

Why Authenticity Is the New 'Purple Squirrel' of Entrepreneurship

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Key Takeaways

- Choose yourself by building a business rooted in values, trust and authentic purpose.
- Excellence and consistency – not perfection – create the rare, memorable leader others want to follow.
- Your “purple squirrel” moment comes when faith, integrity and hard work align.

In September 2025, I flew to California for meetings and found myself walking into Upwork's headquarters in Palo Alto... the very place where my business story began.

Years ago, I was just one person with a laptop, trying to win my first project on that platform, and slowly growing a team. I had no investors, no social proof and no roadmap, only a belief that if I worked with integrity and cared deeply about every client, the rest would follow.

Fast forward five years, and I was walking into the building of the company that enabled me to grow that successful business, invited to join an AI Executive Roundtable hosted by Upwork's CEO, Hayden Brown. Around that table sat executives,

founders and technologists from across Silicon Valley, all focused on shaping the future of work and artificial intelligence.

Out of 18 million+ people on the platform, I was the one asked to represent the voice of AI talent in that room. It was surreal.

The moment wasn't about prestige or validation. It was a quiet confirmation that the long nights, the risks and the faith were worth it. It reminded me that small beginnings, when fueled by conviction, have a way of turning into extraordinary moments.

And it made me realize that that is what being the purple squirrel of your life really means.

In recruiting, a purple squirrel is a mythical creature. Its the perfect candidate with every quality you can imagine. People chase them. Companies try to find them. I decided early on that instead of waiting for someone to "discover" me, I'd become that rare thing myself.

But not by being perfect, but by being *whole*.

I built a business that reflects everything I value: excellence, honesty and faith. I built it from scratch, after leaving a stable career at a Big Four firm, without investors or shortcuts. And I built it by putting people first – clients, employees and the communities we serve.

My company's success in AI and data consulting didn't come from chasing growth. It came from building trust, one relationship, one deliverable, one conversation at a time.

And I believe that's the essence of the purple squirrel, not the person who has everything figured out, but the one who shows up with consistency, curiosity and courage when most people are afraid to.

The truth is, you don't need to fit into someone else's blueprint to succeed. You need to build a life and business that feel like *yours*.

That means being magnetic, not manufactured. It means letting your purpose be louder than your insecurity. It means being real enough that people recognize themselves in your story.

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You don't become unforgettable by being polished. You become unforgettable by being *aligned*.

If you're an entrepreneur trying to build something real, here's what I've learned.

- **Care more than everyone else.** Don't just deliver the work... own the outcome. Make clients feel like you're part of their mission, not just their project.
- **Lead with faith, not fear.** Faith gives you stamina when the odds are long. Fear will make you settle, faith will make you stretch.
- **Be excellent when no one's watching.** Excellence is gratitude in action. It's how you honor the opportunities that others trusted you with.
- **Go all in on what makes you great.** Don't dilute yourself trying to fit every mold. Focus so deeply on your gift that it becomes undeniable.
- **Bring your whole self everywhere.** The world doesn't need another "professional persona." It needs leaders who are integrated...the same person in every room.

Being the purple squirrel isn't about being the rarest talent in the room. It's about being the truest. It's about letting your faith, your purpose and your work all point in the same direction.

It's about leading with humility, serving with excellence and

believing that your calling isn't random...it's intentional. When I look back on that day in Palo Alto, I don't see a highlight reel moment. I see a reminder of grace that even the most improbable opportunities come when you stay true, stay ready and stay aligned.

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So if you feel like you're building quietly, wondering when your "moment" will come, remember this: You don't have to wait for the world to choose you. You can choose yourself.

You can build a business that reflects your values.
You can build relationships rooted in trust and purpose.
You can build a career that doesn't just succeed, but also fulfills.

Be the purple squirrel. Be the one who doesn't fit the mold. The one who builds with both hands...one holding excellence, the other holding faith. The one who proves that the rarest thing in business is still the same as it's always been – authenticity.

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