, everything changed — not just for me, but for the people around me. I went from being a translator to being the person who helped everyone in the room align.

3 tools to help you communicate tech better

Whether you're the only technologist in the room or just the one willing to speak up, your job is to create clarity, credibility, and connection. These tools will help:

1. Reframe, don't repeat
When someone pushes back, don't double down on detail. Reframe their concern in their own language. Make them feel heard — and then offer a clearer path forward.

2. Start with outcomes
Never open with the tech stack. Open with the result. Instead of "We're using containerized microservices," say "We're cutting load times by 70% so fans don't drop off before tipoff."

3. Speak their language
Metaphors work. To a producer, AI is a script assistant. To a VC, it's a high-frequency analyst. Familiar language lowers resistance and builds buy-in.

Related: 14 Proven Ways to Improve Your Communication Skills

You’re the bridge

You’re not in the room to explain code. You’re there to turn potential into progress — to connect software with story, abstraction with action and fear with adoption.

That’s leadership. Done well, it builds momentum, earns trust, and drives real change.

And it starts not with speaking louder — but with being understood.

Here’s a moment every technical leader knows too well: you’re in a room full of executives, creatives, agents or business leaders — and you’re the only one who speaks “tech.” Maybe you’re a new CTO. Maybe you’re just the most technical person in the room. You have ideas that could solve real problems. But no one gets what you’re saying.

I’ve been there more times than I can count — at UTA, the Clippers and now as co-founder of SkaFld Studio. And here’s what I’ve learned the hard way:

It doesn’t matter if you’re right if no one understands you.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/i-had-the-right-answer-in-a-room-full-of-decision-makers/495326

3 Ways Small Businesses Can Compete With Big Companies Using the Power of AI

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Big companies have full teams: marketing departments, content writers, designers and salespeople all working together to grow the brand. But solopreneurs and small business owners don’t have that kind of support. Sometimes it’s just one person, or maybe a part-time virtual assistant or freelance copywriter. That’s why using AI tools isn’t just helpful — it’s necessary. With the right AI systems in place, small teams can get more done, move faster and compete with bigger players without needing a big budget or staff.

The truth is, speed now beats size. A decade ago, a larger team almost always had the advantage — more hands to make calls, answer emails, create content and follow up with leads. But that’s no longer the case. AI tools can now handle in minutes what used to take days, closing the gap between solo entrepreneurs and big corporations.

Even industries known for being slow to change are catching on. According to UpMarket, 75% of real estate brokerages in the U.S. already use AI to streamline their operations — automating follow-ups, predicting client interest and producing polished marketing materials faster than ever. If they can embrace it, so can you. The longer you wait, the more likely it is that larger competitors will out-automate you … and once they do, catching up will be much harder.

Let’s look at three practical ways small businesses can use AI

to compete and even win against bigger companies.

Related: How AI Is Leveling the Playing Field For Small Businesses to Compete With Industry Giants

1. Use AI to create social media content without a team

Creating content for social media can take up a lot of time, especially when you're trying to post consistently across different platforms. But you don't need a large social media team to make it work. AI-powered tools can handle everything from generating captions and hashtags to creating scroll-stopping images.

According to Piktochart, 71% of social media images are now AI-generated. With the right tools and a clear process, even one virtual assistant using AI can do the work of an entire team. This can save hours each week and produce results that look like they came from a big agency.

2. Why small businesses can now handle SEO in-house

Small businesses no longer need to rely on expensive SEO agencies to improve their rankings. Often, all it takes is one good consultant to build a clear strategy. Everything else can be done in-house with the help of AI. From writing content to generating meta titles and descriptions, and even handling technical SEO checks, modern AI tools make it easy to move fast without a team. According to TechnicalSEO, 67% of small businesses are already using AI for content marketing and SEO.

That said, it's important to treat AI platforms as tools, not as one-click content factories. The goal isn't to paste a topic into ChatGPT, take the first draft it spits out and hit

publish. Instead, use AI to brainstorm ideas, reshape your own writing, fact-check details and refine tone — especially if you're not a native speaker. This is how professionals get real value from the technology, and according to Fantasy AI, 55% of marketers use AI for content creation. The best results come when you guide the AI, not when you let it lead.

Related: How Small and Mid-Sized Businesses Can Leverage AI to Compete With Large Companies

3. Out-communicate bigger competitors with AI

For small service businesses, whether it's plumbing, electrical work, HVAC repair, landscaping or handyman services, great communication can be the ultimate competitive edge. According to FieldBoss, 38% of customers say poor communication — like slow scheduling, missed updates or unclear pricing — is their biggest frustration, while only 21% point to high prices. Big companies often leave customers waiting for call-backs, stuck in scheduling queues or frustrated by vague updates.

A solo operator with the right AI tools can do better. Imagine a solo service provider: While they're busy on a job site, an AI-powered chatbot is answering customer questions, booking appointments and even generating quotes. By the time they wrap up for the day, the leads are captured, the jobs are scheduled, and the quotes are ready to send. Out-communicating your larger competitors isn't about having more staff — it's about using AI to make every customer feel heard, informed and prioritized.

This approach also aligns with changing customer preferences, especially among Gen Z, who often feel more comfortable controlling the immediate nature of digital interaction. They prefer texting or messaging over face-to-face or phone

conversations, making chatbots and AI-driven communication not just acceptable, but often the preferred way to connect.

The playing field between small businesses and large corporations has never been more balanced. With the right approach, a solo entrepreneur or a small team can match — and sometimes outperform — companies with far bigger budgets and staff. AI isn't a magic wand, but it is a powerful multiplier for your skills, speed and customer experience.

Related: How Small Businesses Can Leverage AI Without Breaking the Bank

From creating social media content without a team, to managing SEO in-house, to out-communicating bigger competitors, the advantage is clear. Those who use AI as a true partner, combining technology with human judgment, will prove that speed, adaptability and smart execution can beat size every time.

Big companies have full teams: marketing departments, content writers, designers and salespeople all working together to grow the brand. But solopreneurs and small business owners don't have that kind of support. Sometimes it's just one person, or maybe a part-time virtual assistant or freelance copywriter. That's why using AI tools isn't just helpful — it's necessary. With the right AI systems in place, small teams can get more done, move faster and compete with bigger players without needing a big budget or staff.

The truth is, speed now beats size. A decade ago, a larger team almost always had the advantage — more hands to make calls, answer emails, create content and follow up with leads. But that's no longer the case. AI tools can now handle in minutes what used to take days, closing the gap between solo entrepreneurs and big corporations.

Even industries known for being slow to change are catching on. According to UpMarket, 75% of real estate brokerages in

the U.S. already use AI to streamline their operations — automating follow-ups, predicting client interest and producing polished marketing materials faster than ever. If they can embrace it, so can you. The longer you wait, the more likely it is that larger competitors will out-automate you … and once they do, catching up will be much harder.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/science-technology/3-ways-ai-helps-small-businesses-compete-with-big-companies/495958

You Can’t Beat Procrastination With Time Management or Productivity Hacks. Here’s What Actually Works.

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

I remember the eureka moment I had about procrastination when I was still a high school Latin teacher. There was a lot of talk about “time management” and “SMART” goals going around the faculty in-service day training. But then one of the teachers spoke out, “This isn’t time management as much as it’s about an emotion they’d rather avoid.” At the time, I

volunteered to be a practice client in a coaching session, having stepped in as a practice client for one of my future wife's classmates.

The burning question that arose was, "Why didn't I have these conversations earlier in life?" I quickly enrolled in life coach training and began playing with ideas around how to help students get things done. That one experience cracked open the possibility of what coaching could do. Not just for individuals, but for education as a whole. That statement from a faculty member set me on a lifelong path. This was back in the mid-2000s.

The advice for motivation is everywhere: Break big tasks into smaller ones, find an accountability partner, use the Pomodoro Technique, reward yourself for completing milestones. These tactical approaches to beating procrastination fill countless productivity blogs and self-help books, offering the promise of finally conquering that persistent tendency to delay what matters most. These tips and skills are useful, but can only carry a person so far.

As I explored what was working with students, I realized that executive life coaching was advancing leaps and bounds in understanding what really motivates and moves people into action. And that is in a word: emotion.

Consistent motivation is about addressing emotion, specifically the emotion that you'd rather avoid. And once addressed, then the task of building systems and all the other tactics suddenly come back into play.

However, if the underlying emotion lingers or is not at least partially addressed, no amount of system building or tactics can save a situation that is, in essence, already strategically lost.

So let's dive into the dynamic emotional landscape that drives our behavior and constructs narrative, and look at some of the

neurology we're working with.

Related: The Real Reason You Procrastinate and Expert Strategies to Overcoming It

The brain's protective instinct

Neuroscience of productivity reveals a counterintuitive truth about procrastination: It's often a sign that something matters deeply to us. When the stakes are high, whether it's launching a business, having a difficult conversation or creating something meaningful, our brains activate ancient protective mechanisms designed to keep us safe from potential failure, rejection or disappointment.

This isn't a character flaw or lack of discipline; it's evolutionary biology. The same neural pathways that once protected our ancestors from physical dangers now trigger when we face psychological risks. The amygdala, our brain's alarm system, doesn't distinguish between the threat of a saber-toothed tiger and the threat of public speaking. Both activate fight-or-flight responses that make focused, creative work nearly impossible.

The higher the stakes, the stronger the pull toward procrastination becomes. Understanding this removes the layer of self-judgment that often compounds the problem and helps us approach our resistance with curiosity rather than criticism. Recognizing this biological reality is the first step toward working with our neurology rather than against it.

The emotion management revolution

Once upon a time, it seemed the common rhetoric in the productivity industry was that procrastination is a time management problem. But anyone who has spent hours scrolling social media while an important deadline looms knows the

truth: We have the time. What we lack is the emotional capacity to face whatever discomfort lies on the other side of action.

Every act of procrastination is an attempt to avoid a specific emotional experience. It might be the fear of judgment that comes with sharing creative work, the overwhelm of tackling a complex project, the vulnerability required for authentic leadership or the grief of acknowledging that our current approach isn't working. Or even a decision that we don't really want to make. Throughout my years of coaching in academia, I encountered this issue repeatedly. It was never just about laziness. Students often had anxiety around shame, perfectionism or performance. It was this realization that formed the foundation of CTEDU's life coaching curriculum. Emotional intelligence became the entry point to meaningful, sustainable action, rather than an obstacle.

Addressing effective actions and getting it done begins with emotional archaeology. Your success requires digging beneath the surface resistance to identify the specific feeling you're trying to avoid. Are you dodging the anxiety of potential failure? The frustration of imperfection? The sadness of leaving our comfort zone? Once we name the emotion, we can develop strategies to move through it rather than around it.

This shift from time management to emotion management transforms our relationship with difficult tasks. Instead of asking, "How can I make myself do this?" we begin asking, "What am I feeling right now, and how can I honor that feeling while still moving forward?"

Related: The Procrastination Problem in Business No One Talks About

Mastering the brutal beginning

The most crucial moment isn’t the finish line. It’s the first step. Procrastination thrives in the gap between intention and action, in that liminal space where we contemplate doing something without actually beginning. The longer we linger in this space, the more our resistance compounds.

Successful entrepreneurs and creators understand that the beginning is where battles are won or lost. They focus their energy on making the first five minutes as friction-free as possible, knowing that momentum builds on itself. This might mean having materials already prepared, eliminating decision fatigue through predetermined routines or creating environmental cues that make starting feel inevitable.

The key insight is that we don’t need to feel motivated to begin; we need to begin in order to feel motivated. Motivation is a byproduct of action, not a prerequisite for it. By focusing on the brutal beginning rather than the distant outcome, we work with our psychology instead of against it. It was this insight that was truly pivotal, not only for my clients but for me as well.

I chose to take the step from coaching to creating a life coach training program built on these principles. At the beginning, we were a handful of students, and now, 16 years later, we are a global community of certified coaches committed to bringing change and growth to the world.

The power of identity-based systems

The most profound shift in overcoming procrastination comes from separating the decision-making process from the execution process. When we rely on moment-to-moment decisions about whether something is “a good idea right now” or whether we “feel like it,” we’re setting ourselves up for failure. Our

emotional state fluctuates throughout the day, and basing important actions on these fluctuations creates inconsistent results.

Instead, effective systems operate from identity rather than motivation. They transform the internal dialogue from “Should I work on this project right now?” to “This is what I do at this time.” The decision has already been made; the current moment is simply about execution. Building my own coaching practice, it wasn’t motivation that enabled me to keep moving forward. It was the structure and systems I had created.

This approach recognizes that discipline isn’t about forcing ourselves to do things we don’t want to do. It’s about aligning our actions with our deeper values and long-term identity, even when our immediate emotions pull us in different directions. It’s the difference between willpower, which is finite and unreliable, and systems, which operate independently of our emotional state.

Constructing empowering narratives

Perhaps most importantly, overcoming procrastination requires conscious narrative construction. The stories we tell ourselves about our work, our capabilities and our relationship to discomfort shape our behavior more than any external system or technique.

Procrastinators often carry narratives of inadequacy: “I’m not good at follow-through,” or “I work better under pressure” or “I’m just not disciplined enough.” These stories become self-fulfilling prophecies, creating the very patterns they describe.

Transforming procrastination means consciously crafting new narratives that align with our values and aspirations. Instead of “I’m avoiding this because I’m lazy,” we might reframe it to “I’m feeling protective of this project because it matters

to me, and I’m learning to move through that protectiveness with compassion.”

Related: How to Break Your Procrastination Habit in the Next 21 Days Without Using Willpower

The path forward

Ultimately, overcoming procrastination is less about productivity hacks and more about emotional intelligence. It requires developing a sophisticated understanding of our inner landscape, creating systems that honor our humanity while supporting our goals, and constructing narratives that empower rather than diminish us. Even now, two decades since that first coaching conversation, these insights still impact me every day.

The entrepreneurs and leaders who consistently take meaningful action aren’t those who have eliminated discomfort from their lives. They’re those who have learned to dance with discomfort, to move through resistance rather than around it and to trust in their ability to handle whatever emotions arise on the other side of action.

In a world that profits from our distraction and delay, the ability to move through procrastination becomes a competitive advantage. More than that, it becomes a pathway to a life aligned with our deepest values and highest aspirations.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/living/how-to-really-outsmart-procrastination/495939

I Blew an Audition with Robert De Niro — But the Surprising Lesson Now Helps Me Crush Every High-Stakes Moment

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

I'll never forget the moment I got the call: an audition for a movie with Robert De Niro.

My brain short-circuited as soon as I heard his name. De Niro. The Godfather. Heat. Goodfellas. How could I not get distracted?

As the big day drew near, I spiraled. This wasn't just another audition. This was *the* audition.

- What if this is my big break? What if I blow it?
- What should I wear? Do I look the part?
- What if I forget my lines? What if I forget how to speak?
- Maybe I'm not ready. Maybe I'm not good enough.
- But what if I am?

The pressure was electric. Hope and fear did a wild dance in my chest and no matter how hard I tried, my imagination kept racing ahead.

This was *the* moment that could change the trajectory of my life and career — and I blew it.

But the lessons I took from that failed audition turned out to be more valuable than any role. They completely reframed how I walk into a room, command a stage and coach others to show up with presence and power in their own high-stakes moments.

Here's what that moment taught me — and how you can use it to pitch, present or perform with confidence and clarity.

Related: 10 Ways to Build Your Entrepreneurial Confidence

1. Mindset shapes everything

My first mistake happened before I even entered the room. In my head, the stakes were massive: *T*his is life-changing. Don't mess this up. You have to nail it.

I had already lost. I wasn't grounded or focused. I was spiraling. What I didn't know then — but now teach every client — is this: your mindset is your foundation. Walk into any room thinking, I've earned this. That shift alone changes how you speak and how others respond.

2. Focus on the moment, not the outcome

The second I started fantasizing about starring in a De Niro film, I stopped being present. I was thinking about my future, not the two pages of script in front of me.

When you obsess over the outcome — the deal, the yes, the applause — you miss the only thing that matters: this moment. Ask yourself: What does this person need from me right now? Then deliver.

3. Take it one step at a time

I was so focused on the future, I skipped the first step: the

first impression.

In auditions, pitches and presentations, there’s no warm-up act. The first 10 seconds — how you walk in, how you greet, how you connect — set the tone for everything else. You don’t always get a second chance. Nail the first one.

4. Walk in like you belong

I came in with what I now call “please pick me” energy. Instead of owning the space, I shrank into it — grateful but almost apologetic for being there. Gratitude is powerful. But not when it makes you small.

If you were invited into the room, you’re there for a reason. Don’t ask for permission to take up space. Stand in your value.

5. Stop trying to impress — start trying to connect

I overperformed. I tried so hard to be impressive that I tripped over my words and cluttered my delivery. More isn’t better. It’s just more.

What makes your message land is simplicity, emotional truth and connection. Ask: If this were my last chance to speak, what do I want them to feel?

6. Prepare like a performer

I knew my lines. But I didn’t rehearse. I didn’t ground myself or prepare my body for the moment. Clients often tell me they’ve “practiced” — but what they really mean is they edited their slides or memorized content.

But presence is physical. Stand up. Breathe. Visualize the

room. Your voice, posture, and energy are part of your message. Rehearse with them, not around them.

Related: How to Turn Self-Doubt Into Success and Build Your Confidence in 3 Steps

7. Learn to reset in real time

I knew it wasn't going well, but I didn't know how to recover. I was stuck in my head. Now, I teach people to build an internal reset button. A breath. A pause. A shift in stance. Anything that brings you back to center.

Things go off-script all the time. Power doesn't come from being flawless. It comes from knowing how to find your footing again.

8. Don't stay stuck in the past

The car ride home was brutal. I replayed the audition on a loop — every fumble, every flub. Reflection is important. But wallowing isn't. Take the lesson. Leave the rest.

You might never audition for a De Niro film, but you *will* have high-stakes moments — on a stage, in a boardroom, across from someone who could change the trajectory of your business or life.

When you get there, remember: the secret to owning the room isn't being perfect. It's being present, prepared and fully yourself.

That's what people remember. That's what wins the room.

I'll never forget the moment I got the call: an audition for a movie with Robert De Niro.

My brain short-circuited as soon as I heard his name. De Niro. The Godfather. Heat. Goodfellas. How could I not get

distracted?

As the big day drew near, I spiraled. This wasn’t just another audition. This was *the* audition.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/i-blew-an-audition-with-robert-de-niro-but-the/495080

Mark Zuckerberg’s Meta Keeps Suspending Mark Zuckerberg, Esq., From Facebook — and Now He’s Suing

Mark Zuckerberg has a really hard time making dinner reservations. People hang up on him constantly. Trying to live a normal life for the last two decades has been tough. He can’t even keep a Facebook page.

That’s because Mark Zuckerberg is a bankruptcy lawyer from Indianapolis, Indiana, and not the cofounder of Facebook and CEO of Meta, Mark Zuckerberg.

“I can’t use my name when making reservations or conducting business as people assume I’m a prank caller and hang up,” he writes on his blog, iammarkzuckerberg.com. “My life sometimes

feels like the Michael Jordan ESPN commercial, where a regular person's name causes constant mixups."

Related: Mark Zuckerberg 'Insisted' Executives Join Him For a MMA Training Session, According to Meta's Ex-President of Global Affairs

Now, Zuckerberg (the lawyer) is suing Zuckerberg (the CEO) after alleging that the Facebook page he uses (and pays $11,000 to advertise on) has been repeatedly taken down – five times in the last eight years, he says – but he is still forced to pay. He claims it has cost him potential clients.

In the complaint on Wednesday, communications in the form of email threads from Meta, seen by local outlet WTHR 13News, accuse Zuckerberg of impersonating the company's CEO, saying the page goes against their "standards of impersonation." The situation has been ongoing since 2017.

After the report, on Thursday, Zuckerberg confirmed to 13News that his account was working again. A Meta spokesperson told the outlet that the company has "reinstated Mark Zuckerberg's account, after finding it had been disabled in error."

Related: Here's How Meta's AI Superintelligence Effort Is Different From 'Others in the Industry,' According to Mark Zuckerberg's New Blog Post

"We know there's more than one Mark Zuckerberg in the world, and we are getting to the bottom of this," Meta told 13News. "We appreciate Mr. Zuckerberg's continued patience on this issue and are working to try and prevent this from happening in the future."

Meanwhile, on his blog, Zuckerberg says he still gets more than 100 messages a day from people confusing him with "the other Mark Zuckerberg."

Mark Zuckerberg has a really hard time making dinner

reservations. People hang up on him constantly. Trying to live a normal life for the last two decades has been tough. He can’t even keep a Facebook page.

That’s because Mark Zuckerberg is a bankruptcy lawyer from Indianapolis, Indiana, and not the cofounder of Facebook and CEO of Meta, Mark Zuckerberg.

“I can’t use my name when making reservations or conducting business as people assume I’m a prank caller and hang up,” he writes on his blog, iammarkzuckerberg.com. “My life sometimes feels like the Michael Jordan ESPN commercial, where a regular person’s name causes constant mixups.”

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/mark-zuckerberg-esq-sues-meta-for-disabling-paid-accounts/496778

I Sold My Company to Snapchat for $54 Million — These 5 Takeaways Still Guide Me Today

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

In 2014, Snapchat acquired our startup, *Scan*, for $54 million,

back when QR codes were still relatively new.

Most people hadn’t tried them, and phones didn’t support them natively. The technology was promising, but the experience wasn’t, so it sat behind a clunky UX. We removed that friction and made QR codes easier to create, scan and deploy, which led to quick adoption.

The deal with Snapchat was seamless, not because of flashy decks or famous backers, but because they saw how we were focused on closing a real usage gap, how we moved fast and were aligned with their larger vision.

For any founder hoping to build a lasting company or one day sell it, I’ve found that success boils down to a few core principles I’ve learned along the way.

Related: **What I Wish I Knew Before Selling My Company**

1. Build what people *actually* use

Too many founders begin with presentations or investor outreach before proving their product. From day one, Scan was grounded in user need. We built it to let people easily scan and generate QR codes, nothing fancy, just functional and straightforward.

Just like with any startup, we didn’t raise capital immediately. We did, however, start early, pay attention to all helpful comments, and make changes often. Shortly after, that strategy helped the app get more than 1 million downloads. By the end of 2012, Scan had more than 25 million apps installed. A couple of years later, we had more than 100 million copies of the product downloaded around the world.

That user traction was more persuasive than any pitch deck could have ever been. It proved product-market fit, a signal investors and acquirers value above all else. When starting a business, ensure you have the end users in mind and iterate

frequently, rather than investing energy in hypothetical demand. Remember that real usage always beats hypothetical value.

From the start, my co-founders and I aligned on roles and equity. That early clarity, splitting equity equally and playing to our strengths, helped us stay focused and avoid internal friction, which kills many startups before they begin.

2. Design with a buyer in mind

By the time Snapchat reached out, Scan was already built for scale, fully localized, with creation tools that teams could use anywhere. The real alignment clicked when Snap wanted a scannable identity baked into a camera-first experience.

In Q1 of 2015, Snapcodes launched on top of Scan’s core stack. The integration worked seamlessly because we engineered for extensibility, tuned reliability to survive low-light and low-ink prints and planned use cases beyond our original app.

Design for ecosystem fit from the start if you’re a founder hoping to get your business on an acquirer’s shortlist. Keep an eye on the metrics that are important to them, such as mistake rates, time-to-first-scan and activation. Next, look for integration abilities like compliance, dependability and APIs. The discussion swiftly moves from “What if?” to “How soon?” when strategy and culture are in sync.

3. Know your numbers and what it’ll take to win the deal

One detail that almost derailed the acquisition was the initial financial structure. Our seed investors had a liquidation preference that meant anything below $54 million wouldn’t deliver meaningful returns to founders or early

backers.

Snap's first offer came in below that line. With guidance from our lead investor, we held firm. He reminded me: "You haven't gotten a good deal until you've said no three times." That mindset gave us leverage when it mattered most.

We used speed as our lever and told Snap that if they met our number, we could start integration immediately. That clarity closed the gap, and we signed at the threshold we needed to reach.

If you're raising or preparing for an exit, know your cap table cold. Map the preference stack (seniority, multiples, and whether prefs are participating) plus option-pool top-ups and any SAFEs or notes. Define your walk-away point. Keep in mind that leverage isn't only about price; execution speed, a specialized team and defensible IP can all move the terms.

Related: You Need to Make These 5 Moves Before Selling Your Business

4. Every dollar must drive momentum

After raising roughly $2 million in seed funding, we felt confident, but confidence can be a misleading indicator.

Without a strict plan, we overhired, signed a high-end lease in downtown San Francisco, and delayed experimenting with monetization strategies. Cash was used too quickly, and we nearly ran out of runway within months.

That near-crash taught me that funding isn't in any way a safety net but a responsibility. Each dollar must contribute to measurable momentum. Hire deliberately, test revenue early and protect a six-month cash buffer. Flashy growth comes and goes, but durable advantage comes from operational discipline with a focus on the work that actually moves the business. That kind of financial and strategic clarity is often a key

signal that you’re ready to sell, when the business can operate independently, growth is consistent, and decisions are rooted in fundamentals rather than rapid changes.

5. Build for freedom, not just an exit

One thing I’d do differently is hold onto more gratitude. It’s easy to get caught up in momentum and miss the meaning, especially when building with friends.

Selling the company gave us perspective and room to breathe. The real lesson wasn’t in the money, but in building with purpose, creating space where creative teams do their best work and shipping technology that supports human well-being.

That’s the focus at my current company, at the intersection of AI, performance, and mental health. I’m applying those same lessons with more intention, clearer outcomes and steady, user-guided iteration.

For founders, treat an acquisition as a checkpoint. Use it to recommit to the pain points worth solving, the people you want to scale with, and the impact you intend to leave. Execute with focus.

In 2014, Snapchat acquired our startup, *Scan*, for $54 million, back when QR codes were still relatively new.

Most people hadn’t tried them, and phones didn’t support them natively. The technology was promising, but the experience wasn’t, so it sat behind a clunky UX. We removed that friction and made QR codes easier to create, scan and deploy, which led to quick adoption.

The deal with Snapchat was seamless, not because of flashy decks or famous backers, but because they saw how we were focused on closing a real usage gap, how we moved fast and

were aligned with their larger vision.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/what-i-learned-after-selling-my-company-to-snapchat-for-54/496447

Here’s What Was Discussed at President Donald Trump’s ‘High IQ’ Dinner With Tech CEOs, Including Apple’s Tim Cook and Microsoft’s Satya Nadella

President Donald Trump hosted a dinner for some of the biggest names in tech in the U.S. on Thursday, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk was notably absent from the table but said on X that he was invited but could not attend, and sent a representative in his place.

Trump started the event by praising every person at the table as “brilliant” and part of a “high IQ group.”

“This is taking our country to a new level,” he stated.

Related: President Donald Trump, Apple to Announce $100

Billion Investment in U.S.

At the dinner, Trump asked each tech leader how much they planned to invest in the U.S. in the next few years. Zuckerberg said, “at least $600 billion by ’28 in the U.S.” Apple CEO Tim Cook made the same statement, while Pichai mentioned $250 billion overall, and Nadella stated that the figure could reach up to $80 billion per year.

“Good,” Trump said. “Very good.”

(Left to right) “AI and Crypto Czar” David Sacks, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, President Donald Trump, and First Lady Melania Trump at the White House dinner on Sept. 4. Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images

The dinner guest list, which the White House confirmed to the *Associated Press*, included Google cofounder Sergey Brin,

Oracle CEO Safra Catz, White House AI and Crypto Czar David Sacks, Scale AI founder Alexandr Wang, and Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates.

During the meal, Trump congratulated Pichai on the recent news of the determined penalties in Google's landmark antitrust case. The penalties were significantly lighter than what the DOJ had been seeking. For example, Google has to stop entering or maintaining exclusive distribution deals for Search, Chrome, and other products. Google's parent company, Alphabet, added $230 billion to its market capitalization this week.

"I'm glad it's over," Pichai stated at the event, sparking laughter from other guests.

Related: The 'Whale' Who Bet Big on Donald Trump's Second Presidency Actually Won $85 Million, Way More Than First Reported. Here's How He Did It.

Melania Trump Hosts AI Event

Before the dinner, on Thursday afternoon, First Lady Melania Trump hosted an event focused on AI in education. The First Lady said that it was critical to teach AI literacy from a young age to make sure the U.S. stayed competitive in that field.

The First Lady's office started an "Age of AI" challenge last month for students to create projects using AI to address community challenges. Submissions are due in December.

"The robots are here," Melania Trump stated at the afternoon event. "Our future is no longer science fiction."

President Donald Trump hosted a dinner for some of the biggest names in tech in the U.S. on Thursday, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk was notably absent from the table but said on X that he was invited but could not attend, and sent a representative in his place.

Trump started the event by praising every person at the table as “brilliant” and part of a “high IQ group.”

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/president-trump-brings-tech-leaders-ceos-to-white-house/496782