

**SUCCESS IS  
NOT FINAL,  
FAILURE IS  
NOT FATAL.**

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Dedicated to  
those who have  
failed, to those  
who will fail,  
and to those  
who lie.

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[www.fuckupnights.com](http://www.fuckupnights.com)

# THE FUCKUP BOOK

FIRST EDITION



## Prologue.

"We don't want to be associated with failure", is what some people have said to us in some kind of attempt to deny reality. It seems that they think that if we pretend that everything is okay and we avoid talking about embarrassing things, the world will be a better place.

What a mistaken idea. The real world works differently. If we accept imperfection and failure, if we call them what they are and talk openly about them, the world will be a better place.

To put my money where my mouth is, I will begin by confessing that I am a failure. I started a business a few years ago that failed and, as often happens, I disappointed many people, including my investors, my colleagues, my family, and myself.

For years I hid my failure from my conversations and from my resume, until one drunken night in 2012, in the company of four other failures that changed my life, I found out that I wasn't the only loser.

This is how Fuckup Nights began, monthly gatherings where three or four people tell their stories of failure in front of hundreds of people.

And for all of those that still fear being associated with failure, let me just say: this global movement of failures is a success.

**Leticia Gasca**

Six years ago, I went on a crazy trip to Havana with a friend who is as passionate as I am about losing oneself in another culture, Hemingway style. The truth is that we were never able to lose ourselves 100%, but the trip gave us the opportunity to meet an old man with Havana Club breath, who shared with us that, with time, people let go of their dreams because of the fear of failing or, even worse, because of the fear of the changes they need to make to achieve success.

Today, the words of the old man are echoed in each of the stories that we have heard during Fuckup Nights. When I reflect on my own experience with failure, I am tormented that I did not tattoo his wise words on my chest. If I had done so, maybe my failure story would have turned out differently. Maybe I would have conquered the fear of standing up and trying again after my first failure, or persisted and overcome the obstacles of the second, and today, maybe I wouldn't fear the changes that are being demanded by what I hope is the ultimate success of the third.

**Julio Salazar**

Failure, just like success, does not exist. Failure is like that Sufi tale that says, "good luck, bad luck. Who knows?" in which an unfortunate event brings you some benefit, and a perceived misfortune ends up saving you from a greater misfortune. But then, what is important? The important thing is to do. Do what you like, and do it all the time. I'm not talking about fulfilling whims. I'm talking about being able to say: I lived on my own terms, and I did what I wanted to do even if life didn't agree. And to be able to do that, it's crucial to be able to recover from frustration.

The personal, the painful, the intimate perspective of the speakers that share their stories, that is what I'm interested in. (These are the things that happen when we talk about our failures).

The embarrassment that our mistakes cause us can be enjoyed or suffered in private. But the failure monster feeds off of that loneliness. Closeness is another form of intimacy, and that is what I feel during Fuckup Nights: closeness. A certain warmth when a perfect stranger applauds my errors and my weaknesses.

**Luis López de Nava**

When I was invited to give a TEDTalk about Fuckup Nights, something that many friends have said came to mind: we are the anti-TED.

From the topics to the informality, the lack of famous speakers to the destruction of the ego, we are a movement that's the total opposite of the talks with a teddy bear's name.

This idea was confirmed for me on a call with the speakers' coach. I was told that a common tactic among the majority of the TEDsters is to begin the talk by gaining authority. Using the typical passive-aggressive tactic where you convince the audience that you know more than they do.

We lost all authority from the get go with our name. When this movement began, to grow, friends told us that we would have problems registering the name with the government, opening a bank account, or signing on sponsors. And it's true. More than one potential sponsor decided to pass on the project because of the name; however, we stand strong because we do this for the community, not for some potential sponsor that wants to hop on the bandwagon.

Many TED speakers have a very western definition of success. They tell you to work hard and to have a plan. Getting friends together every month to laugh and drink beer isn't exactly understood as hard work.

Other great gurus tell you to dream big to achieve something that people admire. When we started, our big dream was to invite 30 friends to hang out and listen to stories of failure. What happened was that we found thousands of slightly crazy people with the same dream.

Everyone wants to be part of something. Everyone wants to be considered successful. This is the trick: the people that want to be cool are the ones that are the least cool. You do not want to be the hipster that talks a lot but never does anything meaningful. The secret is to take a step back, focus on the things that you truly value, and live them, even if it is something as seemingly silly as listening to other people's Fuckups.

**Pepe Villatoro**

I remember really well the day that Fuckup Nights was born.

We were on the terrace of WE ARE TODOS celebrating, you know, improvising the party. Friends, music, beer, a grill, and the barbeque began. After a few beers, out came the *mezcal*, and that's when the serious talks began.

I was going from conversation to conversation, until I got to one where the subject was failure.

The group was Leti, Julio, and Pepe, a group I'd worked with on a project that resulted in failure for all four of us.

When I joined the circle, someone, maybe Julio, said:

—"Charlie, what do you think? An event focused on failure."

—"Wait, what?" – I asked.

—"Yeah, and they should be called Fuckup Nights."

To avoid losing the "aha moment", we decided to meet up a week later and discuss it a little more sober.

We met a week later at La Nacional, a local *mezcaleria*, and I invited Luis, a friend and business partner.

We ordered a round of drinks. Someone, I don't remember who (probably Leti), proposed that each of us share a failure to find out if talking about the subject in public would work the way we thought it would.

What happened next was one of the most inspiring, intimate, and fun conversations that I've had in my life.

Each of us had a very different way of seeing failure in our stories.

Listening to one story you died laughing, another you wanted to cry, and others truly gave professional lessons.

I think the experience gave us the certainty that no matter what happened, we would at least have fun. We decided to start Fuckup Nights two weeks later on that same terrace, with just one rule: keep it simple.

**Carlos Zimbrón**





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## How is this book read?

This is a free read book, you can start from the front or the back. You can also open to a random page and let yourself be surprised. Of course, there is also the option to scan it quickly and stop at the sections that grab your attention.

Although the method that you choose isn't important, do remember to make this book your own: underline it, cross things out, take pictures and share them on social networks. Talk about it and lend it to your friends.

Here you will find different types of content:

— Twelve of the best *Fuckup* stories we've heard at *Fuckup Nights*. All of them are titled with the name of the speaker.

— Insights and activities about failure, based on the 24 points of the internationally acclaimed *Fuckup Manifesto* (see previous page).  
— Results of the research on the most common causes of failure in Mexico.

There is a story for every two points of the manifesto. The research results can be found at the end of the book.

The intention of the creators of this book is to transfer the spirit of the *Fuckup Nights* to a document that's fun, innovative, and collectable.

We hope you enjoy it.











Now let's get  
started!





# #1. GET REJECTED

BY LETICIA GASCA



One of the most common (and human) ways of failing is to get rejected. For example: you rehearse for a play for months, but casting doesn't go your way and you're rejected for your dream role. Or when you finally summon up the courage to ask the girl that you like out on a date, and she says no.

Sometimes, it can be really tough to accept NO for an answer, and this is one of the main triggers of tantrums for both kids and adults.

However, when you realize that you already have the NO, rejection stops being such a

serious problem. Not trying something is the same as trying and getting a NO. The only way to get a YES is by making sure you try.

Going through life thinking that you'll never be rejected, or that you are the only human being that has ever been rejected, is very unrealistic. Look out the window. Everyone that you see has been rejected on various occasions, but few of them have intentionally tried to be rejected. Why not give it a shot?

## Do It

1. Think of something that requires an audition or a test to get in: a dance group, a play, a singing reality show, etc.
2. Once you have a long list, circle the activity that you're the worst at.
3. Participate in an audition or test for that activity. Instead of suffering through the process, enjoy it! Observe the paralysis that the fear of being rejected causes in many people.
4. When you are told that you've been rejected, be enthusiastic and thankful for the response.

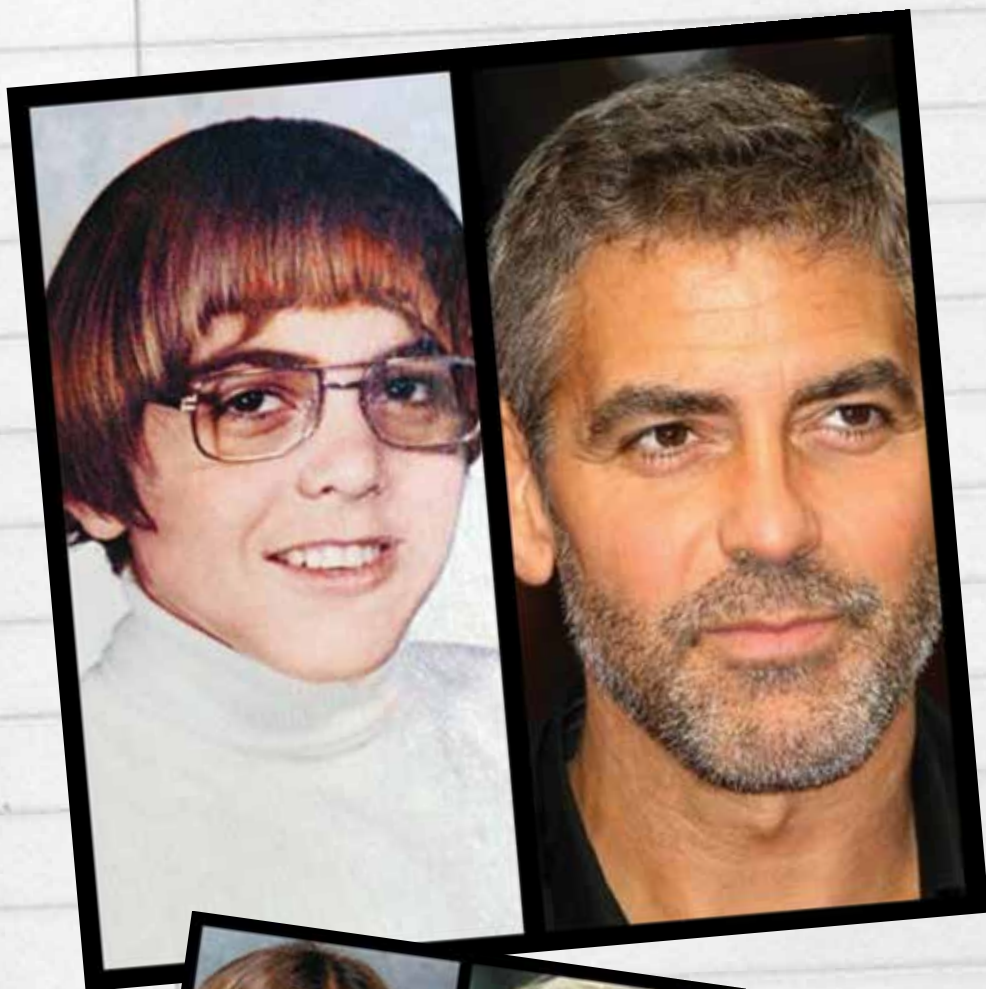
## Take the step

Hit the street and randomly ask people if they'll let you take a picture with them. The exercise ends once you've been rejected five times, in other words, when five people say NO. Send the pictures that you were able to take to [hola@fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@fuckupnights.com) using the subject "1. Get rejected".

The editors of the Fuckup Book had the idea to create a section called "The Traveler", full of witty comments, sharp observations, and various anecdotes to compliment every point. A parallel and itinerant narrative that would connect the dots between the activities, meta-ideas, and explanations. I mean, innovative and "out of the box" proposals are totally "in" these days. They asked me to do this, supposedly, because I've known the Fuckup Nights since the beginning. I was one of the speakers at the inaugural session, when twenty people sat

on bricks on a patio on Calle Chihuahua, in the Roma neighborhood of Mexico City. And then I was the "storyteller coordinator", meaning I curated the writers that were responsible for chronicling and sharing every story told at those first Fuckup Nights. I've been given the liberty and autonomy to write 150 words for each chapter (I'm at 138 so far). The path starts here. We are going strong. I, Jordy Meléndez Yúdice, am the Traveler.









## #2. EXPERIENCE A SETBACK

POR CARLOS ZIMBRÓN, LUIS LÓPEZ DE NAVA, TASHA RUSSMAN, DIEGO OLAVARRÍA, TATIANA MAILLARD Y LETICIA GASCA

You're probably asking yourself, 'Why should I experience a setback?' Per Merriam-Webster online, a setback is defined as "a checking of progress, defeat, reverse."

Without a doubt, one of the worst setbacks in life is the first one: you don't know what you are facing, how you feel, or what you will lose. What is more, you don't know when that terrible feeling of uncertainty and doubt in the pit of your stomach will stop.

If you've never had a setback, pay attention: when that moment arrives, it will be one of the most important moments of your life.

And if you have already experienced misfortune, bad luck, or mishaps, remember that eventually another setback will happen. It's not that we have it out for you; it's simply the nature of existence.

It's more realistic and pragmatic to live life knowing that eventually, a misfortune, bad luck, or mishap will happen.



In the year and a half of listening to stories during Fuckup Nights, one thing is clear: there is no greater lesson than the existential wake up call that comes from a setback. Size wise, there are big ones and small ones (all jokes aside), but what's really important is how you face failure and what you build from there. Generally, entrepreneurs must have, in almost equal parts, long term planning skills, a lot of motivation, and a high tolerance for frustration, otherwise, you are screwed if something goes wrong. Because, of course, things can always go

## Do it

- 1) Move all the furniture in the house (or the room, but it will be less fun). At night, in the dark, or with your eyes blindfolded, walk from one side of the room to the other, trying to avoid obstacles. It doesn't matter how cautious you are, you won't be able to make it without at least stubbing your pinky toe. Congratulate yourself when you make it to your goal, and don't worry about breaking that invaluable VIIth century Chinese vase.
- 2) When deciding between using the elevator and running up the stairs to the tenth floor for that meeting with executives, choose the second option. Even better if you're already running a few minutes late. A little bit of cardio never hurt anyone, and you'll be grateful when you arrive on time in spite of the obstacles. Sweating and with your tongue hanging out, but you made it.

## Take the step

Keep calm and carry on, and don't back down until you've done all the activities with your left hand (if you're right handed) or with the right (if you're left handed).

1. Grab a camera or phone to record a video.
2. Ask a friend to record you.
3. Ask your friend to tie your hand behind your back and try doing everything with your free hand. Or you could try eating with your feet....but that's a bigger challenge.
4. Upload the video to YouTube and let us know. We'll be your fans forever.

wrong. Go to <http://fuckupnights.tumblr.com/> and read the case of Alejandro Maza: a successful social impact project, impeccable planning, motivation up to his eyeballs, but no room to scale it....all because he didn't read the fine print of the contract that he signed with the government. Ask him now how many times he reviews the documents that he signs for the projects that he now leads through OPI: Open Intelligence.



# SETBACK

According to  
Merriam-Webster.

## Setback

*Noun* *set·back* \ *set- bak* \

### Full Definition of SETBACK

- 1: a checking of progress
- 2: defeat, reverse
- 3: <sup>4</sup>pitch <sup>7</sup>
- 4: a placing of a face of a building on a line some distance to the rear of the building line or of the wall below; also: the area produced by a setback
- 5: automatic scheduled adjustment to a lower temperature setting of a thermostat
- 6: the distance of a structure or other feature (as a well or septic system) from the property line or other feature





# Rafael Bracho



## 1. Preparing the fall

Ever since I was a child, I always wanted to own my own business. I was never afraid of the risks, on the contrary, they were seductive. But life didn't lead me down that path, at least not at first. After studying Industrial Engineering in college, and then completing an MBA, my life took a very conventional path. I started to work for companies, building a corporate career. However, I still had that itch to start a business. It was there, like a latent desire, like a hidden microchip in a robot waiting for the activation signal.

The years passed by pretty normally, until one day that chip activated. A complicated situation finally flipped it on: the company I worked for started to make some questionable decisions, and I ran the risk of ruining my reputation if I didn't resign as soon as possible. So I resigned. I took advantage of the fact that I no longer had a full-time job to go ahead and scratch the itch.

The difference between having a conventional job and having your own business is profound. My resignation arrived under very special circumstances. I didn't even have a project in mind. I knew that I wanted to start something, but I had no idea what that something might be. My situation was the opposite of those people that have a dream for years and one day finally decide to carry it out. What I wanted was first the freedom, and then a project. The moment that I resigned was the moment that I jumped towards that freedom. I would say that was the moment that I put the parachute on my back, took off on a plane through the air and, from ten thousand feet, jumped out the door. That was the moment my free fall began.

## 2. The auction

During the initial days, I dedicated myself to analyzing various business models that could help me identify my new calling. I was interested in a business that was internet based and that was also fun. Finally, I discovered one that fulfilled those requisites: an auction site. This model was different from other online auction sites because the items up for auction were offered direct, not via third parties. The format of the auctions was also different. Let me explain: instead of putting up money, the participant used a chip (which could be bought for six pesos through the site) to increase the value of the auction, ten cents per click. The auction started at zero pesos and every time someone clicked and spent a chip, the clock restarted to 30 seconds. 30, 29, 28, 27...if the countdown finished and there were no other offers, the last person to spend a chip won. Generally, the price of the auction ended far below the retail price of the product, a difference that the company off set with the money from the chips spent by those who didn't win.

More than an auction, it was a bet: if you spent your chips and didn't win the final bid, you lost your money. But if you won, it was very likely that you were purchasing the product at a bargain price. The format was half auction, half bet: a mix of strategy, patience, and luck were needed to win. It was an adrenaline rush.

We named the company Locuaz, and were off to a good start. Some of the auctions got people's attention, others not so much. For example, there was one auction that initially seemed disastrous: we auctioned off a motorcycle and, after a brief bidding period, it sold for \$7.90 pesos. It pained us to have to give the motorcycle up for eight insignificant pesos. However, the news ran through social networks and ended up bringing us much more than what the motorcycle originally cost in terms of users, publicity, and visibility.

## 3. Finances

At a financial level, the company achieved its break-even point in eight months. You could say everything was good. But then we realized that, from that point on, the number of new users had tanked. Our equilibrium was also our paralysis. That was when a dilemma arose: the only way to increase our visibility was by investing in publicity and marketing, but we didn't have the money for that. That was the moment when the company went from being a successful business to becoming a full on fuck up.

## 4. The importance of instinct

When I realized that the company wasn't going to make it, I was plagued by sleepless nights and preoccupation. And by regret: "Why am I doing this?" I thought, "Why am I not working for some corporate, with my steady paycheck and my safety net?" I even started to compare myself with people that had been successful, and I began to doubt myself. At night, in the company of my pillow, I tried and failed to solve the problems. Sleep became a bad counselor. The fun part of the fall had ended. Vertigo had replaced the adrenaline.

Despite everything, I learned something from those days: you have to listen to the people that surround you. They might not know your numbers or your business strategies, but they love you and they care about you.

That was how I came to understand that the time had come to close the company. Luckily, a company that was interested in buying us materialized, and we came to an agreement with our investors. They bought Locuaz from us in July 2012 and turned it into PinWin. They were up and running for a year, then shut down in August 2013.

I think back on my free falling days with nostalgia. One thing is clear to me: someday I will jump again.





## #3. GET A BAD GRADE

BY TATIANA MAILLARD



If you failed a test because you were too busy checking Facebook to pay attention in class, we're sorry to say: you deserve it.

But we assume that you are a responsible human being hungry for knowledge. That is why we prefer to imagine you with your head in your hands, your fingers pulling out your hair with barely disguised anguish, gnawing on your pencil that looks like it has

been chewed up by a tranquilizer addicted beaver in withdrawal! And right before your eyes, the silent tormentor: a multiple choice test with four possible answers that are all painfully similar, because the world is cruel and every time you fail, an academic wins a Nobel Prize, because NO ONE is more intelligent than they are.

In the end, you failed in spite of your dedication and constant badgering of the class nerd to explain everything that you didn't understand. And that's okay. It is okay to get a bad grade (or two). If you get three, it might be time to change your study habits, buddy. We learn from our mistakes, and you can check where you messed up, review your questions with your professor, and try again.

The next time, you'll know that the right answer is C.

Beyond the cliché, there is something certain in the small world of entrepreneurship: no one will ask for your grades from your third semester of college, or ask for your high school G.P.A. The skills you have (and can show), the dedication and professionalism that you bring to your project, the way you sell your idea, proposal, or company, and your network of contacts will be much more important than a bad grade in your academic history. Of course, this doesn't mean that you shouldn't take maximum advantage of the time you spend in

## Do it

1. Put your failed test in a place of honor in your house (for example, in the US, people put their kids' tests on the refrigerator. Or at least that's what TV series have shown us.) Pat yourself on the back.
2. Review the questions you messed up. Put on some boxing gloves and punch the daylights out of a punching bag with your teacher's photo taped to it. When you get tired, leave the house (shower first), look for your teacher, and ask them to enlighten you with their super awesome knowledge about the subjects that you didn't get.
3. Use any opportunity you have to study out loud. A good opportunity is the dinner party when you meet your in-laws. Break the uncomfortable silence by explaining how many phosphate groups the DNA oligonucleotide pATCGAC has. Fascinating!

## Take the step

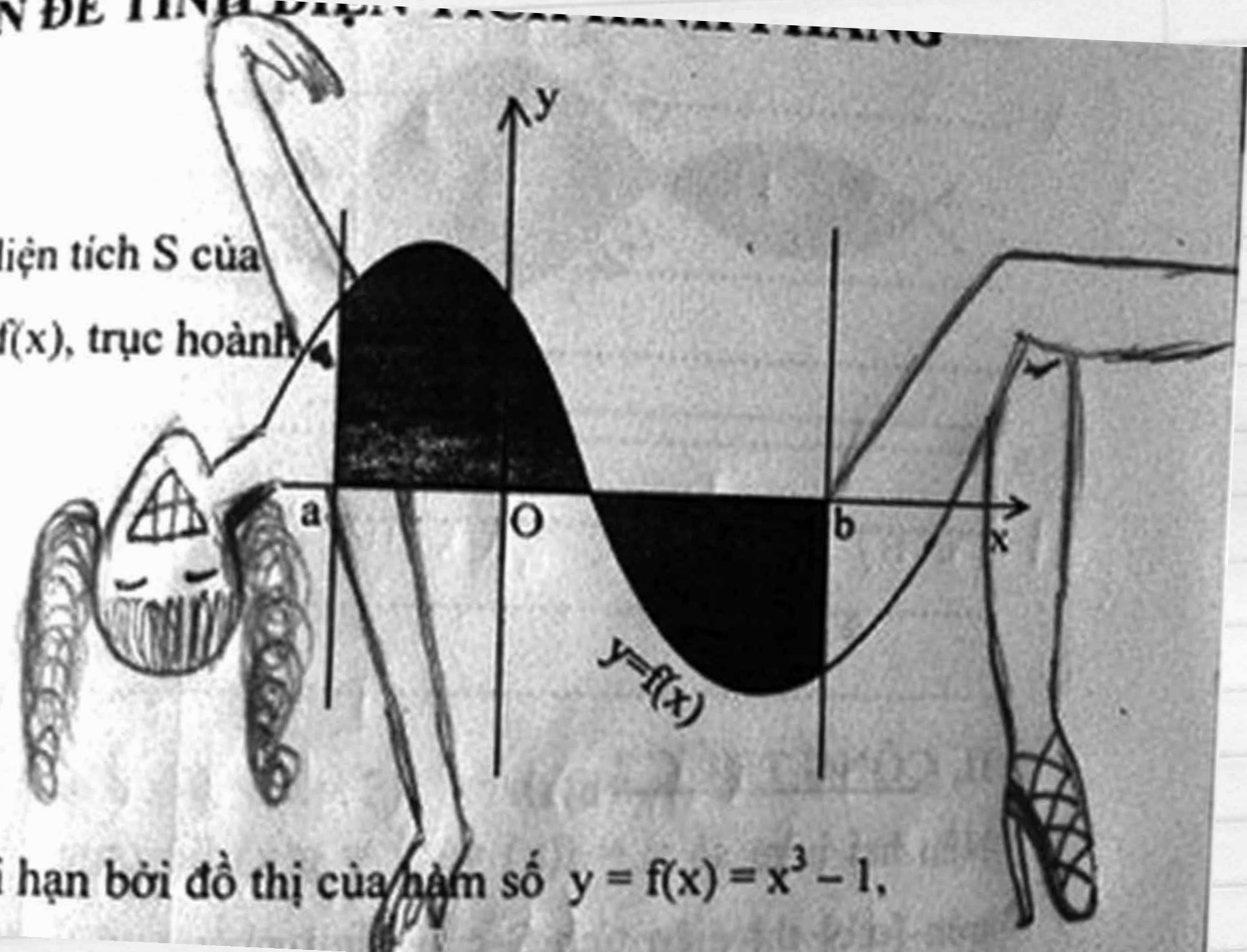
You are the Rocky Balboa of your Masters in Economy...or Spanish Literature...or whatever it is you're studying. Inhabit the role. Mark your calendar with how many days are left until your next fight. Prepare. After studying everyday, record a testimonial video where you explain what you've learned and what your goal is for when you take the test. Share it on social networks. The night before your test, upload your last video explaining that tomorrow is your big fight. We trust that you're prepared. When you pass with flying colors (because that's for sure what will happen), share the results accompanied by the song "Eye of the Tiger." Go and get 'em!

school or of the trainings that you take throughout your professional life. We don't want what happened to natural born entrepreneur Alejandro Almada to happen to you. Many of his failures could have been avoided if he had paid more attention in his college courses, especially the ones on the four P's of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. So pay attention, people.



# H PHÂN ĐỂ TÍNH DIỆN TÍCH

trên khoảng  $[a;b]$  thì diện tích  $S$  của  
hình phẳng giới hạn bởi đồ thị của hàm số  $y = f(x)$ , trục hoành



hằng giới hạn bởi đồ thị của hàm số  $y = f(x) = x^3 - 1$ ,





# #4. GET FIRED

BY NICKO NOGUÉS

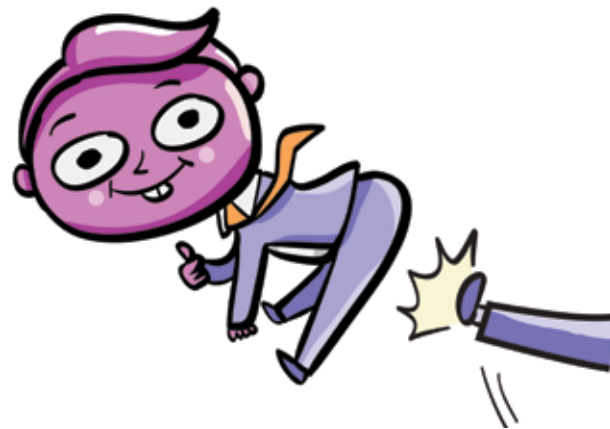
I am one of those people that think that if you haven't been fired at least once in your life, then you're doing something wrong.

The concept of having a job "for life" doesn't exist anymore, and even if some keep trying to preserve it, the mere idea of being with one company for more than three or four years makes my hair stand on end.

I also think that in a few years we will be asking how it was possible that there were people capable of being locked up in an office at least eight hours a day, doing things they didn't believe in, to pay for other things that they didn't need, trying to fill an empty life.

I think that this is crystal clear to today's 15 year olds, who prefer to put all their talent and energy into things that they truly enjoy doing, and then try to make a living off of it.

The rest of us have a harder time swallowing this change, maybe because ever since we were kids we've been told that "Man was born to suffer as the sparks fly upward", "Good things come to those who wait", and "Buckle down and give it your all." I don't know about you, but I don't want anything



that will cost me "blood, sweat, and tears" anymore. I'll pass.

We only have to go back to the etymology of the word "work" in Romance languages to rapidly understand how perverse the concept is. "Work" (Spanish: *trabajo*, Portuguese: *trabalho*, French: *travail*) derives from the Latin *Tripalium* "(literally "three sticks"), a torture instrument made with three sticks that was tied to slaves to beat them.

Essentially, work is tied to suffering. So what is really being celebrated on days like International Workers' Day (May 1) is everybody's suffering.

So don't worry if you've been fired or are about to be let go. Actually, worry (a lot) if

you haven't ever been. This is coming from someone who has been fired once and who has quit quite a few times. And not only did I survive, I actually feel more alive each time.

We should change the name and the meaning of what today we call "work". For me, work is the opposite, something that

consists of enjoying (almost) everyday doing what you do. I think that instead of "work", I would use the word "dedication", because you have to dedicate a lot of everything to achieve it. Love, above all.

So it's not work. It's much better and it's celebrated every day. Starting is easy: get fired.

## Do it

Get fired. No, it's not a joke. If you're unhappy with your job, consider it. Give yourself a deadline.

Tell your plan to five witnesses, and commit in writing that if you don't keep your word and leave when you said you would, the money you save in the lead up must be split between the group.

See it as a stock market investment, but even better. If things don't turn out as planned, you'll make your friends very happy.

If all goes well, they'll also be happy. They say that friendship is valued highly.

Put a date on the calendar to quit. Be realistic, because the point is that you really do leave. We recommend a minimum of six months and a maximum of nine.

Save money during this time. As if there were no tomorrow.

Make a plan: during that time, focus on looking for another job, or create one. Good luck.

## Take the step

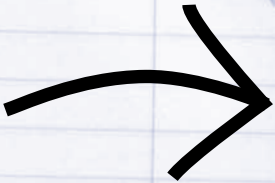
If you are happy with your job, my most sincere congratulations. Maybe you want to help someone that isn't by suggesting that they do the activity above. Take a picture of this page and share it on social networks.

The fourth point of the Fuckup Manifesto shines light on a hidden but constant debate at the Fuckup Nights: not everyone can afford to fail and continue on as if nothing had happened. If we're realistic, few have that wiggle room. It is not the same to try -and fail- when you're 22 years old, have a family safety net, and no responsibilities, than to do it when you're 40, with few savings and a family to support. That's why, of the 24

manifesto points, this is the one that most gives me pause. To recommend, "Get fired" seems unnecessary to me, not very serious, and possibly even dangerous. It seems that whoever added it is a yuppie that doesn't care about financial issues, since they've got that part of their life figured out. On the other hand, it feels so good to tell your boss how you really feel and to leave a job where you're not happy.



# Blank resignation letter to fill out, tear out, and turn in.



Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

After an appropriate period of deliberation, I have come to the decision to tender my resignation from \_\_\_\_\_, effective immediately.

Please know that I still maintain a high level of respect for you as a manager and supervisor, and I thank you sincerely for the support and assistance you have offered me in each of those roles. I have been proud to work for \_\_\_\_\_; it has been a journey that has provided me an unparalleled foundation to move forward to new and exciting opportunities.

As such, I have decided to become a professional pirate. It has always been a dream of mine to live the life of a swashbuckling corsair, beholden to none and master of all I survey. Once my crew of unabashed rogues is assembled, we shall take to the capacious expanse of the high seas to pursue fortune, fame, and hair-raising adventure.

Our path may not be filled with the porcine comforts and technological marvels that \_\_\_\_\_ provides, but we shall nonetheless move forward to carve a name for ourselves in the annals of bold insurgency and death-defying derring-do. Once I have a keen blade at my hip and the Jolly Roger is flapping high above me, I believe I will find my true calling.

Please note that I am currently accepting applications for First Officer, if you are at all interested in applying. I will provide a full medical and dental plan, which will offer immediate coverage of all maladies other than scurvy and the occasional bout of rickets.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name





# Enrique Jacob



**T**he story of my failure, my first business, starts in college, in my third year at the School of Economics. In 1979, a friend and I decided to start a business from scratch, with all of the risks that implies.

At that time, the outlook was very promising, and the economy was growing, particularly in the construction sector. We had a plan, and that plan was built out of bricks or, to be precise, of construction blocks made of vibro-compressed material. We dreamed of manufacturing them, selling them, and creating our first business. The place where this dream would come true would be Naucalpan, a municipality in the suburbs of Mexico City.

There is a saying that reads as follows: the road to hell is paved with good intentions. You could say the same thing about the biggest failures: they are buildings constructed with blocks of small successes that one-day collapse. From the beginning, our business started off well. There were favorable winds blowing in Naucalpan. My father lent us some land, which saved us from having to pay rent. Also, since the adjacent piece of land belonged to a family member, we were able to share electricity and water costs (of course, this helped us reduce our operational expenses and increase our competitiveness). We invested in machinery, and bought a truck to transport the raw material to our new production center and to take our fresh out of the oven bricks to the clients that we had all over the city. We were the ideal small business, practically untouchable, and everything indicated that we were on the right path. Our youth made us feel invincible, and the small successes we had boosted our confidence to the stratosphere.

1980 came around and the new decade brought a new project, as well as a renewed sense of ambition. News began to spread that the government of Mexico City had decided to build a Central de Abastos, a market distribution center, in Iztapalapa, and that it would be the biggest market not only in Mexico, but also in the world.

Markets are the origin of Mexico. The first thing that caught the attention of Hernán Cortés when he arrived to ancient Tenochtitlán was the quantity and the variety of products of the Mercado de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, which back then was the largest market in America, possibly even the world. The Central de Abastos in Iztapalapa would in certain ways be a continuation of a project that was older than the country itself. If our bricks were used to build it, we would in some way become part of history. Also, why not say it, we would make a substantial amount of money that would mean great success and prestige for us.

We decided to participate in the bidding process. We were convinced that we could win, since our offer included a novel proposal. I'll explain: because the vibro-compressed material

is heavy, the transportation cost of the material is significant. Which is why manufacturers that are physically closer to the construction site usually win these bids. Our novel idea was to manufacture the bricks right there, on the site of the new distribution center. Our only condition was that they lend us a platform on which to put the brick manufacturing machines (it is worth mentioning that the plan was to have three times more machines on site than in Naucalpan). It was a bit risky, but the contract was juicy and our ambition and enthusiasm motivated us to give it a shot. On top of that, we had sufficient water and electric energy supply.

One day we received the long awaited call: the contract was ours. We celebrated. But we hadn't even finished toasting and gotten down to work before the problems began. Here's the tragic story: to begin, for some reason beyond our control, the electric company wasn't able to install the electricity supply on the platform where the machines would operate. We were faced with a dilemma: abandon the contract or risk it all. Like out of control gamblers, we made the riskier decision. After agreeing on extra expenses with the constructor, we rented electricity generators. But the problems didn't end there. We soon learned that we also wouldn't have access to the other most important raw material: water. Again, like kamikaze pilots, we opted for business suicide: the installation of water tanks on site, despite the fact that the cost and transportation of the water would be on our account. A set of sixteen water tanks, just imagine!

The problems kept coming: a few weeks later, we realized that we would have to pave, or at least compact the gravel, of the access area of the platform so that the construction material could be moved in and out. When the rains started and this area flooded (the specifications that were given to us for the construction turned out to be incorrect), the whole platform was useless. Another investment lost.

After all of these difficulties, the thriving business that a few months before had been smooth sailing, with stable clients and a growing local market, collapsed under the weight of an ambitious project that went from being the contract of our lives to a white elephant. Every brick we produced for the Central de Abastos was a brick that lost us money. After awhile, it was impossible to deliver what was promised in the contract, and the constructor in charge of the project sued us for non-compliance. Our company closed in the red. My partner and I had to opt for an unflattering, but effective solution: go to our parents and ask to borrow money to settle the debts (in our defense, I must admit that, although it took us a year to do it, we paid up to the last cent).

Sometimes I think that if we hadn't bid for the project, our company could have continued on. It maybe would have completed more modest projects than building the biggest market in the world, but it would have survived with the small and medium clients that it supplied. Instead, the company ended up sacrificed on the altar of the Central de Abastos that, like an Aztec deity, devoured its blood without mercy.

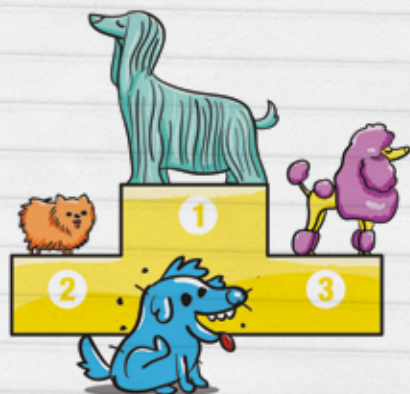




# #5. LOSE A CONTEST

BY LILIÁN LÓPEZ CAMBEROS

In my elementary school, for various reasons, there were very few kids. There were four of us in the sixth grade, and no more than forty in all the grades combined. We knew each other so well that we were like a big and disorderly class, with no discernible organization in terms of age or ability. But we were still made to compete against each other. Maybe the reality of handling such a small student body was too boring for the teachers and the principal, who decided to focus their energy on a series of competitions that took place at least once a month. Mental calculations, dictation, spelling, reading out loud,



landscape drawing, fantasy stories, basketball competitions, knitting, and watercolor painting. Everything could be a competition. And someone was the best in each of them. Even when you were clumsy, slow, or hopeless at something, you could be content with the hope of winning the next contest.

But then the regional office of elementary schools organized a statewide chess competition. My dad had taught me the rules, and we played some afternoons. Since I always won, I thought it only natural to raise my hand when my teacher asked who knew how to play. I didn't even bother to practice, I was so sure of my undeniable talents. My teacher Lulú and I arrived at the host elementary school in the morning. It was very cold, and I was shaking when I sat down to play against Grecia, a girl with long hair and a sweet smile. While we played, my pieces moving with quick angst, I began to realize an uncomfortable truth. My dad always let me win. I could see his fake painful faces, replayed in my memory; the barely disguised smiles hidden in the supposed anger caused

by my intelligence, my talent, and my admirable mental quickness.

Grecia defeated me in a few moves. The trauma of discovering the truth about my abilities left me in a state of shock for the rest of the contest. But something strange happened, because by the time I returned to school, my humiliation had become pride.

I had lost. But no one else there had participated in a contest that seemed overwhelming, unconquerable, one of those that was worth losing rather than missing out on. From this experience, I learned the honor that comes from showing up to a contest... and, with that same honor, losing it.

## Do it

1. Use marketing in your favor: in this era of social networks, most brands base their contests on an association between user experience and the product. Participate without planning to win, but more as a creativity exercise. For example, plan your perfect date on a transatlantic flight.
2. Do you write? Don't compete in a story contest, but instead in a contest focused on digital illustration. Do you draw? Write a short play (at escritores.org, you'll find hundreds of calls for proposals). None of

the above? The other day, I discovered a short video contest based on the concept "the invisible".

3. Juvenal's saying, "A healthy mind in a healthy body", isn't just common, it's true. If there's one contest that every human should participate in, it's the one aimed at the strength and resistance of the body. Participate in a marathon, in a soccer tournament, or in a relay. You won't lose, even if you end up in last place.

## Take the step

**Do our first activity suggestion and send us a screen shot of at least two contests that you participated in via social networks: one must include photography as part of the contest (a picture of you with the product, or in a specific destination) and the other may be written, illustrated, or any proof that you participated.**

In a society that bows before the overwhelming success of Mark Zuckerberg, the superhuman abilities of Cristiano Ronaldo, and the incomparable qualities of Magnus Carlsen (chess grandmaster and reigning World Chess Champion...who honestly no one really knows, but he's 23 and better than Kasparov at his best), it's worth it to take a breather. First: perfection is not only (practically) unattainable, but it's also often boring. Remember your classmate that got a perfect 4.0 G.P.A? They're probably a bank employee now. They probably

earn a massive salary, but their soul is being eaten away by the never-ending bureaucracy. Second: ever since we're young we're taught that life is a competition, and when we grow up we complain of how fucked up and cruel the world is. If we truly want to change something, we have to go from irrational "competitiveness" to intelligent "cooperation". The end.



It wasn't a  
penalty







# #6. DEFY THE SYSTEM

BY NICKO NOGUÉS

My Fuckup Night friends very kindly invited me to write part of this book, but when I finally got around to working on it, there it was, defying me.

I looked it in the eyes and smiled. It seemed like that blank page was nothing more than a lovely metaphor for what we understand as failure.

Because, at the start, and at the finish, it's ultimately up to us. And fortunately, we can always say "Enough!", take a deep breath, and release a very powerful, convincing, and beautiful FUCK UP.

Sometimes it's actually healthy, so here is mine. I would love for you to join me and make it yours.

Breath deep, because here we go:

Fuck this blank page. Fuck the manifestos. Fuck if you like this book or not. Fuck everyone who tells you "don't do this, do that". Fuck the time thieves. Fuck mediocre people. Fuck the cowards. Fuck everyone who says a lot but does little. Fuck envy. Fuck your fears. Fuck machismo. Fuck feminism. Fuck



the right. Fuck the left. Fuck everyone who is just a benchwarmer.

Fuck everyone who throws shade because they're afraid of your talent. Fuck "in a minute". Fuck your laziness. Fuck our excuses. Fuck everything that smells rancid and doesn't let us move forward. Fuck "yes, you can," because you always could and you always will. Fuck you. Fuck me. Fuck the Fuck up.

Fuck up the system.

Recently I was catching up with my best friend. He's always had an adventurous spirit (he's the type that gets up one day and decides to hitchhike to Oaxaca) and he enjoys dreaming up incredible plans, the majority of which obviously don't pan out. He constantly has his head in the clouds. His most recent adventure consisted of spending a few months in the provinces of Mexico, just like that, with the plan to make a documentary about street artists. My friend is not a movie director: he studied law. His plan ended as a categorical failure, and he

## Do it

The most obvious challenge to go with this chapter would be to invite you to say FUCK to EVERYTHING that doesn't feel good and, above all, TO DO IT. Yes, send everything that you hate far, far away. But let's be real-

istic, you won't do it. So let's save time and energy, focus, and make it easy.

Chose only one thing that you are truly sick of and leave it behind. We won't find out if you don't do it. But your conscious will. :O

## Take the step

Record the moment  
you say FUCK IT and  
send your story to  
[hola@fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@fuckupnights.com).  
We'll include it in our  
next book. 0\_ \_o

opted to return defeated to Mexico City. As we talked, I noticed he seemed sad. And then he spewed out a phrase that stuck with me: "The difference between courage and ridiculousness is very tenuous, but it's worth it to take the risk." That's when I knew that he'd try again (maybe not with the documentary), and no matter what, he'd be successful. Screw you, System. Defying the system is not for conformists.



There is no justice in following unjust laws. It's time to come into the light and, in the grand tradition of civil disobedience, declare our opposition to this private theft of public culture.

Aaron Swartz

Aaron Swartz (November 8, 1986- January 11, 2013) programmer, writer, and internet activist. Co-founder of Reddit. He used his technological talents to make the internet and the world a more just place.

[www.aaronsw.com](http://www.aaronsw.com)







# Alejandro Almada

I failed because I forgot the four P's that we were taught in business school: price, product, place, and promotion. Now I have four examples to help illustrate the importance of P, both in the alphabet and in life.

## Price

I had two businesses related to food at different times in my life: a Japanese restaurant and a poultry shop. I started the former with my brother. The menu had an irresistible price of 45 pesos (about US\$3). We bought the ingredients through my brother's girlfriend, whose family owned a Japanese supermarket. Everything was going swimmingly for my brother, his girlfriend, and for me. Until they broke up. Love left, and with it, our raw ingredients at an excellent price. We had to increase the price of the menu by twenty pesos, and on top of that, a sandwich shop opened next door. If you had to choose between a menu that's gotten noticeably more expensive and a cheap, filling sandwich, which would you prefer? Ah! I knew it. Thanks to people like you, we had to close our business after a year.

The poultry shop: Things weren't going so badly: we sold between 200 and 300 kilos of chicken breast daily to Japanese restaurants (did I mention that I studied at a Japanese school? That's where I made all of these contacts.) But we didn't consider the fact that the price of chicken goes up and down constantly. We couldn't alter our sales price to the restaurants, because that would affect the pricing on their menus. Fail.

## Product

If you don't believe in your product, don't sell it. Quit before you end up hating it. I, for example, hated selling costume jewelry. In spite of that, I thought it would be a good business. I was blinded by the *bling bling* of cheap jewelry, and I started to sell to beauty shops and gift stores, some sixty clients in total. Oh, how I hated showing them the product, talking about bracelets and necklaces that even I didn't like! But I hated it even more when those same clients, with whom I'd left the merchandise, called to inform me that their business had just been robbed and, coincidentally, the only items stolen were my products. Yeah, right. Keep the merchandise. It's ugly anyway. I quit.

## Place

Besides the poultry shop and the Japanese restaurant, I also had a cafeteria that was located right in front of the university. Don't ask me why, but I thought the financial success of my



business would arrive with the hoards of hungry students on a limited budget, lured by the free chips and hookah I offered as a promotion. Small miscalculation, since the gold mine was actually the office workers that wanted to invite Lupita from accounting out for coffee, some chips, a hookah, or everything all at once with money from their paycheck. But I was crazy, blind.

## Promotion

You know, maybe my costume jewelry business would have been profitable with a little more marketing. But I never did it because, ugh! I hated it.

To summarize: don't forget the four P's. Also, study your cash flows, margins, and accounting to increase your earnings and avoid spending them getting drunk...or so says my friend's cousin...





# #7. PERFECTION IS RHETORICAL

BY TATIANA MAILLARD

Rhetorical and boring. Without peaks or valleys, without challenges or goals, without cracks. A perennial and chilling smile. It's the shiny shoes and starched uniform of the kid that never plays soccer in the mud. The key that turns off the motor that keeps us moving because where would we go, if we're doing so well here? Bye-bye conflict, bye-bye learning, bye-bye surprise. Hello, yawns.

In the varied and vast realm of the Lord of the 'meme', a quote by Samuel Beckett spreads and multiplies: "Ever tried, ever failed. No matter, try again. Fail again. Fail better." Any new business carries the risk of error. Fear of failure condemns us to never take a risk and to lock ourselves in our round, calm, and perfect cage of inaction. Treat perfection for what it is: the ideal that encourages you to venture into action. But also take into account that error is a great teacher, and it can hold interesting surprises: penicillin, LSD, and Viagra were discovered (you guessed it!), by mistake.



Maybe the funniest conversation I ever heard during Fuckup Nights was given by Alex Eaton, a gringo that worked as a mountain guide in Alaska. Since he was very skilled and intrepid, a company hired him to film the action scenes of a movie that took place in the snowy mountains. When he was given the equipment, he didn't bother to ask how to put the film in the camera, but did the recordings anyways. All of the material was exposed. Thousands of dollars went down the toilet thanks to an almost childish mistake. The height of stupidity,

## Do it

1. Extract virtue from your defect. There will be certain character defects that you can diminish or eradicate just by being conscious of them. But there will be others that you will have to deal with for life. Channeled correctly, those issues may be transformed into virtues. Are you irritable? Use boxing as a pressure valve to release the anger. Maybe you'll discover that you're as good as the reincarnation of "El Puas" Olivares. Are you harsh and unable to say what you think with tact? Okay. But in that case, cultivate the fine art of irony that has given us geniuses like Jonathan Swift or Oscar Wilde.
2. Take advantage of when your friends are really drunk (and therefore vulnerable and sincere) to propose a defects contest, where everybody confesses what imperfections embarrass them. Something like:
  - "I grow hair on my ears, and I'm a girl!"
  - "Oh yeah? Well I have six toes, SIX, on my left foot."
  - "That's nothing, let me show you the enormous wart I have!" ...Ok, no.Whoever has the biggest imperfection wins the applause of those present and a drink.

## Take the step

Take activity 2 to the next level and organize the same contest somewhere with no modesty or limits: social networks! What? Are you going to feel embarrassed in front of all those people that post photos of their food? Please!

some would say. The person in question, after venting and talking about his failure, listed three successes that he "rescued" from this story. 1. No one died (laughter). 2. No one was hurt (thank goodness). 3. He was able to keep working and introducing himself as the most extreme mountain guide in Alaska. There's no hidden moral here, I just wanted to tell the story.









# #8. SEARCH FOR WHAT MATTERS

BY LILIÁN LÓPEZ CAMBEROS

Not long ago, I was reading a book that tried to explain, from among the dozens of possible ideas, what literature is. To illustrate the point that considering something literature is a question of opinions and values that represent a certain time period, the author made fun of a newspaper slogan: "Times change, values don't." This, of course, is a lie, for if there's anything that transforms quickly in a society, it's the formulation of values and principles. "It is as if we still believed in killing sick newborns or in exhibiting people with mental illness in the public plaza," the author concludes.

Reflect on what you value, what truly matters, and ask whether it's not just the subtle imposition of modern values.

Money, for example. Is it important to you to be successful because you consider that the only way to earn money? Does your entrepreneurial career obey a primal impulse within you? Or is it just a way to emulate the careers of the businesspeople that you admire? What does success mean to you?

A friend that's now in charge of his father's company recently told me about his long-



term objectives. Ever since he was young he was taught that the company would one day be his, and that in some way he would need to maintain the family's legacy. A degree in business administration and numerous certificates in sales and business later, his vision is fresh and realistic. "The company has sentimental value. It is about continuing my father's work, but also about living with dignity, to enjoy the things that the company can give, and also to give employment to others." Exaggerated expectations of growth don't keep him up at night. He knows that often, the excitement of having a company is making a lot of money. But he has other rules: to keep his family close, to stay clear on what aspects of the competition are convenient for him, and to not be blinded by greed. He's searching for what truly matters.

If searching for what is important to you is what we're talking about, we must mention Álvaro Rego, director of the Museo Mexicano del Diseño (Mumedi). It happens in three acts. 1) After graduating from university, he founds his first design studio, receives a loan from the bank for hundreds of thousands of dollars, but two months later goes bankrupt when the devaluation of '95 arrives. 2) In 1997, he founds Matiz, a design magazine that gained considerable prestige and recognition. During a fundraising trip to San Francisco, he gets sick with

## Do it

1. What is Facebook for if not to run into people from the past? Make the promise to write to at least three people from the past: elementary school, middle school, or high school classmates, neighbors, ex's, distant cousins that you don't talk to anymore. Tell them about what you are doing now and ask them what they are doing. Relive old stories. Keep the promise of writing more often and, if possible, to meet up. The people from the past are other versions of ourselves: when you talk to them, when you see yourself reflected in the idea that they keep of you, it is possible to access that part of your being that you have lost with time. Reconnect with your other beings through other people.
2. Talk to those that are close to you: your partner, friends, co-workers. What is it that they value the most in a relationship? In a friendship? In a job? Share ideas. Tell them about the things that you value the most in different aspects of your life.
3. Create your 'in-case-of-earthquake' box. Let's imagine that a big earthquake destroys your house (knock on wood). Think with a level-head about what would hurt the most to lose. Memories, mementos, objects? Reduce the list as much as possible, create your own box, and place the things on your list inside. But don't look for it in case of an earthquake! The point is to know what you feel most attached to, and why.

## Take the step

Make a list of the "wrong" ways you could reach the success that you're looking for, and send them to [hola@Fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@Fuckupnights.com). This is a list of anti-values that, even though they might allow you to accomplish your goals, go against your principles: corruption, bribery, plagiarism, tricks, etc. Give us some context and write down numerous examples. (For example, if you like to write, a dishonest way to reach fame is sucking up to the most important members of the contests, editorial staff, and media.)

influenza, has three heart attacks, ends up with a pacemaker placed on the wrong side, and while he's in the hospital, his employees dedicate themselves to stealing the company's accounts and team. He loses everything and moves back in with his parents. 3) In 2002, he rescues an old family building and founds Mumedi, a massive hit in Mexican design.



# Fuckup Nights in the world

Buenos Aires • Olavarría • Salta  
• Tucumán • Vienna • Brussels •  
Curitiba • Ottawa • Santiago • Cali  
• Bogota • Bucaramanga • Zagreb •  
Prague • Copenhagen • Guayaquil  
• Quito • London • Badajoz • Madrid  
• Palma de Mallorca • Tarifa •  
Valencia • Strasbourg • Paris • Berlin  
• Cologne • Dusseldorf • Stuttgart  
• Guatemala • Hyderabad • Izmir  
• Aguascalientes • Atlacomulco  
• Cancun • Celaya • Chihuahua •  
Cuernavaca • Culiacan • Durango •  
Ensenada • Guadalajara • Hermosillo  
• Irapuato • Leon • Mazatlan • Merida  
• Mexico City • Monclova • Monterrey  
• Morelia • Oaxaca • Pachuca • Playa  
del Carmen • Puebla • Queretaro •  
Saltillo • San Luis Potosi • Teziutlan  
• Tijuana • Toluca • Torreon • Tuxtla •  
Villahermosa • Xalapa • Zacatecas •

Casablanca • Amsterdam • Panama  
• Lima • Tacna • Malmö • Stockholm  
• Geneva • Zurich • New York • San  
Francisco • San Diego • Caracas •  
Auckland • Warsaw • Lausanne •  
Barcelona • Hannover • Hamburg •  
Asuncion • Cairo • Singapore • Poznan  
• Munich • Frankfurt • Tokyo • San  
Juan • Maribor • Prishtina • Granada •  
Edinburgh • Barcelona • Johannesburg  
• Washington DC • Ciudad Juarez •  
San Salvador • Bilbao • Bratislava •  
Matamoros • Recife • La Paz • Medellin  
• Tepic • Leipzig • Istanbul • Mendoza  
• Athens • Concepción • Kraków •  
Trójmiasto • San Cristóbal de las Casas  
• Mérida, Venezuela • Lodz • San Miguel  
de Allende • Barranquilla • Bolivar • St.  
Gallen • Sofia • Helsinki • Tunis • Rijeka •  
Manila • Antigua • Guatemala • Austin  
• Tucson • Los Mochis • Leon, Spain





# Christopher Espadas



Everything began in an unlikely place: beautiful Barcelona. It went down a little something like this: I was sitting at a bar, contemplatively drinking a glass of wine, when, among all the conversations that were happening around me, I overheard two people talking about clothing brands. Hoping to kill some time, I mentioned that I worked for Adidas in Mexico. The gentlemen turned out to be no less than the owners of Privalia, one of the most important online clothing outlets. Between drinks, they confessed that they were interested in expanding their brand into Mexico, and told me that they'd contact me in the following months to help them open the Mexican market. I agreed with incredulity, gave them my card, and thought that I'd never hear from them again.

Fast-forward a couple of months: after not only getting a call, but also an offer, from the owners, I quit my job at Adidas and joined the newly formed Privalia Mexico team, specifically, the purchasing team. The take off of the company was one of the most notable successes of my career: in the first year, we surpassed all expectations, something that made me feel like a real business genius.

One morning, a thought came to my head that went something like this: "Oh, but if I'm such a talented dude with contacts at all the clothing brands, why don't I create my own site and compete against my current employers?" And that is just what I decided to do.

The first thing I did was to look for a business partner. I partnered up with a good friend and, after arduous preparations we opened Walaclub, a company that basically followed the same business model as Privalia. The company started out very well. The results were very encouraging from the beginning, which fed my ego. A couple of successful trimesters later, I thought I was the most handsome, most intelligent, and most successful man in the world. I had become, or so I thought, the businessman that Mexico was waiting for. My celebrations rivaled those of a sultan. I began to organize gatherings at the best restaurants in the city with important people in the textile business. I thought I had to differentiate myself, that I had to stand out.

I complemented my massive wastes of money with terrible business investments. For example, I invested a bunch of money in Ermenegildo Zegna clothes that didn't sell very well. I also brought more than thirty friends to work with me, and many of them I hired just because they didn't have a job. As if I were some Silicon Valley tycoon, I paid them high salaries (almost as high as mine, even) so that they could fill roles that didn't even necessarily need a full-time employee. All of this was part of being an elite company, or so I thought. I also moved the offices from a hip neighborhood to a lame one, simply to be in a bigger and fancier building. I even commissioned a TV commercial and a late night infomercial that were totally useless.

But I didn't realize my mistakes. Because I was the accountant and the administrator, I could spend the money however I wanted. There was no one to keep me in line. I was the boss.

Another thing that seemed good at first, but ended up leading me to my downfall, was my good relationship with the vendors. The whole world was willing to extend me credit (very high, of course). The situation was, in a business sense, enviable: I paid for practically only what I sold. The situation was, in terms of self-control, terrible. I managed my credit worse than a shopping addicted teenager using Daddy's platinum credit card.

I got to the point where I couldn't pay my liabilities: rent, salary, payments to vendors, etc. I didn't have money for that and I didn't have money for payroll. I had to borrow money from the bank, but that didn't solve anything. I still had other debts that I had to pay interest on, and the money that I did earn all went towards paying them down. It was impossible for me to pay the vendors, and everyone who had been friendly with me started to turn against me. The same thing happened with my friends. And with my girlfriend. When the money ran out, so did the friendships. The dinners and the invitations also ended. Even affection was gone. I lost absolutely everything. The only things left were my debts.

And the worst was yet to come.

Another reason I had spent like there was no tomorrow was because my accountant had told me about a series of "fiscal strategies" that we would use to avoid paying taxes. One day, however, I received a notice from the government, and discovered that these alleged strategies were more fictional than the boogiemer. I soon received another notice, then a warning, and finally, a patrol with two armed police officers showed up. When you owe more than \$1.5 million pesos in back taxes, the penalty for not paying is jail. And that was how I spent the most shameful time of my life: twenty-two days in the Reclusorio Oriente. I got out of jail, but the nightmare continued. I had to sell everything, even the computers and chairs of the business, to pay the severance for my employees.

Through it all, I continued to lose everything: my car, the status I had, all my life savings, as well as two years of work that went down the drain when I had to close the business. And on top of losing all of that, I still owed \$1.2 million pesos to the government and three months of office rent to my lessor.

After this resounding failure, I came to the conclusion that we mustn't let our desires and ambitions cause us to lose our head. But above all, one must be smart with money. The Walaclub failure was the high price I paid for allowing myself to be swept away by my desire to impress others. And I lost my footing. And whoever loses their footing, inevitably, ends up slipping.





# #9. KEEP IT SIMPLE

BY NICKO NOGUÉS

If you had to choose one point in this manifesto, choose this one. Actually, it's likely that when you finish this book, you won't remember more than three points. So keep it simple, save some time and energy, and dedicate a few minutes to memorizing this point three times : keep it simple.

That means that whatever you do, in your professional or personal life, seek to find the essence. Put all your attention and all your talent into the search, because when you find the essence, you'll have (almost) everything.

I worked for almost 10 years as a creative at advertising agencies around the world, usually selling people things that didn't actually matter, but that I had to treat like the most incredible things ever invented. That meant making a big effort to find an idea, the simpler the better; something that a big and diverse group could understand, told in the most simple and direct manner possible.

At first it was tough, but thanks to that time in my life I learned to be simpler. In the end you realize that it's all about trying to find the instant that is the essence of any particular thing, whatever it may be.

Looking for the excellence of things is okay, but you won't be able to find it if its essence is unclear, something that normally is so pure and so simple that it's hard for us to see, even if the majority of the time it's right in front of us.

Humans are very complicated beings, unfortunately taught dogmas such as "Good things come to those who wait," "If it's too easy, be suspicious," and other similar nonsense. Warning: this doesn't mean that simple is necessarily easy, fast, or both, but that it is simply simple.



Although I'm not always the obvious poster child for point 9 of this manifesto, it's the one that I most often share (but that I least often do). Doing things simply is not always easy, even less so for the tragic minds that seek the epic and dramatic in every conversation. Or for the tangled up people that don't know how to explain something easily. Or for those who go over the same idea thousands of times and don't arrive anywhere. Or

You are the one that is complicated. The less you complicate yourself, the more you can simplify other aspects of your life, and

## Do it

In spite of what many people may think, I'm one of those people that thinks that the more money you have, the more you complicate things.

Said in another way, I don't know if money brings happiness, but it does make it more difficult to find. And I'm not saying that money isn't necessary, but that you hit a certain point where instead of adding to your life, more money divides it.

Elders tend to have wisdom that most 30 year olds would like to have. They tend to say that necessity is the mother of invention, and I believe it.

That is why this challenge consists of choosing one day of the week to leave your house without money. All day. For one day in your life, try to make something that seems complicated into something simple.

## Take the step

Document your experience with text and pictures so that you'll never forget it. Take note of your impressions; how you felt, how simple or difficult it was, and share it on your social networks to see if it inspires some of the rest of us.

if, in the end, life is just an idea, the more simply you live, the more authentically you will live it. Don't forget: keep it simple.

It goes as follows:

- 1) Get up as usual. Take a shower, have breakfast, do what you do every morning.
- 2) Get in the mindset of a champion, so that when you leave home you intentionally forget your wallet.
- 3) Don't ask anyone for money today. Under no circumstance. No, don't even think about it.
- 4) This is about sharpening your ingenuity, so you're allowed to be treated to things. But surely you can think of things that don't require money.
- 5) If you fail and end up borrowing or using money, it's okay. In the end, this is a book about failure. However, the challenge doesn't count. No points for effort.
- 6) Repeat as often as necessary.

for those politicians that explain everything through schemes, conspiracies, and dark evil forces. But seriously, keep it simple. If it's an idea, it should be understood in one line. If it's a project, don't get bogged down in the weeds. If it is a product, start with a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and go from there. Remember Occam's Razor: the simplest answer is often correct.



keep it simple





# #10. YOU ARE PROBABLY GOING TO FAIL

BY NICKO NOGUÉS

The world is divided between people willing to fail and people who will fail without even knowing it because they never accepted the possibility of failure. The former are those who, knowing that they might lose, are willing to risk it. This is exactly the reason why they tend to win.

Imagine you have a bike, shiny and new, parked in your garage.

You can decide to take it out a lot, use it to get to work, take a spin on the weekends, explore a new park, participate in a race, and go a bit farther every time. If you choose this option and you decide to use the bike, it is very likely that somewhere along the way you'll get a flat tire, or get in an accident, or it might even get stolen. After so much use, the day will come when you'll have to say goodbye. But when that day comes and you look back, you'll remember all the adventures that you experienced, despite putting more effort in than kilometers.

You could, I suppose, decide not to leave the neighborhood with your bike. From my



point of view, you limit the adventure by a lot, as well as the stories that you could create. In the end, your life is made up of the anecdotes that you can tell your friends, children, grandchildren, or nephews.

Returning to the bike. If you only explore your neighborhood, you might feel relatively safer, but really it's only an illusion, since there's no assurance that you'll be safe from getting a flat tire, accidents, or thefts right in your front yard.

I wonder if it's worth it to start a discussion with Nicko. What does "you're probably going to fail" have to do with the whole bike story, the flat tires, and the adventures outside of your neighborhood? Isn't this the most cliché metaphor you've read in the last two months? Do it: write down all the metaphors that you read or are told for a week. Then come back and compare them with the metaphor of this manifesto point. If you find a metaphor that is more cliché, send it to [hola@Fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@Fuckupnights.com). With your help, we can begin a worldwide

Finally, you could also decide not to take it out of your garage because you think it'll be safer there, that nothing will happen to it, that it will remain impeccable, without a scratch, and far away from possible accidents. However, consider this first: your bike will end up covered in dust (even if you cover it), with flat tires and a rusted frame due to the humidity in your garage. The paradoxes of life: the bike will be practically useless because it's unused.

Well, that bike is you: either you go out willing to fail or you'll get rusty quickly.

If this doesn't convince you, maybe H. Jackson Brown's mother will: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

## Do it

Why not take the metaphor of this chapter into real life?

1) Buy a bike. Even if it's used.

2) Name it.

3) Take it out everyday you can for two straight months.

4) Then, leave it in a garage without using it for two straight months.

5) Draw your own conclusions.

## Take the step

Send three pictures of your bike to [hola@fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@fuckupnights.com): the day you bought it, after two months of using it, and after two months of not using it.

campaign against clichés and Paulo Coelho-style metaphors. JK, this is all in good fun. Nicko is right: if you're going to fly, it is very likely that you'll encounter turbulence along the way. If you accept it from the beginning, the flight will be more pleasant. Light and peace. Don't freeze because of the possibility of failure. (But do send the metaphors, dudes.)



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V	Q	Y	H	Z	T	A	Z	Q	V	Z
X	R	L	Y	P	B	E	M	C	G	X

**Find**  
**failure in**  
**the word**  
**puzzle.**





# Marisol Gasé



## Act I

Before telling the story of the “failed cabaret”, it is important to clarify something about my past, my present, my future, and my dream of making the world into a cabaret here in my corrupt, macho, fucked up, surrealist, but endearing and marvelous Mexico. I want to discuss how hard it can be to establish and keep an independent theater company, especially one made up of only women, not because of the stupid prejudiced idea that women can’t be friends, but because of everything that misogyny and machismo entails when the issue becomes more complicated. Because you fight to create a horizontal organization, where four women make all the decisions.

A little bit about my history: I studied at the Centro Universitario de Teatro at UNAM, considered the best acting school in Mexico, but also the military school of theater, where there is only one stage manager, and the student body barely has a say.

In other words, in this country there is a culture of creators that, instead of harnessing their own talents, are obligated to memorize, practice, and unfold themselves in canonical works. Because of this, creating an independent theater company is difficult.

When I graduated, I won a scholarship from the British Council in Mexico to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. I arrived and discovered a world of independent companies, where theater was full of brutal and marvelous energy. I returned to Mexico with a mission: start my own theater company. And I did.

## Act II

I already said this but I’ll repeat it: this is a story about a theater company in a country where there are no theater companies, organized, no less, by four crazy women, feminists, talented, studious, stubborn, and above all, humble. We’ve arrived at the part of the story where we founded said company 15 years ago.

We started the process of our first cabaret spectacular by choosing the title of the show. In retrospect, I realize that we chose the worst possible name: ‘Love with Barriers’, an allusion to the movie, *Love Without Barriers*.

The night of the premiere arrived. We were the three little stars of the school in our first roles after graduation. Everything seemed exciting. We would premiere at El Hijo del Cuervo, a venue that back then (end of the nineties) was still one of the coolest theater bars. We used all the strategies we could think of to invite people. (Including pretending to be our own personal assistants when we called to invite audience members. It was borderline comical).

We didn’t know exactly what would happen with the play, but we figured that at the very least it would be a good party. The day of the premiere arrived and, surprise, no one showed up. Well, our mothers, someone’s dad, our boyfriends, and even some of my 96 ex-boyfriends made their ghostly appearances (imagine our level of desperation to have invited them). Actually, to this day it’s still one of our favorite jokes to make when we think that no one is coming to our shows.

## Act III

The show was a failure. It was a series of political sketches, and without the laughter of an audience, they became pathetic and gloomy monologues. I think only my mom clapped. And not only did we embarrass ourselves, but we were also in debt: we still owed \$1,500 pesos (some \$9,000 nowadays) to the venue, something that left us in ruins for a good while. But we persisted, and a short time later opportunity came knocking: one of the ex-boyfriends that had attended our original performance said he wanted to hire us for a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party, and that he would pay us the extraordinary amount of \$5,000 pesos to stage the show. We celebrated, thinking our problems would soon be solved.

The party was in a huge and luxurious house, and everything seemed promising. By then we had changed the name of the show to something more sexy and suggestive: *Cabaret à trois*. That night we came out dressed in little shorts and fishnet stockings before starting our sketches in front of sixty people. After a successful first scene, we began a sketch that would for sure please the public, where one of the actresses did a perfect imitation of Ernesto Zedillo, the president at the time. Everyone hated Zedillo, right? That’s what we thought.

But the sketch did not result in laughter. Not even one little giggle. We soon learned the reason from a guest that came to yell at us in our changing area between sketches. None other than Zedillo’s son was in the audience. Our stomachs sank.

The hour and a half long show was cut to twenty-three minutes. We had to tolerate the accusing glares of the guests at the party, as well as our desire to kick more than one that yelled at us. We left depressed (there were tears) and with the idea that, maybe, the play was damned.

## Ovation

The end wasn’t as tragic as it could have been: a little before leaving the party we met a woman who, after telling us that she had liked the little that she had seen of the play, invited us to a gender equality course. This turned out to be a blessing. Today, the *Reinas Chulas* do political cabaret, but above all, we talk about human rights, and we talk about equality between men and women.

Let’s continue to make the world a Cabaret.





# #11. IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR RECOGNITION, STOP

BY TATIANA MAILLARD



Yes, baby, yes, honey: you are the most beautiful person to your partner, the most intelligent to your parents, the shiniest star in the office worker universe, the one that looks the best in a bathing suit at the beach and the one that understands with overwhelming clarity all of the nuances of the armed conflicts that we've already experienced in the 21st century.

But there will always be someone that doesn't find you very charming.

It is even possible that they will find you (are you ready for it?) unbearable.

And you ask yourself, "Why? Why, if I am so charming?"

Well, maybe you're not as charming as you think. Not for everyone. And it doesn't matter how nice you are to those people, or how much care you take to show them your virtues, they will only see the same charmless guy that, on top of everything else, is pretentious.

So, why don't you relax a bit with a good glass of whisky and toast to the wisdom of those grandmothers that already warned you: "You can't please everyone." Cheers.

At times it seems that becoming an entrepreneur has become fashionable, a trend among certain social spheres. Nowadays, there is a boom of entrepreneurs with creative ideas and projects for everything, which in a certain way is great. It stops being fun when you realize that the only thing the "entrepreneur" wants is to attract the spotlight. He/she doesn't really have an interesting idea, or a clear objective, or the slightest intention of solving a problem or making life easier. He/she arrives at the absurd point of inventing problems where there are none,

## Do it

1) Talk to them, hear their reasons for why they don't like you. Maybe there is a good reason for it. Are you the classic office worker that forgets his Tupperware until it grows its own living mini-universe? There you have it. Accept constructive criticism and agree on the rules of a healthy relationship with your haters, like good neighbors of planet Earth. Now, if they flat out refuse to talk to you to solve the situation, maybe you should skip directly to TAKE THE STEP.

2) Have fun with the situation. Since they hate you, at least give them a reason. For example, your corrosive kindness and your friendly greetings: "Hi Ruy! Hey! Black moccasins with white socks. You look almost as good as the time you showed up in a tie-dye suit."

Note: We are not responsible for the consequences of making these technically accurate observations to your boss.

## Take the step

Have you thought that maybe what those people that don't like you really need is a hug? What are you waiting for?! Fill their hearts with chaos and confusion with a strong, fraternal show of affection. But wait! Ask someone to record the moment on video or with photos and send it to [hola@fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@fuckupnights.com)

just to sell an alleged solution. It's easy to spot the people that only want to say "Look, I'm an entrepreneur," give you a business card with their name on it and wait for you to open your mouth and say, WOW! Their need for attention smells, and generally, it stinks. So no, if you're looking for attention, upload suggestive photos to Twitter. Or study theater.









# #12. IF YOU TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY, DON'T

BY LETICIA GASCA AND PEPE VILLATORO

What is taking yourself too seriously? Taking yourself too seriously is forgetting that you are only one of the billions of human beings that have walked this Earth and that your achievements and failures aren't that important in the grand history of the cosmos.

Taking yourself too seriously will result in a distorted view of reality, and will limit you from living a healthy experience of failure.

It is typical of people that take themselves too seriously to work years and years on a project that has already failed, drowning in denial. Because they take themselves too seriously, they don't give themselves permission to fail or to pass on to another stage in life.

To learn to fail with grace, it is fundamental to accept that you are just another human being among billions, and that just like everyone else, every once in a while you laugh, use the bathroom, and fail.

Don't take yourself too seriously. Learn to laugh at yourself, and accept when others are laughing at you.



In fact, the best comedians owe their success to not taking themselves too seriously. They don't hesitate to make fun of themselves and of their situation, and every time something bad happens to them, they immediately see it as a new anecdote to share with their audience.

The best Fuckup anecdote about this point goes to Christopher Espadas. And watch out, because this kind of story repeats itself constantly in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It's titled "When Success Eats You Alive", and begins like this: Christopher meets the owners of a Spanish company that sells products online and is hired as Country Manager in Mexico. Everything is going well for Christopher; he closes good contracts and takes home sizable commissions. And then, BAM!, he begins to think of himself as the king of sales. He takes himself too

## Do it

Be a clown for a day. Yes, seriously. Get a clown costume with giant shoes, red nose, and white face, and put it on. It's very important that every inch of your face is covered with paint.

Go out onto the street and walk through the park, trying to be funny even if you're not.

If you hit the streets looking like IT, we'll be your fans forever.

## Take the step

We can imagine your Facebook profile: a series of posts and pictures about how perfect your life is and how successful you are everyday. It seems that every minute of your life is so happy, and you've become extremely attractive and social. It's over. Compare yourself with the most successful person in your field and make a "meme" of yourself. Share it on your Facebook profile.

seriously. Motivated by his ego, he thinks he is more important than the owners. He quits, starts his own business in the same space, hires his friends with super high salaries, and buys cutting edge technology. But the sales don't arrive. The debts do. Friends, girlfriend, and clients leave. The IRS comes knocking at his door. Bankruptcy. The moral of the story is obvious. In failure, as in victory: relax.









# Carlos Mondragón

I'm going to tell you a short story about when I left 2 million US dollars on the table because of ignorance and arrogance. I hope it's useful.

It all started when I was 4 years old, and I played the now classic *Super Mario Bros* for the first time. I marveled at the experience of learning through challenges in super fun imaginary worlds with different physics. At that moment, I said, "I want to create games!"

When I was 12, internet for the masses arrived to Mexico and the doors opened to thousands of new things, including learning to program. I started to learn, and tried making my first game in junior high. It was very fun, but we never finished it.

When I finished university, I started a videogame studio with two friends that I worked with a lot in school (@soul248 and @rxko). For eight months, we burned money that we had earned making software for big companies trying to make games for XBOX. Surprise, surprise, it didn't work out.

So we switched to making games for Facebook and everything changed. We began to capitalize the company and, at last, to fulfill our dream of launching our own games.

The company grew. We were twelve people that just wanted to create games. We published the games on Facebook, and not a single one generated money. We obviously were missing something on the business side of things, so after various attempts, we decided to copy something that did work. We copied the game of one of the leaders in the industry, published it, and, six days later, I received a call. I thought they were going to sue, but no, they wanted to buy me out. They wanted to buy the team. They offered us US\$2 million dollars. We asked for US\$4 million. We screwed up. Big time.

We knew nothing about buying companies, investors, or anything. Our office was a garage in Mexico City. But that's not an excuse. We learned a simple lesson: when someone wants to buy, sell.

We didn't know that things would go well with our next launch. But, looking back, we still didn't know how to run the business, and the most intelligent thing would have been to sell. At times like that, a series of emotions consume you and you can't think clearly.

What I most regret was that the company didn't survive, and twelve people's dreams were destroyed.

On the bright side, all 12 are in a better place now, and the lessons we learned at the company were very important for everyone. Would I do it again? Without a doubt. Plus, I started a new business!







# #13. BE VULNERABLE

BY DIEGO OLAVARRÍA

The word “vulnerable” comes from the Latin word *vulnera*, which means “injury”. To be vulnerable is to set the armor aside, destroy the walls that protect the city from invasions. Vulnerability is, in strategic terms, a bad tactical decision: the general that leaves a flank vulnerable increases the possibilities of his army being attacked. But being vulnerable is necessary. If we never made ourselves vulnerable, we would always be in a state of alert, of fear: we would shut ourselves inside, barricaded away, stuck, paralyzed. In other words: we wouldn’t live.

But vulnerability also occurs outside the context of war. Writers suffer through it every time they publish, and painters when they hang a painting in a gallery. Not to mention the actors that go out on stage or the entrepreneurs that present a pitch to a group of wary investors. Putting yourself in front of an audience that may be cruel is difficult, even more so when the rejection of your product can feel like a rejection of you as a person, of your most intimate thoughts. But people do it anyway, because being vulnerable is the only way to inspire someone, to confess your love (and to make love: the naked body is the most vulnerable of all), to share the most



personal things with the people that matter. And as it takes the form of a confession (vulnerability tends to be an admission of imperfection, of humanity), to be vulnerable is to take a weight off your shoulders.

Although there will always be people who see vulnerability as a synonym of weakness, there will be more that identify and recognize vulnerability as a show of strength. Because that is what vulnerability is, above all: an injury that makes us stronger.

As of August 2014, there have been 24 editions of Fuckup Nights in Mexico City. If we consider that there are four or five presenters per event, then there is a universe of almost one hundred people that have talked about their failures in these events. I have heard funny, sad, and boring stories, even stories with unexpected endings. But Rodrigo Boyzo’s story immediately makes me think of the word vulnerability. During the first anniversary event, Rodrigo recounted his failure with a permanent knot in his throat. Just ten days before, he and his

## Do it

Have you ever felt that warmth that creeps up your cheeks when you blush because you’ve done something ridiculous? Good, you are human and you’ve been vulnerable.

Here we share some suggestions of activities to repeat that feeling, putting you right in the storm. You can be sure that everyone will judge you.

- Do something new and difficult. Is there something that’s looked down on in your social circle? Do it! We know some folks that run events to talk about failures. Weirdoes.
- Go out to flirt one night and try for as many rejections as possible. You’ll probably become an expert and the collateral damage might even be positive.
- Think of the last time that you affected someone by being stubborn. Go and apologize to that person.
- The next time you have a problem, ask for advice from a stranger or someone that you don’t know well. Showing your vulnerable side will humanize you in their eyes.
- Even if you run the risk of sounding like Miss Universe, have clear what you would like to achieve in life and share it with people every time you can.
- Raise your voice. Tell your friends what you hate about their habits and why they bother you so much. Then ask them what they hate about you.

## Take the step

Pick one of your biggest and most ridiculous secrets and... tweet it.

Confess your love to the person that you like. We know what you’re thinking and yes, you can combine the two activities above to get even more amusing effects.

partners had closed NuFlick, an online independent film platform that they had started with the intention of “having fun.” Over three years, the project grew but the group began to drift apart. Unable to close a deal to finance the project, they had to shut it down, once and for all. Just like that. When he finished telling his story, Rodrigo said, “I feel calmer after telling you this.”









# #14. LAUGH AT YOUR FAILURES, AND SHARE THEM WITH THE WORLD

BY LILIÁN LÓPEZ CAMBEROS



Once again, the phrase attributed to the comedienne Carol Burnett has become popular: “Tragedy + Time = Comedy.” Almost anything tragic is susceptible to becoming comedy. All failures, with time, can transform into laughs. A chuckle helps fight the dark spell of the fall.

I heard this equation of time and tragedy last year from stand-up comic Tig Notaro. In August 2012, Notaro had a show in Los Angeles in which she introduced herself in the following manner: “Thank you, good evening. “Thank you, thank you, I have cancer, thank you, I have cancer, really, thank you.”

It was true. Radically modifying the script that she had written for the show, the comic gave a summary of the tragedies that had befallen her that year, in a period of less than four months: a bacterial infection destroyed her intestines and sent her to the E.R., A week after leaving the hospital, her mother died in a

domestic accident (a pretty dumb one). Weeks later, her girlfriend left her. And, in the midst of grieving both losses, she was diagnosed with cancer. “It’s strange, because in accordance with the Tragedy+Time=Comedy equation, right now I find myself stuck in tragedy.”

There are few stand-up shows with the power and emotion that Tig Notaro conjured in less than an hour. She never stopped being funny, but in her confession, in the nakedness of the intimacy, there is a clear intention to heal. During the show, her way of asking the audience if they felt good, if she’d made them sad, if they preferred that she tell them a dumb joke, turned out endearing and hilarious all at once. In her position of extreme vulnerability, Tig showed that the equation of tragedy and time is not always correct. There, during her most tragic hours, Tig knew how to get up, laugh...and share it with the rest of the world.

I don’t know if you have noticed that the points “If you take yourself too seriously, don’t,” “Be vulnerable,” “Laugh at your failures,” and (spoiler alert) “Defeat your ego” are pretty much the same idea, the same sequence. I don’t know, maybe there could have been twelve points, like the twelve Zodiac signs, or the twelve apostles, lending a mythological aspect to this manifesto, but no, we have twenty-four and now we have to keep

## Do it

1. Stand-up comedy is becoming more and more popular, Take a shot at a stand-up amateur’s night. Don’t fear going up on stage. After summoning courage however you prefer, try to make the audience laugh through the hindsight of your personal failures. Apply the formula of time, because, to be honest, not all of us are as talented as Ms. Notaro.
2. Try the following experiment: at the next party you go to, trade out your regular anecdotes (self-indulgent or not) for the story of some of your biggest failures. Don’t fear throwing your audience off: if your biggest failure has the capacity to make someone uncomfortable, the better. A calm gesture, quiet voice, and smile on your face can turn the story of a break-up or a bad investment into genuine comedy.
3. Transform one of your most painful memories into a story, but you must write it in a comic light (the death of your pet, when you didn’t get into university, the first time you were fired, a difficult break-up, etc.) Transforming tragedy into comedy is the only way to protect yourself from it.

## Take the step

The (virtual) world is measured in hashtags. Just like the simple idea of #throwbackthursday has motivated the whole world to dig up photos, texts, ideas, and hobbies from the past to share them exclusively on Thursdays, dare to start a movement that celebrates the idea of laughing at your failures and sharing them with others.

Create a hashtag that summarizes this idea: #failurefromthepast, #throwbackFuckup, etc. The idea is to use your creativity. In every RT and hashtag that you are able to make viral, include a link to the Twitter account @Fuckupnight. Let your movement be heard (and read)!

walking down this path of failures, activities, and meta-ideas. And since on every path it’s okay to seek refuge or shelter when night falls, I’m going to make a small stop. And so, unexpectedly and without relevance, I’ll leave you with one of the best tweets that I read in 2013: “I have been listening to *cumbia* for hours and I’m still cold. You have failed me, Latin heat.” Via @taquerosatanico.



This picture was taken by Faridh Mendoza during the first anniversary of Fuckup Nights. It shows “*La Novia del Santo*” right before she told her story.







# Nadia Lartigue



Sharing a failure to learn from it is one option, but trying to fail in order to produce something positive is also an option. To begin, I'd like to divide the word failure into many. When I started to think about it, a few came to mind: accident, clumsiness, arrhythmia, trash or residue, mistake, unforeseen.

My background is in dance, and what I'd like to do here is reclaim dancers a little bit, not as flexible and agile super humans (yes, many people think that's how dancers are), but just the opposite. We're super humans that go through life doing everything wrong.

Body movement is an inexact science. And that possibility of imprecision is precisely what interests me. Physics can be full of magic and incredible phenomenon that seem miraculous in its exactness, but the body of a living human being is loaded with many other things.

One of the elements that fascinate me is the notion of **lack of rhythm**. It makes me happy to think of that rare creature at parties that just doesn't have a clue, that dances all crooked and steps on the ladies' feet. The person that lacks rhythm often times doesn't even notice that they're offbeat, but are actually enjoying themselves while they release their energy in unexpected ways. Those of us that dance "well" almost feel challenged by that presence, and some even feel at risk on the dance floor.

Something very similar but different, is **residual movement**. Here, I refer to all those micro and not so micro movements that take place in the body while we do something specific. For example, everything that vibrates and bounces when one goes out to run. Whether it is the testicles, breasts, butt, skin of your calves, your shirt; anything that cannot be controlled by muscles. And finally, I like the idea of thinking of an **accident** as a possibility. This doesn't need explanation.

## And now, a short anecdote...

Besides being a dancer and choreographer, I organize, along with a few colleagues, a forum of Contemporary Performance called *Reposiciones*. A few years ago, we came up with the great idea of inaugurating the event by conjuring the spirit of a famous theater artist. We unanimously decided that it would be Juan José Gurrola, a stage and fine arts artist that was known for his genius, arrogance, pride, and tenderness.

We began to look for a medium to carry out the performance for our grand opening, which had already had people talking. For about two months we searched for a legitimate person willing to do it, but were unsuccessful. Everyone thought it was dangerous to do such a delicate act in front of forty and eighty people. Who would protect us? A medium protects

those who are present, but an audience was a different story. We never knew if offering a lot of money would solve the issue, but as good artists of the local scene, we were poor, and our money for production was minimal. We knocked on doors in Xochimilco, we asked everywhere; we even decided that a charlatan would do, that what was important was the performance. We opened up the Yellow Pages and looked online, calling desperately just to get more no's. Finally, it was the evening before the event. The press had been notified, expectant colleagues were full of curiosity, and *Reposiciones* was in danger.

That night, I was able to make an appointment with a *Santero* on Cuauhtemoc Avenue (I found him online) that agreed to do the session, but alone with me to ask the spirit of Gurrola for permission to be conjured first. The only solution that we could think of was for me to record the session with a professional audio recorder. During the event, we would play the recording along with a reading of Gurrola's texts.

The moment arrived when I rang the doorbell of the *Santero's* apartment in a non-descript grey building and headed up to the third floor to face an uncertain destiny. Many things went through my head: "What am I doing alone at a stranger's home? I hope he doesn't realize I'm recording. Take this seriously, what if the spirit really appears? What am I doing here? Is this recording correctly? I hope he doesn't notice! No, no, seriously, be serious, or this isn't going to work." And that is how I spent what must have been two of the strangest hours of my life.

According to the *Santero*, the spirit not only sat next to me, but also gave its authorization. Some strange things happened with a candle. It was intense. After a while, he gave me a list of objects that I needed to acquire, which included \$7,000 pesos. We had the authorization of the spirit, and he also welcomed me to his family of *Santeros*.

When I left, the professional recorder was still blinking, so I assumed that everything had been recorded and that we at least had something for that night. But, no. Nothing had been recorded. On this recorder, you had to press the button twice until the red light stopped blinking. And no one had told me... There I was with my colleagues, confessing that not even that had turned out well.

We had to do something, so we read some of Gurrola's text, played music that he composed, recited Hamlet and I put on my best spooky face and recited my sad story with the *Santero*. I tried to create a feeling of expectation, tried to make them believe that the spirit would eventually come down. I lit my little candle, laid down some white flowers, and asked for silence. In that silence, a beer bottle fell and smashed into pieces between the theater seats. There it was. And that was enough. Gurrola was making fun of us and of the audience, like he did his whole life with so many others. Once again, we had failed at our staging.

And it was a pleasure.





# #15. EMBRACE YOUR FAULTS AND HELP OTHERS BE BETTER

BY TATIANA MAILLARD

We are embarrassed by failure. We hate it when we say something stupid and the words knot up in our throats, like the noose that kills the condemned. Or when we feel that we've disappointed those who believe in us. It hurts when we make an effort to improve certain things that we don't like about ourselves only to realize that we are still the same, just with good intentions. If someone notices our weak spots, we are terrified. This is the jungle, and the predators will have no mercy as they sink their teeth into our weaknesses. Who loves their own flaws? Who feels satisfied with the deformed reflection that the funhouse mirror shows us?

But life is hard enough without also being intolerant of our own flaws, and those of others (important to clarify: provided these flaws don't put human rights at risk). Embrace your defects in an act of acceptance, not of conformity: you can always unexpectedly change di-

rection. And if life gives you the opportunity to teach someone else, teach them to be better without putting them down, with tenderness. In the end, everyone runs the risk of falling.



This point is a perfect opportunity to talk a little bit about Natacha Lartigue, choreographer and advocate of arrhythmic and residual movement. Everything started when Natalia, about to give a dance performance in New York, sprained her knee. She had worked extremely hard to get to that day and all of a sudden, everything went up in smoke. Instead of getting angry and cursing her luck, she decided to flip the situation and embrace the flaw and the failure. She began to experiment with the movements of broken things and injured bodies, fas-

## Do it

1. Write a letter to your near-future self, the one that lives 365 days ahead of you. Besides the pleasantries and asking if the flying skateboard from *Back to the Future* has been invented, talk to him/her about the adjustments that you would like to make to your character, your personal life, your professional life, and of the confidence you have in yourself to achieve these goals. Let them know that you have faith that by the time the you of the future reads the letter, you'll have achieved at least one of your/their goals (being pessimistic), or all of them (Zeus status). Start working on your goals, and when one year has passed, read the letter sent by your past self. You'll surely find some surprises.
2. Organize your own Fuckup Night with close friends. Get together, drink some beers, eat some good food, and put the subject of fucking up on the table: Destructive relationships? Great ideas that ended up as total shit? Backstabbing business partners? The topics are never ending.

## Take the step

Get a henna tattoo with the word that describes your most feared flaw or defect. You decide if you want it to be publicly visible or not. It's enough for you to be able to see the word that describes your flaw and that you hate so much. It is also enough for you to notice how, as the days go by, it dissolves until it disappears. You are not your flaws. You can free yourself from them. With conscious effort and willpower, you can change. It will be easy...HA! Hahahahahahah! #Not. But believe us, you will be proud of your own growth.

cinated by the possibilities of accidental and arrhythmic movement. That is how she began the workshop, Sin A Priori, where she explores residual movement: dancing badly as a conscious act. And yes, she seemed happy. Before continuing, I'll share this: *The Traveler* (Kojin) is a novel by the Japanese writer Natsume Soseki published in November 1913 (in case you were wondering).





In honor of William Griffith and Bob Smith, founders of Alcoholics Anonymous.

On June 10, 1935, William, a stockbroker, and Dr. Bob, a renowned surgeon, got together to achieve sobriety. They both had serious drinking problems. William had been sober for six months, and Dr. Bob had taken his last drink that day.

And Alcoholics Anonymous was born, a non-profit, international community, that today includes 116,000 meeting groups and more than two million members worldwide that have achieved recovery thanks to this community.

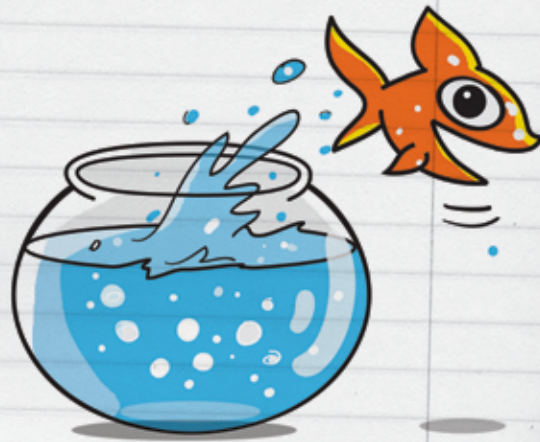




# #16. LEARN NEW THINGS

BY DIEGO OLAVARRÍA

For ancient Greek philosophers, curiosity knew no limits. Aristotle wrote about the laws of aesthetics, but also about plant classifications. Archimedes has a hydraulic principle named after him, but also a screw. Socrates was a fan of philosophy, but also of telescopes. All the knowledge in the world was yet to be discovered, and any fertile mind could follow the interests that it pleased and, in that process, produce distinct fruits. During the Renaissance, there was Leonardo DaVinci, who was not only a great painter but also a prolific inventor. Today, things have changed: the world demands specialization, it demands that mathematicians be only mathematicians, that artists be only artists. Discoveries have become more and more difficult to make, and there are those that will spend their whole life in a laboratory without discovering anything remotely close to what the Greeks achieved in a month. But, what would happen if we dared to learn new things? Or, even better, combine the knowledge we have with knowl-



edge that seems so different that it couldn't possibly interest us or be useful.

Thomas Hobbes wrote that curiosity is to the mind what lust is to the body. In other words: passion is to the mind what love is to the heart. And yes, curiosity is a motor that pushes our mind towards learning new things. Nothing is more pleasurable than discovering a passion you didn't know you had. And the more we dare to learn, the closer we will be to finding a passion, which is almost as good as falling in love.

Have you heard of a thing called Concierto Cable? It's a platform for streaming concerts and acoustic sessions in Mexico City. María José Oviedo, or Majola to friends, started this project with some friends...with no idea how to run a livestream. With an autodidactic spirit, they learned by doing. And they went along perfecting the technique, to such a degree that the platform is still active today, and gains followers everyday. When you have a passion for something, curiosity moves you to learn, to experiment, creating a virtuous cycle: you try, (you maybe fail), you

## Do it

1. Learn about a subject that you never considered before. For example: if you hated math, take a look at your algebra notes. If you never liked biology, research exactly how those mushrooms that you ate for lunch reproduce. If you were among those who preferred hard facts to fiction, read some short stories by Jorge Luis Borges. If you never liked French, give it another shot (and if you hate it again, try Portuguese). Remember that geniuses find inspiration everywhere. In

other words: the best business idea of your life may be waiting for you in a 17th century poem. So keep your eyes and your mind open. Feed your curiosity, and the bigger, the better.

2. Jump down the knowledge rabbit hole: let one book lead you to another, one newspaper article to a different one, one Wikipedia link to another. Let serendipity guide your steps, but when you find a subject you like, stop the knowledge free-fall and focus.

## Take the step

Send a concise e-mail to [hola@fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@fuckupnights.com) telling us what you've learned about a subject that never interested you before. Tell us all about how learning about tropical ants made you a better team player, or how reading about the history of spacecraft made you realize that your dream of running your own business isn't actually that crazy. Tell us the details in a way that invites us to also get interested in the beautiful work of locksmithing, or whatever it is that you've discovered.

learn, you become an expert, you succeed, (maybe you go broke and are invited to Fuckup Nights to talk about your failure), you keep on keeping on. Sidenote: so far, there are only two women mentioned in this narrative. The organizers of Fuckup Nights know that there is a disproportionate representations of stories from men (the immense majority) and women: either women start fewer companies, or they don't fail, #orsotheysay.









# Federico Casas

I'm going to tell you about how I lost \$3.5 million pesos. Hold your tears, and I'll do the same with the sentimentality. Behind every story of failure, there are losses, but what's the point in crying over the friendships or the money that I am not going to be able to recover?

Let me give you my opinion: send the market studies to hell. Do you really think that the people who are paid to do the studies are going to tell you that your company is going to fail? Eighty thousand pesos. That's what the studies that I did for my second business cost.

But that was nothing compared to the \$140,000 peso investment that I lost in a soccer statistics site that a group of friends, programming experts that knew a lot about technology and stuff, decided to start up. Modesty aside, the site was incredible. It was a shame that they didn't use at least some of that \$140,000 peso investment (plus the rest of the money they raised) on a crucial detail: paying a good administrator. Had they done that, maybe we wouldn't have lost everything.

Then I tried to commercialize nostalgia, with terrible results. Do any of you remember the little *Tamiya* cars? Yes? We were kids when they became popular sometime in the nineties. Last century! And that's the key: that toy was the best back in the day. But now, no hyper-technologized kid is interested. I lost \$70,000 pesos and now my partners and I have a warehouse full of abandoned toy cars and parts. What worked before doesn't necessarily work now.

I've learned a few lessons. For example, he who loses focus, loses period. That's why I always say, be wary of the project incubators. I was in one and it left me totally confused, because you have to listen to various "mentors"/advisors. Totally schizophrenic! While one says: "You should do this," the other advises "Don't do it!" Yes. No. Yes. No. Maybe. Ahhhhh! Insanity! We didn't know what to do anymore, we lost the focus of the business, started to pivot, and the project never took off. If the incubator is full of mentors, run and look for strategic partners that actually add value.

I should add two more links to this chain of catastrophes: the time I invested in an architecture project that cost me \$1.4 million pesos more than expected, and that iPhone app whose development I outsourced to another company, instead of creating it with an internal team. It turned out super expensive. I learned that when one contracts out, one must keep in mind that every tiny change will come with a huge price. Subcontracting a service that is tied to the heart of your business almost never turns out well.

The funniest of all these stories was when I gave away 70% of the shares that I had in a company to avoid a fight and in the process learned that one must be careful about who one associates with. In my experience, the key is to associate with people that you admire and respect.



You fail, but you don't die. I lost friends, money, even my mind. Which brings me to share a final opinion: money, but above all, fame, perverts. You're featured in a magazine, you make a little bit of money, and goodbye prudence! That's why now I try to focus on generating value, working everyday to find ideas that solve problems. I hope many more of us can do the same, and I wish each of you the best of luck on your path to develop your dreams. May you learn from your failures and reap many successes.





# #17. DO SOMETHING THAT SCARES YOU EVERYDAY.

BY NICKO NOGUÉS

Experts say that since caveman times, our brains developed to detect the bad things before the good ones. In the face of adversity, the average human gets scared. I would dare to say that practically all of us get scared, without exception.

As I see it, despite a world population of 7.2 billion, in the end, there are really only two kinds of people in the world: the scaredy cats and the cowards. Because let's not kid ourselves, no one is born brave. We are born crying, as if we didn't want to leave the place we've been for nine months warm, secure, and well fed.

The only difference is that at some point, the scaredy cats dare to cross that thin red line that separates us from the "hero" that we all have inside. The cowards, however, never do. And the more you cross the line,

the more you learn to live with fear and failure. You make them your friends. You get to know them perfectly, until you've practically earned a Masters degree in them. You begin to benefit from them; because although you know you can fail, you also know you are not

alone. Your fear is your co-pilot, pushing you forward, making you more consistent, and it's the most powerful fuel that there is. That which makes you go faster than the adversity and makes you seem brave in the eyes of the cowards.

Being afraid can have positive outcomes. Perhaps the best thing is that most of the time, our fears are completely in vain, since what we fear never actually happens. This means we have a great imagination, and our fear should make us glad, because it's proof of how much creative potential we all have. We only need



to use it and focus it in the right direction.

Like Batman once told me, "Without fear, there is no courage, Nicko". And if Batman says so, who am I to say differently?

Believe me, you are not born brave, but knowing how to live with fear and failure makes it seem like you were. And often, that's all you need.

## Do it

Conquering a fear daily would be incredible. But taking the first step is already impressive. Doing these three points would make you a superhero:

1. Write a list of twelve things you truly fear.
2. Dedicate yourself to completely overcoming them. You have one month of the year for each one.
3. Do it.

## Take the step

Document and share via your social networks the fear that you have decided to overcome each month. Make it public, and don't be ashamed.

If you are afraid to expose yourself publically, congratulations! You have your first fear to conquer. You have 11 left.

"You learn to live with fear and failure. You make them your friends"... Ok, enough. (Nicko, don't hate me, your metaphors are great). A piece of info: three out of every five entrepreneurs say failure is their main fear. Don't cite these numbers seriously (my public opinion poll consisted of asking 5 people, at midnight, what their greatest fear was in terms of their projects and companies), but there is something interesting here. Three mentioned

failure. One mentioned the government. The last mentioned his father-in-law. Let's give this exercise some weight. The fear of failing can become the cause of failure itself. This, in social sciences, is called "the self-fulfilling prophecy theory". Fear paralyzes, it clouds the mind, limits vision, and causes us to make bad decisions. So, like Nicko says: make fear your friend and your co-pilot, instead of your adversary.









# #18. BE THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE

BY NICKO NOGUÉS

**Y**ou have to be good. You have to go to school. You have to go to class, and you have to be the best in your class. You have to have a girlfriend, or a boyfriend. Better yet, a few. You have to be this, you have to be that. You have to get your BA. And when you finish, a Masters degree. No, two would be better. And a PhD.

## You're 25 already!

You have to have a real girlfriend. Or boyfriend. You have to get married ASAP. And have a kid. Two is better- a boy and a girl. You have to own a house NOW. You have to get a better job, where are you even going with this one? You have to make more money. You have to have a credit card. You have to spend more. Who cares if you don't have the money? You have to act like you have it. You have to be happy. Who cares if you're not? You have to pretend like you are. You have to look good, where are you going looking like that? You have to be faithful,

even if you're unfaithful. You have to be funny. Smile. You have to. All the time. You have to agree. You have to say yes. Even if you don't feel like it. You have to have a mid-life crisis in your 30s. And in your 40s.

## Now you're 50.

You have to get a convertible. You have to sign up for the gym again. You have to lose weight. You have to eat better. You have to have hair. You have to keep going out as if there were no tomorrow. You have to be an example for your kids. You have to take the boy to soccer and the girl to ballet. You have to give them the best education. You have to get along with your boss. Even if you can't stand him anymore.

## You have to stop.

You have to realize that you don't have to be all that. Be the person you want to be. Discover yourself.

Marisol Gasé knew that comedy was her thing since she finished college. With two classmates, she started the theater company *Cabaret à trois*. And the tragedies began. With a lot of effort, they were able to rent a venue for their shows. On opening day, they faced one of the worst situations that can befall an actor: an empty theater. A cabaret show is made of laughter, "If there is no laughter from the audience, there is nothing." Once the

## Do it

Your life bag is too heavy. Full of too many "you have to's". You don't "have to" get rid of all of the weight, but it wouldn't hurt to lighten the load a little, don't you think?

If your answer is no, come back to this chapter when your answer is yes. If you answer yes, keep reading.

1) Make a list of the ten "you have to's" that are the heaviest for you and start to emp-

ty them as soon as possible. For each one that you take off, write an alternative that you would love to replace it with.

2) Buy a notebook, but not just any notebook, a special one.

3) Write down your achievements in your notebook and store it away like a treasure. In a few years when you come across it by chance, it really will be.

## Take the step

Calmly. Calmly.  
There are enough  
"you have to's".  
Here you don't  
have to do  
anything. Just  
go with it.



bitter pill was swallowed, they managed to get a gig to entertain at a friend of a friend's birthday party. During their show, they made biting jokes about Ernesto Zedillo, the president at the time. The boos began. The friend of the friend was Zedillo Junior. Marisol didn't give up. Now, she is a Reina Chula, cabaret star, comedian, and member of *El Weso* on W Radio. She is what she wanted to be.





@OphCourse  
Photo by Jorge Lara





# Brando Flores



Like a stampede, we rushed into the hotel gym and jammed the door shut with all our strength so that they couldn't get in. The last of us had been pursued with chairs and sticks in hand. I remember one guy that waved a belt around and used the buckle like a boxer. At that moment, we didn't know what would happen to us. Our innocent plans never even conceived of this scenario.

The room was full of people with cuts on their faces, people throwing up, and a few that had fainted. Some people were making frantic calls to locate friends that were still outside, to the police. A few were even calling their families, in case something else happened. Seeing that, I broke out in that cold sweat that hits your body when you know that failure is imminent.

My Fuckup is about the loss of a business, the kind that in Mexico might change things radically or leave things as they are for decades, the kind that can change generations for better or for worse, the kind that is perceived as worse than the most corrupt and monopolistic companies, that generates doubt and distrust before it even exists.

This story is about the fleeting life and loss of a political party. This could be a massive foot in mouth situation, a kind of Fuckup flash mob, but I can only write for myself, for what I saw, did and didn't do to let it happen.

"Politics is a very wide door, through which anyone can enter. But be careful, because it is also very low, and if you stand up too tall, you will surely hit your head."

This was the type of advice that I had in mind when, more than ten years ago, I started a party run by feminists, human rights advocates, LGBT community activists, environmentalists, wise, old leftists, authentic Trotskyists, Maoists, social democrats, and all the run down leftists that found community and belonging in the group. A *sui generis* group that learned to work together in spite of the historic differences.

Elections arrived, our first trial by fire. And with them, our first major disagreement. One of the groups that we had invited, and that we never ended up truly connecting with, had proposed that the main candidate be the head of a well-known pharmacy chain, whose mascot's dance moves were the only platform we could run on. We wanted the candidate to be one of the feminist leaders that had been part of the struggle the longest, and whose face was already recognized by part of the population that we assumed would vote for us.

The corresponding court ruled in our favor. Later, I understood this wasn't about justice, but about pure and simple logic, of betting on the winner.

In the end, our position was imposed and they withdrew, or at least stopped being public. We should have expelled them from the party, but being the Good Samaritans that we were,

we let the majority of them stay. They became ghosts that haunted the neighborhood. In spite of everything, and against all odds, we were able to keep the registration of that party.

Like in almost everything, the issue is not to succeed, but to know how to manage the triumphs. And when these generate abundance, that is when –as a friend likes to say– the going gets tough. The floodgates opened and people arrived from all over, and who were we to question the integrity of those who joined? Wasn't our original purpose to get people to engage? Suddenly, it was like arriving home and finding everything out of place and not knowing anyone, and even worse, everyone else knew each other, but they didn't know you.

Because of these changes, the moment arrived to reorganize the leadership structure. The groups were already defined, them and us; that moment when the shading disappears, and everything is black and white, everybody with their own individual "truth". They began to use the oldest methods in the book, those that have helped to keep the post-*tlatoan*ic regime exactly the way it is and always has been. Methods recorded in the history books; all we had to do was open them and read. But we didn't do that.

Instead of getting off the boat, we thought we could play the game, and that our untouchable public sector origin would absolve us from any mess and would even be enough for us to prevail. Idiots!

To top it all off, those ghosts we should have exorcised showed up, and they were looking for revenge. As soon as they had new cards to play, they immediately bet against us.

We arrived at the town hall, not even knowing by whom or how it had been organized. We arrived in groups, very proud to be in uniform. Huge mistake. We debated for hours, stuck on the issues. In the best cases, the decisions were made by just a few votes. At one point, the tension started to break the ranks. Money started to be passed around, and one or two of our own quickly renounced our group and went to the other side.

Faced with this, the only option we had was to take over the podium, yes, just like the other parties often do, unfortunately. But in that moment, everything took a terrible turn. Men with white hats came out of false walls and started to throw at us everything they could get their hands on from the coffee service. Cups, mugs, ashtrays, and plates flew at our heads, and the hanging chandeliers were smashed to create even more confusion.

We ran towards the emergency exits, but they were all blocked. Only one door was left open. We were able to trickle through, but more of them were waiting for us outside to beat us up again. Once we were outside, we ran as fast as we could down the hall to the gym... and you know the rest.

Calmly, guarded by the group of thugs, votes were tallied for all the leadership posts. We, of course, were completely left out.

We all resigned en masse from the party. I didn't want to have anything to do with politics for a good long while.

I learned what it meant to win, to change the life of many people, and then to disappear from the scene, all of this in scarcely two years. After a while, I returned to politics, but with a new knowledge that not even the best school could have taught me.





# #19.GO OUT AND BE PERSISTENT

BY DIEGO OLAVARRÍA

They say that if your intention is to reach the peak, the most important thing is to be persistent. No mountain climber ever conquered Everest from the comfort of their couch or by giving up at the first rock in the path. Persistence is a form of resistance, it is almost a synonym: in the face of adversity, a persistent person seeks strength and motivation to continue on. This motivation may come from wherever you prefer –from dreams, from desires, from rage- but it is important that it fulfill a clear purpose: being the motor that will push you to move forward, toward the fulfillment of the goal that your mind has set.

But persistence is a double-edged sword. There is an old Chinese tale of a traveler heading towards the city of Chu. After journeying for three days, the traveler meets an old man that tells him that the city of Chu is in the west and not towards the east, the direction that the traveler is going. The trav-



eler insists that he has very good horses, abundant supplies, and even a safe-passage letter from the Emperor so that no authority can prevent his pass. The old man listens attentively and responds that the better his horses, the more abundant his supplies, and the more powerful his safe-passage letters, the farther away he will end up from the City of Chu. In other words, badly applied persistence can easily become stubbornness. In that case, no one will be able to convince us away from our inevitable failure.

The distance between being stubborn and persistent is only a few millimeters apart. Basically, we call a successful stubborn person “perseverant”. But beyond definition issues, one thing is for certain: if you are not willing to sustain your projects when problems arise, being an entrepreneur is not for you. Be careful: it is not about leaping into the abyss or indefinitely maintaining something that’s not sustainable, but of being capable of finding creative and effective solutions when they are needed. Sometimes, the answer will be to work twice as hard

## Do it

**Step 1.** Set your mind to something that you have always wanted but that you never achieved. Think of a list of the adversities that have held you back from reaching your goal.

**Step 2.** Now, analyze the obstacles. If your adversity is financial, cut down on superfluous expenses in other areas of your life (for example: swap that mocha latte for an Americano). If your obstacle is time, give up the twenty minutes that you use on social networks each night and dedicate it to your passion instead. If your obstacle is motivation, learn to ignore the pessimistic voices (without leaving out the realistic ones) that surround you.

**Step 3.** Persistence requires motivation and rejection of failure. Be inspired by the persistence of those you interact with on the city streets. For example: consider spending an afternoon accompanying one of those guys with the blue vests that try to convince office workers to donate money to orphans in Africa. Learn from their techniques on how to engage people, and the way in which they don’t accept the “no’s” of the passers-by. Also get inspired with the insistence of the window washer that, in spite of the rejections, takes advantage of distraction to squirt some soapy water on the cars and, because of his persistence, the drivers that end up giving in and paying.

## Take the step

Persistence is, by definition, an effort. It doesn’t matter if you are looking for a job or for spiritual enlightenment: it will take hard work. Remember: obstacles may be both internal (exhaustion, disappointment) and external (economic or social obstacles, or, in the case of an Olympic runner, literal wooden obstacles). Send an e-mail to [hola@fuckupnights.com](mailto:hola@fuckupnights.com) telling us about the obstacles that you faced and the tools that you used to overcome. Whether you used refined ingenuity, mathematic intelligence, or brute strength to overcome them, we want to know how you did it.

as before, other times, it will be to reduce your workforce if that’s the only alternative that’s left. But don’t get desperate. Act patiently. Think with an open mind. Ask for advice if you need to. And, of course, even though it sounds like an advertising slogan: don’t stop; keep walking (unless, of course, you don’t have any wiggle room left. In that case, remember point 14. =P).









# #20. RISE ABOVE THE CONFLICT

BY TATIANA MAILLARD

**S**o you've had a bad day. Life is full of bad days, distributed equally among all of the creatures of the universe: the worm devoured by the bird, the guinea pig after a nightmarish day of laboratory tests, the little pig that, on his way to the slaughter house, doesn't imagine its future as the superstar of Sunday barbecues and bacon breakfasts...on top of worse things that we won't even mention.

The world stinks...sometimes. You can cry one day, but the next day you will have to get up and continue on, because the world keeps spinning. Spend some time alone to think. Walk, write, vent. Talk to friends. It is important to avoid self-pity. It's okay to feel down, but it's not okay to stop. We have all had a bad day, a bad month, even a bad



year! This is where the popularity of self-help books comes from. There are no quick solutions. But we can learn from everything, and what doesn't kill you, makes you... weird-er (or so the Joker would say in *The Dark Knight*).

One of the nights that I most regretted missing Fuckup Nights was when Pablo Collada presented, a friend and colleague that I respect very much. His failure took place when he was 23 years old, and worked at two consulting companies that did the same thing. One day, Consulting Firm B boss asked him to get information on Consulting Firm A. After significant doubt and self-questioning, he decided to do it. "Nothing will happen," he thought. Until one day, his boss from Consulting Firm A called him in, sat him down, and told him: "I know

## Do it

1) There is nothing more liberating than breaking things. "What's wrong with a little destruction?" asks Alex Kapranos in "The Fallen" by Franz Ferdinand. Gather everything that is destroyable in your house: ugly vases, chipped plates, the horrible gifts from your ex, old small furniture. Do you have an ax? Very useful. A car? Yes? No? Ok, surely a friend will. Put all the things in the trunk and drive to a secluded area where you can have the pleasure of throwing, breaking, smashing, stomping, and tearing until you get tired. The sweet catharsis of releasing the beast that we all have inside.

2) Is that too extreme or complicated? Okay, there are always kickboxing classes to channel the rage.

3) Things might be really bad, but you must take decisions that range from micro to macro. The first is the attitude you take. If you are weak, you need to act with strength, even if you don't want to, and even if you don't have the strength. With every situation, be conscious that you decide how to face it. Stay firm. In the future, when you remember that, in spite of everything, you decided not to give up, you will see that it was worth it to keep going, and you will discover how much stronger you are.

## Take the step

**Sick, hungry, and sleep deprived? The ideal moment to take a selfie that will show the difference between your hyper-realistic portrait of the difficulties that life's cruel reality provokes, and the stack of standardized photos of people making duckfaces, showing off their gym body, or taking pictures in the driver's seat (pffff). In no way should you put a self-pitying photo caption. Make it clear that this is you now, but not for long, because you will do whatever you can to get up again and join the infinite mosaic of selfies of people posing from their best angle and with their stomach sucked in.**

what you're doing." Pablo told the truth and humbly confessed his error. Although litigation between the two consulting firms began, Pablo had saved himself from being sued. Recognizing our errors can be as important as accepting the faults we have. Today, Pablo is the Executive Director of Ciudadano Inteligente, a Chilean organization focused on political accountability. Check them out.





Photo taken from: A Human Right/ [www.ahumanright.org](http://www.ahumanright.org)





# Linda Machina



First off, let me introduce myself. I am the co-founder of Machina Wearable Technology, a clothing brand that integrates invisible technology into its designs. As a reference as to what wearable technology is, there is Google Glass, Jawbone, or Nike's FuelBand.

Today I am going to tell you about our product that was both the biggest success and the biggest failure: the MIDI Controller Jacket, a jacket that uses the movement of the wearer to make music via an application.

Everything began in 2011, when we presented the product at a tech accelerator event. The MIDI Controller Jacket was only a prototype, so much so that the cable was visible and sewn on the outside. So we were super surprised when after our presentation, we were invited to present the product at Campus Party Brazil, one of the most important technology events in Latin America.

As we were leaving the stage after our presentation in Brazil, we were approached by a possible investor, who for privacy reasons we'll call Raul. Raul was so impressed with our product and brand that he invited all the Machina partners to New York, and promised us the moon and the stars. He saw a promising future for us. He told us we would be millionaires, and that we would work with world class DJs, like Tiesto. The future seemed bright!

When we arrived in New York, Raul took us to meet the president of Louis Vuitton US, who was thrilled. He told us that it had been years since he had seen a concept and branding so well done.

— LV President: "I have a friend that would love to be the ambassador of your product. Let me give him a call."

— Machina: (In silence)

— LV President: "Hello Kanye! What are you doing? You have to come to my office and meet some crazy guys doing some crazy things I am sure you are going to like."

— Machina: (In shock)

We left the Louis Vuitton offices unbelievably excited. We returned to Mexico with the investor from Brazil and presented at another high caliber event. When the event was over, various media outlets approached me.

I was in charge of communications and marketing for the brand. I was very excited about what we were experiencing. Without thinking much about it, I told the media that there was a possibility for us to do big things. Nothing else. I didn't confirm anything.

One day later, the following was published on the home page of the one of the most important business news sites:



Fuck Up #1: The investment wasn't yet finalized.



Fuck Up #2: They published a "quote" that I didn't even say. Those were never my words.



Fuck up #3: They included the name of a person we never even met. Bernard Arnault is the president of Louis Vuitton on a global level. We met the LVMH president of the United States.

When the story ran, we lost a US\$200,000 investment, we lost the possibility of collaborating with Kanye West, and the Brazilian investor ended up unfriending me on Facebook. That is when you realize everything is over. When you get unfriended on Facebook.

Fuck. Up.





# #21. DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU GET WHAT YOU LOVE

BY LETICIA GASCA



There are many reasons for failure, among them bankruptcy, natural disasters, and problems between business partners. However, one that hardly gets talked about is when the founder gives up. In the majority of cases, projects fail when the creator throws in the towel.

I am not blaming those that give up. It is very demanding, physically, mentally, and emotionally, to start up your own project. Everyone is different, and not all the wallets or all the bodies can handle the difficulties of starting an organization.

If you discover that what you're doing doesn't generate results, and you don't love the project, it is okay to stop, to give up. But if you really love what you are doing, don't stop.

The majority of young people believe that if they follow their passions, they will be successful. However, as they grow into adults, they seem to forget. Instead of doing what they are really passionate about, they look for a steady paycheck.

If it's about doing something you really love, exhaust all the resources and opportunities possible before giving up. And if you give up easily, take it as an indicator that you maybe haven't found your true passion yet.

Go back to "The Traveler" section for point 19. Once you've done this, read the last two lines carefully. Jump to point 14. From there, go to point 9 (my favorite). Keep it simple. Continue to "The Traveler" section from point 10. Remember to send us the corniest and most indecipherable metaphors that you hear or read. We can create a nice contest and declare first place null and void. That way, we all lose, and fulfill the goal of point 5. If you

## Do it

What was your favorite candy as a kid? As soon as you finish reading these instructions, run out to find your favorite childhood candy. Remember its delicious taste, smell, the packaging, and all of the places where you enjoyed it.

If you can't find the candy because it isn't

made anymore, don't give up. Surely vintage lovers have some candies from the last decades stashed away. Places like Mercado Libre and Amazon might be useful, also.

Exhaust all of your options: search in the candy factories and in all the hidden corners of the market.

## Take the step

We all have a dish that we love wildly but that we don't know how to make. Maybe, if you try, you can prepare something delicious that will increase your taste IQ. Look for the recipe for that dish that drives you crazy, buy the ingredients, and get to work. If you would like, you can find an accomplice for this activity. It doesn't matter if the final result is what you were expecting; show us your dish via a picture on Twitter/Facebook.

If it didn't turn out well, try it again.

Remember, don't stop until you get what you love.

haven't read Rayuela, ask for forgiveness and walk away. Once you've read it, you can read the *Fuckup Book* from back to front, starting from the last paragraph of point 24. If you put a mirror in front of the pages of the book, and put on a Gloria Trevi CD at moderate volume, you can read and hear the subliminal messages of our sponsors. If nothing happens, go to points 16 and 19 and, in strict order, learn Aramaic and be persistent. Continue.





Jorge Luis Suarez arrives at the finish line crawling and comes in second place at the 2013 La Habana marathon.





# #22.YOUR TRUE POTENTIAL IS A MYSTERY

BY LILIÁN LÓPEZ CAMBEROS



**G**olf: you watch it and it looks like a boring sport, and you don't think about it too much. A few months ago, I traveled to a resort in Manzanillo for work. For travel writers, it's standard to do all the activities that are offered at a hotel in order to review them. This time, in just one day, I was able to do two things that I had never done before: drive a jet ski and play golf. I didn't learn much from the former; the only secret is to accelerate and brake on the water. And with the latter, I found that it was more fun to ride in the golf cart than to actually use the golf club. Coincidentally, that day the golf teacher was giving lessons to the hotel manager's kids. During our tour of the ostentatious 27 hole course, with lake, mountain, and ocean views, he stopped at a green and gave me one of his best putters with just one instruction: golf is about thinking. Think about the angle, think about the speed, think about the posture of the body,

think about the air currents. Think about the path that the ball will take towards the hole. He corrected my posture, gave me some tips, and told me to hit the ball. The ball glided smoothly towards the grass and landed in a perfect hole in one. The excitement of that shot was far from the thunder that I imagine is felt when one makes a goal. It was more like a quiet inner pride.

I joined the kids in their cart for the rest of the class as we went from hole to hole. There was no cultural or age barrier as we celebrated together. It turned out that I, who

had never had any interest at all in this sport, had skill. The problem is that I would never have known it if it weren't for a random work visit to a tourist resort

I read or heard somewhere that I had to specialize in *something*, in just one thing, because life is too short to distract yourself with many things. I think that is partly true: there is

no way to become a concert violinist and an expert in German critical theory at the same time. One of the two things would have to be a hobby. But, if specializing in one thing is the key to success, true potential is only discovered in the margins, on the outside, that we weren't called to.

You true potential is a mystery.

## Do it

- Take a class/course in a subject that is totally foreign to you: baking, embroidery, yoga, philosophy, Latin rhythms, contemporary literature, etc. Maybe you'll find a skill that you didn't know existed. Maybe not. But the effort of learning and taking your known abilities to unknown limits will help you solidify the knowledge you do have.
- You know yourself, or at least you think you do. You already know how well a finished text will turn out, or the results

you'll get from a company. But the truth is, you never know if something could have been better. The only option is to always aim a little bit closer to excellence. Apply a different standard to yourself in your next project. Expect more than just satisfactory.

- Train for something and then dare to do it: a marathon, a dinner for friends, a business presentation. Look for a difficult challenge and prepare specifically for it. Aim high from the beginning.

## Take the step

Dig up your elementary, junior high, or high school report cards. Find your lowest grades and explain, in a few paragraphs, how you overcame the difficulties that you had in these subjects. Share an image of the report card and your explanation on our Facebook wall.

The example that Lilián gives for this point is one of the most beautiful that you, reader, will find in this book (I also confess that I never would have thought that my friend has the qualities of a good golf player). The true potential is a mystery, no doubt about it. A similar discovery happened with Mardonio Carballo, a Mexican poet, actor, and writer. While these days the majority focuses on what is "modern" or "hip", Mardonio found a

unique outlet for his creative work in the indigenous, in the ancient. And he immersed himself completely. To present as indigenous, in a country like Mexico, is an act of courage. "The entrepreneurial spirit exists in knowing how to play with what you have," said Mardonio when he participated in Fuckup Nights in 2013. And that is just as important for everyone, whether you're a poet, designer, or technologist. End of story.





# Raúl de Anda



To understand a failure, it is necessary to connect with the person that went through it. So I think it's important that you know who I am. After graduating from university with a degree in industrial engineering, I put all my energy into trying to get a job with Valmex, a local brokerage house. Maybe this was because I always heard my dad say I was going to be good at making money, or maybe because of the prestige. Within a year, I had an abrupt realization about the reality of the terrible distribution of wealth in my country, and I thought "With each person that I make richer, I am making 50, 70, or 100 people poorer". So I quit, and traveled to Africa as a missionary.

I arrived in the Central African Republic with the idea of changing the country, but in the end, I was the one who changed the most. Living six months in a country where one out of every five kids doesn't live to see their fifth birthday, and the average life expectancy is only 49 years, I realized that in this world, charity doesn't grow as quickly as the problems do.

When I returned, I discovered a world that talked about solving the biggest problems in the world with business. I began to collaborate with an organization that developed and operated programs to attack specific issues, everything from a fund to support entrepreneurs to a program to decrease unemployment of recent graduates. When we began to design the program to decrease unemployment, we realized the problem was that people were graduating without work (not to mention experience). So the epiphany (for us) was "no one should graduate without work", and there was the answer (again, for us).

The challenge of course, was to monetize...but we weren't afraid of business models. Practically everything was in place: clients (companies that were interested in placing university students), our target population (evidently, university students who were about to be *NINIs*<sup>1</sup>), and alliances (universities). We would make money by recruiting and placing high-potential university students.

We already had the ball in our court; we just had to make a goal. We focused on creating a great network of companies to be part of the program. After seven months of work, 100+ meetings, 50+ presentations....we had closed zero companies, made zero sales, generated zero employments, and even worse, had learned zip.

We were so sure of our product and so proud of our model that we never once stopped to think, "Why the \*&^# aren't they signing on?!"

We sat with more than fifty directors and we never asked them what we could improve, what they really needed, what they would like to see in our model, or humbly, if they would help us create a model that they would actually be willing to pay for. After seven months

<sup>1</sup> Common term in Mexico that refers to a young person who does not work or study (ni estudia, ni trabaja).

of work, dozens of meetings, and around \$700,000 pesos spent, the biggest cost was my self-esteem.

When we started hearing "NO" from the businessmen we pitched to, I thought, "Hmmm, these idiots don't recognize a great opportunity." When I reached twenty rejections, my thought was, "Wow, there are a ton of idiots here. I should look for better companies." By the time I got to thirty rejections, it was, "I think only idiots live in this town." Finally, after being rejected forty times, everything changed and only one thought remained: "I think I'm the idiot."

The problem with hearing so many rejections is that you start to doubt your abilities, your skills, and, even worse, yourself. And you begin a cycle (almost infinite, and very hard to break) that starts with doubt. Once you doubt your model, and yourself as a person, you start to panic (which causes you to freeze up, and makes you less able to respond, surprise, and make magic happen). Once that internal fire starts to burn out, we're ashamed, and seek solitude. Which only makes the cycle worse, because loneliness combined with our insecurities can make our doubts even bigger, more real and more tangible.

## Doubt- Panic- Self-Esteem-Isolation- Insecurity- Doubt

I could mention more than thirty enormous errors that we made, but there are three that stand out, and they are all interconnected: stubbornness, pride, and the "ghost effect".

Stubbornness: meeting after meeting, we said the same thing and sold the same thing, always thinking the error lay with the other party.

Pride: we were never humble (or smart) enough to stop and think, re-think, and ask.

Ghost effect: this is the most serious, and it only happens with extreme arrogance, when your pride is so big that your brain can't imagine being wrong, and so resorts to creating enemies where there are none.

In our case, the ghost effect was thinking that there were hidden agreements between companies and universities, where the universities offered their students as unpaid interns in exchange for event sponsorships. This is why they didn't want to pay for our services; they had them free of cost straight from the university.

We got so caught up with our solution that we forgot the most important part, the problem we wanted to solve. We were so arrogant that we didn't even realize that we didn't have a value proposition. We were offering a service to companies that the universities already offered free of cost via their career centers. And we could never engage the career centers as allies, because they saw us as competition. Another big error: we didn't know how to inspire. We preferred to intimidate.

As children we are told that we will come across moments in life that are like a "Y"; if we chose well, we will be successful, but if we chose poorly, we will go straight to failure. And today, with a hand on my hip, (well, on the keyboard) I can say there is nothing more false. The route we walk isn't a "Y". It's more like a zigzag. There are only two things that can change the length of the path: the perseverance to go from failure to failure without losing your way, and the quickness with which we learn from each moment.





# #23. DEFEAT YOUR EGO

BY LETICIA GASCA



The most powerful reason why we hide our failures has three letters: ego.

Ego is that thing we build throughout our lives as we acquire knowledge, beliefs, habits, and experiences.

Ego is the illusion that you create about yourself, generally inflated beyond reality. The illusion that you are perfect and infallible gets shaken up when things don't go as planned and reality reminds you that you are neither perfect nor infallible. And since ignorance is bliss, instead of destroying the illusion, we look for a pretext to justify ourselves.

Ego is not all bad. It can be a strongly

motivating force, but don't let it become the primary influence when you make decisions.

If you defeat your ego and get rid of your imaginary need to be perfect, you can better face the world. For example, instead of seeing things as you would like them to be, you will see them as they are. And when things turn out badly, instead of beating yourself up or justifying yourself, you can be more compassionate with yourself, and remember that you're only human.

Up until now, there have been bits and pieces of a dozen stories from among the many who have shared their experiences at Fuckup Nights. But as we get to the end, the reader might have noticed that there were a lot of stories that aren't my own, a lot of making fun of Nicko, and no personal confession. Here we go, in 100 words: The job that paid me the most, as well as my last two relationships, all ended mostly due to one reason: my ego. Psychologists will know how to explain this better than I can, but when you think you are indispensable

## Do it

The best way to measure your ego is by observing how easily you get offended: if it's frequently, you probably have a bit more ego than necessary, convincing you that the world should be how you want it.

The next time you feel offended by

something or someone, think about whether you're offended because what happened challenges the illusion of perfection that you've created.

The offense is in the ears of who hears it, not in the mouth of who says it.

## Take the step

Social networks are a showcase for the ego. No one is as good-looking as they appear on Facebook, or as intelligent as they seem on Twitter.

The ego, just like social networks, loves to divide us into winners and losers. There will always be someone who is faster, younger, stronger, smarter, and luckier than you. It is impossible to win all the time, but on Facebook, we only see the pictures of smiling runners crossing the finish line and studious friends announcing that they've completed graduate school.

Share your failures on social networks:

- Take a picture of the spaghetti mush that you overcooked.
- Post a screenshot of a rejection e-mail. Tell the world that you didn't get that job or that you didn't win the raffle.
- Stop showing off your awesome physical condition. Tell us about that day that you went running, but three blocks later you were overcome by laziness and went back home to watch TV.

Remember: you are not your victories (or your failures).

for something, or someone, you've already lost. Because you're not. However good, intelligent, or "necessary" we think we are, the other person (boss, girlfriend, partner, friend) always has the option to find a replacement, or to learn to live without our presence. It hurts, and it's difficult to understand. But that's how things are. And better to realize it now than never.









# #24. BE BRAVE AND LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

BY TATIANA MAILLARD



I'm sure you've never heard this advice, right? But it's never bad to remind ourselves that in order to balance the cosmos, there are both good and bad experiences. Every new project is a jump into the abyss. The kind of jump that only crazy people, brave people, and occasionally, also stupid people make. Enjoy the risk of doing things that you've never experi-

enced before. How cliché to suggest that you take a course to learn some new activity, or that you enjoy the small things in life. We think you are the one that needs to decide where to direct your energy and desire to enrich your existence. That way, when death reaches out and extends a hand, you go in peace. Because life doesn't owe you anything.

Irma Gonzalez, also known as "La Novia del Santo", is 75 and has a touching story. Coming from a family of acrobats, her childhood was spent among circuses and juggling. Without fearing anything, Irma did dangerous acrobatics, until one lady yelled "Ohhh, she is going to kill herself". She felt so afraid that, in the middle of the performance, she froze and was not able to continue. When she was 13, she got into *Lucha Libre* just to try it, she regained her intrepid attitude and kept wrestling for 50 years. She traveled throughout the whole world

## Do it

What can we tell you? To enjoy every minute? To dance, laugh, love, cry, learn, fall down, get up, watch sunsets, go scuba diving, challenge yourself? You already know all that. Remember that the most important thing in life is to live it. That's it.

## Take the step

Pick a day to let everyone on your social networks know that you'll be shutting down all your accounts in a week, because you'll be busy living instead of showing everyone your life. If you prefer to be less extreme, choose one to keep (the one that's most useful to stay informed on what's going on in the world, or to stay in touch with your loved ones). Radical? Yes. But why do you need a million friends on Facebook? You don't even know most of them!

and created a legend, both due to her graceful way of fighting and to the silver mask she wore, which is why she earned the nickname, *Novia del Santo*. Today, her knees are destroyed, but she keeps training teens with the same cheerfulness as always. If that is not passion, I don't know what is.

The path isn't over, it starts here. Bon voyage!









# Alexander Eaton



I've been a skier since I was a child, and for me, the happiest day of the year was the fall day when all the pro-skiers released their latest videos. All through my adolescence, I lived hypnotized by the images in these movies. Throughout my twenties, I trained, prepped, worked in ski shops, and compulsively devoured ski movies. All of this with one objective: to get to Alaska.

In the summer of 2001, after completing half of a degree in journalism, I arrived in Valdez, Alaska. I was willing to do any job offered. I worked as a guide, wrote for the local newspaper, and tried to sell photos to adventure magazines. That winter I was working refueling helicopters when something incredible happened. The most prestigious producer of ski movies called to ask if I knew how to film with 16mm Arriflex. They urgently needed additional takes for a movie that was in production, and had heard that I had a good eye.

Make a 16mm movie for a company renowned among famous skiers? I said yes, of course.

The model that they lent me (they had to dig it out of the back of the closet) was from 1972, and it had a long and intimidating lens. I took the camera home with me that night, to the freezing mobile home on the opposite end of the city where I lived. I charged the battery, and familiarized myself with the camera. The trip would begin at 6 a.m. the following morning.

At midnight, the movie director called to give me a quick crash course on how to use the camera. He mentioned the importance of keeping the film in total darkness before changing it, or I ran the risk of overexposing the film. He explained a series of complex steps that I would have to follow to place the film in the reel, and recommended that I practice these steps ten times with light and twenty times more in darkness.

At around three in the morning, I was only just trying my backpack on. Including the tripod, camera, batteries, and all my additional equipment (rescue rope, gloves, clothes, avalanche shovel, etc.), the backpack weighed 50 pounds. And I was going to have to ski with it on.

I couldn't sleep that night. That morning I saw the sunrise: dim light and sparkling snow. In other words, perfect filming conditions. The following four days were exceptional. We filmed during the long days and skied with the beautiful Alaska sunsets in the background. The skiers put on a spectacular show: they launched themselves from enormous cliffs and glided down the mountainsides. The images captured with the Arriflex were perfect, showing the skiers framed with plumes of snow and steep mountain peaks, a perfect blue sky in the background.

To achieve a high enough quality, a motor needs twenty-four frames per second, almost two feet of film. One hundred feet of film lasts three and a half minutes. Every finished roll of film required me to improvise a dark room with my ski jacket and my backpack. In this wilder-

ness darkroom, I took out the film and sealed it in a dark box. I then placed the new film in the reels and filmed for three more minutes.

On the fourth and final day, I had a stack of Kodak film boxes, which I made sure to mail on the last day of helicopter season. I celebrated the end of filming and my first free day singing triumphant songs at the top of my lungs at 6 a.m. That same morning, I got a call inviting me to join a helicopter trip from Valdez to California, all down the Pacific coast. I spent the next three days filming the ocean, the mountains, the Canadian rainforests, as well as remote ski destinations, all from high altitude.

As soon as we landed in Washington State, I ran to a pay phone to confirm that the producer had received the film. The technician that answered was upset. They had received the film, but not a single roll had images. He had revised the film one by one. He didn't understand. The rolls of film seemed to be backward, and untouched. Had I operated the mechanism of the camera backward? He was sure that I had.

I don't remember hanging up. The shock arrived in waves. I thought of the shots lost, of the risks that the skiers had taken in vain, in the tens of thousands of dollars spent on helicopters gone down the drain. Neither the names of the skiers nor my name would appear in the movie this year. And it was all my fault.

The helicopter had finished fueling, and was waiting on me to continue on to California. With the thunder of the helicopter blades echoing in my ears, I grabbed my backpack and my camera and ran away with no explanation. Quietly to myself, and then yelling, I repeated the words, "No! No! No!," but it was useless. The images were lost, and there was no way to recover them.

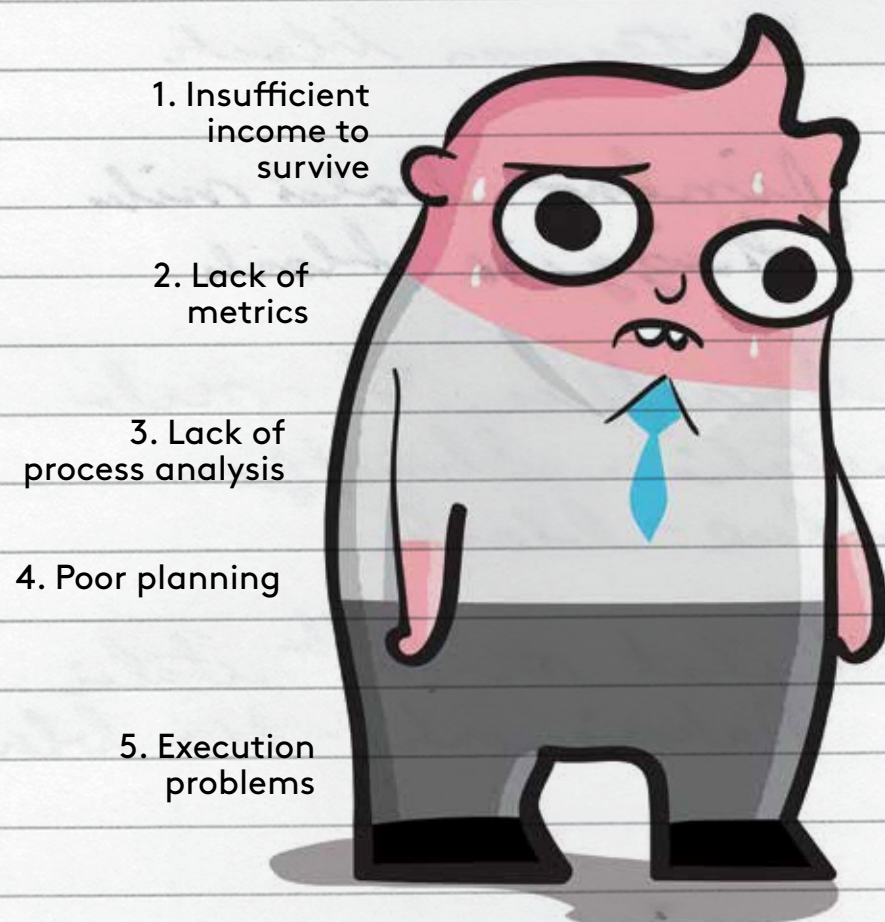
Afterwards, talking to the director of the movie, I figured out what had gone wrong. It turned out I had practiced changing the film rolls with film that someone else had rewound backward when they were using it to practice. I perfected that error, ten times in the light and twenty times more in darkness.

I bought a ferry ticket back to Alaska. I made the three-day trip on the deck accompanied by a bottle of whiskey for my sorrows. My bed was a sleeping bag on a plastic chair. Just a few days before, I had flown over this landscape and it had seemed almost like a miniature. Now I was cold and wet, and my failure had put my feet rudely on the ground again. On the second night, I screamed at the top of my lungs from the stern, where the motors were. My screams were drowned out by the mechanical roar and by the vast wilderness, both indifferent to my successes and my failures.



# The Main Causes of Failure for Businesses in Mexico

BY: MARIO DÁVILA, FRANCISCO LAYRISSE, GERARDO LOZANO F., ERIKA RIOJAS, AND HÉCTOR URBINA



If we talk about businesses that fail, the million-dollar question is, why do they fail? This study seeks to respond to this question focusing on Mexico. The top 5 reasons for failure can be found below, and in the rest of the chapter you will see how we arrived to these conclusions and what we learned along the way. We hope this research is as interesting and useful to you as it was for us.

The five most common causes of business failure in Mexico are:

1. Insufficient income to survive (65%)  
*"Having just enough cash on hand to fund monthly operations."*
2. Lack of metrics (48%).  
*"Lack of clarity in the objectives of the business, why and what we work for, in addition to key performance indicators."*
3. Lack of process analysis (44%)  
*"It was my first business, and although theoretically I knew a lot from my university studies and my other jobs, it's very different to be to be one hundred percent responsible for your own business rather than an employee. Today, I would pay more attention to creating a business plan."*
4. Poor planning (44%)  
*"Lack of planning. Lack of experience as a director. Lack of business vision."*
5. Execution problems (43%)  
*"I think we focused too much on planning, but we never went out to prove if our hypotheses also made sense for the end client."*

Entrepreneurship and failure go hand in hand, like *chile* and Mexicans. True, not all Mexicans include *chile* in their diet, and some like it spicier than others. Similarly, it's doubtful that the best entrepreneurs result exclusively from the knowledge that accompanies failure. What is undeniable is that, in Mexican culture, *chile* is a vital element and, within the universe of en-



trepreneurship, failure is fundamental. Using this logic as a starting point, those involved in the creation of this book decided to study and get to know in depth the subject of failure, a subject that has been talked about very little.

Before turning our attention to failure, let's first dedicate some words to entrepreneurship. We know that for many, entrepreneurship goes beyond hitting the street and getting a job; it's about seeking independence and self-fulfillment, and of innovating and gaining the respect of others. Entrepreneurship is necessary for society. It promotes growth and development, and is also based on the philosophy of individual initiative.

It is very common for new ventures to pop up everywhere. Unfortunately, that means that there are also failures everywhere. In Spain, 80% of companies go bankrupt in the first five years. And in the United States, companies have an average life span of six years, and 30% don't make it to their third year. In Latin America, the situation is similar: in Argentina, only 7% of companies make it to their second year of life, and in Chile, 25% of companies disappear in the first year. (Velazquez, 2008)

In Mexico, 75% of new companies close their operations after two years, and between April 2009 and May 2012, for every one hundred existing establishments, approximately twenty-two closed and twenty-eight began activities. This is very good news: for every one hundred establishments, six are born, and the trend continues to rise.

Diving deeper into this data, we see that INEGI reveals that during this time period (2009 to 2012), 1,135,089 companies were born, and the sector that presented the greatest percentage of start-ups was private non-financial services, with 30.7%, followed by the commercial sector with 28.4% and in third place, manufacturing industries with 20.4%. In respect to companies closing (884,240), the sectors with the highest percentage of closures were the commercial sector, non-financial services, and manufacturing industries, with 22.9%, 22.7%, and 16.7% respectively. (INEGI 2013)

Looking to foster an entrepreneurial culture, the Mexican government recently created the Instituto Nacional del Emprendedor (INADEM). The organization is guided by four work streams: 1) Promoting financing and access to capital, 2) Promoting the creation of managerial skills, 3) Supporting access to technology, and 4) Access to correct and relevant information.

Academia is also working intensely to be a motor for entrepreneurship. To respond to this growing phenomena, the Tecnológico de Monterrey has created the Instituto de Emprendimiento Eugenio Garza Lagüera, which since its founding has been dedicated to renewing the educational model of entrepreneurship.

Since its founding, the Tecnológico de Monterrey has understood the importance of entrepreneurship, developing programs and activities that have grown in an extraordinary way, particularly during the last thirty years, and now form one of the most important entrepreneurship ecosystems among educational institutions in the country, and in the world. However, the challenge to develop an entrepreneurial culture continues to grow, as it now demands considerations that did not exist within the previous traditional model.

Resilience is one of the new elements that has been identified as vital for learning, which means the ability to recover in the face of failure, to confront plans that do not pan out, and to pick oneself up after a fall. Reality has shown that people that overcome failure have even more possibilities to achieve, and that it is possible to develop abilities to confront and overcome failure. The way that societies integrate and face failure is one of the distinguishing factors between successful entrepreneurial cultures and those that only try to be successful. Included among the latter is Latin America and, of course, Mexico, where failure is still perceived with apprehension and with avoidance. In many cases, failure represents the end of an effort.

Because of this, the subject of resilience and its relation with failure have been integrated into the new educational models focused on fulfilling the vision of developing people with an entrepreneurial spirit. The cultural and personal shift in the perception of failure must happen gradually, so that more people accept it in a profound and open way. Because of this, research about failure and initiatives to better understand it are crucially important.

Now, what is the core of this research? What findings did we come to? Is it really possible to discover a primary cause of failure for the Mexican entrepreneur? Is it one single cause, or a variety of aggregate issues? Is the main issue lack of financial capacity, or strategic? What is the personality of the unsuccessful entrepreneur in Mexico? All these questions, and many more, were addressed in the research. But first, it is necessary to understand the process that was undertaken to generate this report.

## Methodology

The general objective of this research was to take an initial pass at understanding why ventures fail in Mexico. More formally, the objective was defined as such: "Explore and identify, within the Mexican context, the internal and external factors that contribute to the failure of a venture."

To accomplish the overarching objective, a series of more targeted objectives were established, including: distinguish the factors that contributed to the failure of the entrepreneur, identify the profile of the entrepreneurs that have failed, as well as their personality, identify the sources of startup capital, and discern the lessons learned by the entrepreneur after a failure.

Since this is an initial attempt, it was necessary to divide the study into two stages.

### 1. First stage: Qualitative Analysis:

A focus group was conducted with nine business founders who had failed, and who generously shared their stories. The participants included men and women between 25 to 45 years of age, entrepreneurs active in a variety of industries, including the food sector, software development, commerce, international logistics, and telecommunications. Through these stories, certain themes were identified, including: startup capital for the creation of the company came from personal money (either from other businesses, or personal/family savings), and that one of the common causes of failure for almost all the entrepreneurs was an insufficient planning process.



Going more in depth into the reasons for failure, two primary sources were identified. On one hand, we have the reasons intrinsic to the entrepreneur, meaning failures attributable to the individual, including lack of vision, poor administration, absent or deficient market studies, and the absence or imperfection of a business plan. "In my case, it was the lack of a business plan or in-depth study." "We always ignored the administrative aspect, and there was no administrative talent to support our growth." On the other hand, failure may be a result of situations that are out of the entrepreneur's control, including external factors such as instability or lack of safety, problems with providers, etc.

It was also noted that an entrepreneur does not fail due to any one reason or cause, but that failure is, in fact, a multifactor phenomenon. Similarly, it also became clear that each entrepreneur had different causes for their failure. Each story told of distinct causes of failure, and only a few were common to all.

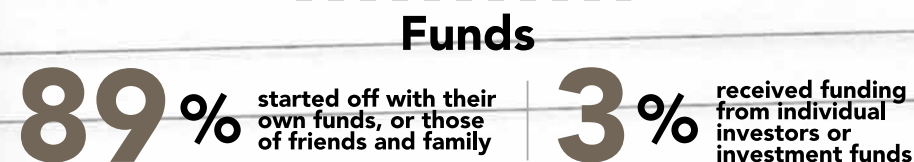
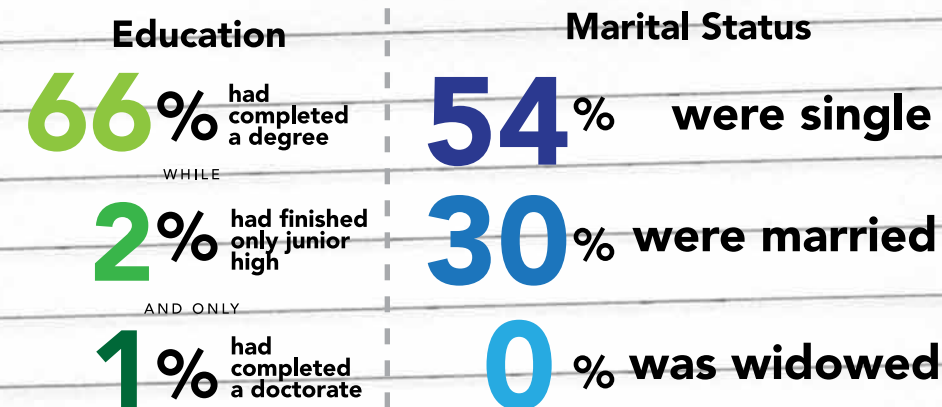
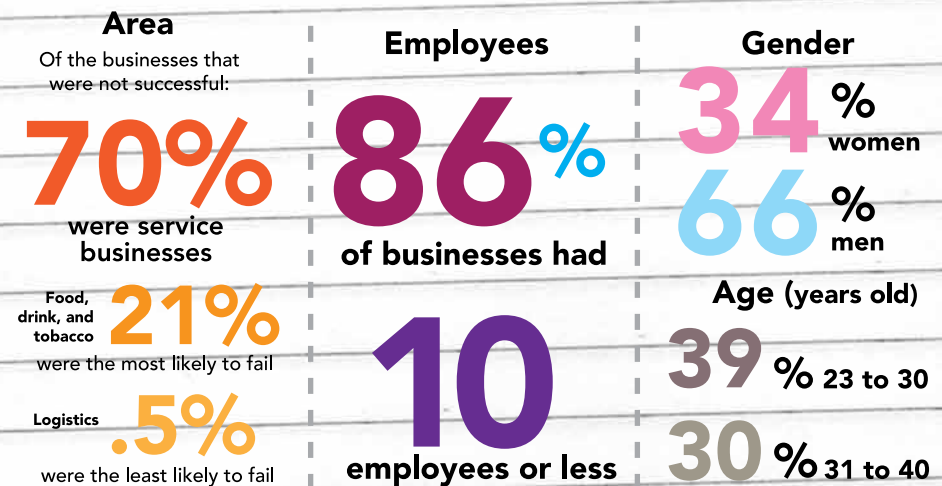
Based upon these findings, we focused our analysis on the creation of categories or themes that would create order and better facilitate the study. Based on the interviews with the entrepreneurs, the decision was made to create six main themes. These can be seen in the following chart:



However, when we realized that each entrepreneur's story had few causes in common, it was necessary to go more in-depth with another qualitative round. Following the focus group, we developed a questionnaire of eight open ended questions and sought the input of thirteen entrepreneurs that had failed in their respective businesses, with an emphasis on sharing their experience of problems and/or failures connected to the six main areas. Using these questionnaires it was determined that all the various reasons for failure studied in the qualitative process would be grouped within these six primary themes.

## 2. Second Stage: Quantitative Analysis:

With the six themes defined, we went on to group and simplify the reasons for failure outlined by the entrepreneurs. In total, 41 reasons for failure were identified, grouped into 22 sub-categories and then placed into the six overarching themes. 409 entrepreneurs answered the survey. Various sections were added to the survey to allow for the analysis of the profile and the personality of the unsuccessful entrepreneur. The results were as follows:





## Personality of the Entrepreneur

- 1. Openness to New Experiences**  
They have: An active imagination, aesthetic sensibility, attention to internal experiences, intellectual curiosity, strong judgment and decision-making skills, and enjoy variety. The opposite individual is more conventional and traditional.
- 2. Conscientiousness**  
They have: self-control, not only of impulses but also in planning, organization, and execution of tasks. The opposite individual is more lax, informal, and less careful with their morals.
- 3. Extroverted**  
They are: daring in social situations, avoid being alone. The opposite individual is reserved, unpleasant, and very independent, they prefer what is known and routine.
- 4. Agreeableness**  
They are: altruistic, considerate, confident, and supportive. The opposite individual is egocentric, skeptical, and competitive.
- 5. Neuroticism or Emotional Instability**  
They are: anxious, preoccupied, lack consistency in their behavior, have low tolerance to stress, and few social skills. The opposite individual is stable, calm, and firm in their decisions.

### Predominant personality traits during failure

In this study we focused mainly on the theory of traits in order to analyze and understand better the personality of founders of businesses that failed. The system of reference to explain personality traits is the model of the Big Five Personality Test (John et al. 2008), popularly known as the Big Five.

The five traits or factors that are explained in the chart above are usually represented as: factor O (Openness to new experiences), factor C (Conscientiousness), factor E (Extroversion), factor A (Agreeableness) and factor N (Neuroticism, or emotional instability). The five factors form the mnemonic acronym "OCEAN."

In our study, 409 entrepreneurs who had experienced failure answered a personality test with the purpose of determining their predominant personality traits. For this study in particular, it was decided that the two primary dominant characteristics would be considered.

The following table illustrates the results:

Personality trait	First mention (%)	Second mention (%)	Total
Openness to new experiences	48%	26%	74%
Conscientiousness	20%	26%	46%
Agreeableness	10%	19%	29%
Neuroticism	12%	16%	28%
Extroversion	9%	12%	21%

Considering the results, one notes that "openness to new experiences" appears in 74% of the sample group, which means that almost three out of every four business founders that failed looks for new experiences. This may indicate that a person that is open to new experiences is positively related with the initial start-up of the business, but it might not necessarily be the most suitable trait for an entrepreneur thinking of long time survival.

Ironically, the second most dominant characteristic is, "conscientiousness", which appears in 47% of the sample group, which means that two out of every four of the entrepreneurs have self-control and seek a certain degree of advanced planning. This might imply that, despite the organizational skills of the entrepreneurs, when faced with unexpected, adverse situations, they lose control and give up. However, with the data gathered, we can deduce that personality plays an important role in the success or failure of the entrepreneur.

### Failure as a natural process

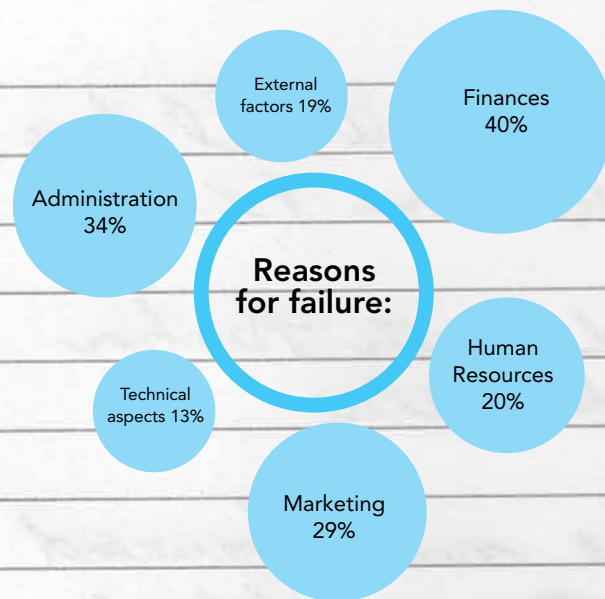
As already mentioned at the beginning of this section, 75% of new ventures fail. Since failure is so frequent, it is pertinent to ask: why do entrepreneurs fail? What happens in the minds of entrepreneurs that live through a failure? Why do some try again and others don't?

Perhaps part of the reason why an entrepreneur doesn't achieve definitive success has to do with not learning how to overcome failure. Executing a business idea requires dedication, effort, and sacrifice. In a single word: resilience (capacity to face adversity and to be able to adapt) (Rodríguez, 2013).

Resilience is a characteristic that is found in great business personalities throughout history. To fall and get back up, over and over again, is part of the entrepreneurial attitude, just like recovering from a crisis situation and, above all, learning from one's mistakes. In any case, to be able to learn from mistakes, it is necessary to clearly identify them, and, as previously mentioned, it is very difficult to determine any one cause as the sole cause of failure. The exploratory interviews showed that each situation has multiple causes for failure, and the surveys reflected this as well. When we asked each entrepreneur if he/she had had problems with any of the 41 situations, each one reported having had problems or many problems with 11 of them, on average. If one only considers the issues in which the entrepreneur reported having "many problems", it is noted that the entrepreneurs selected 5 causes.

In the following section, we explore the main causes of failure, one by one. By doing a global and comparative analysis of the diverse situations, it should be noted that the main causes for failure are found in the areas of finance and administration, with 40% and 34% respectively. It is important to mention that the percentages do not add up to 100%, since the causes for failure are not mutually exclusive.





## Cause 1. Finance

We found that the primary reason for failure has to do with the area of finance. But, what is finance? Below, you'll find some comments made by the entrepreneurs interviewed in this study:

*"I have never been very financial or administrative, these are activities that I don't even like. I openly hate them."*

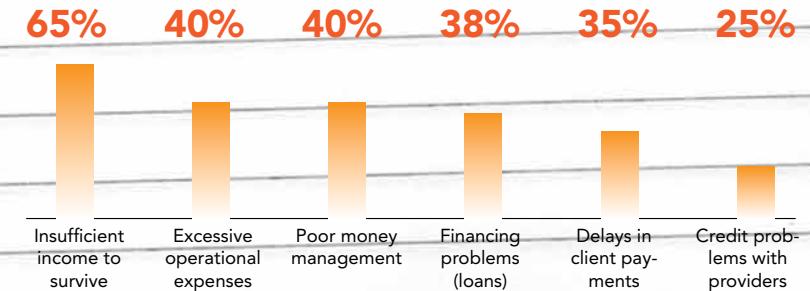
*"This project failed due to bad financial planning and because we didn't have a professional structure that fit the scope of the project. The company was unable to generate its own income. It was sustained with public resources and no incentives were created to generate its own resources."*

In reality, many entrepreneurs don't want anything to do with the financial area. Anything that has to do with numbers, accounting, or the calculation of budgets, among other things, are subjects that frighten or irritate the entrepreneur, to the extent that many don't ever seek training.

*"Cash flow was my problem. The operational expenses ate up all of my investment."*

With the purpose of going more in depth into the reasons for failure in the area of finances, specific examples from each of the sub-themes were evaluated. Of these, "Insufficient income to survive" was the most frequently mentioned reason for failure, selected by 65% of the entrepreneurs. In other words, entrepreneurs might have had a good business idea, but it didn't provide enough money to maintain the lifestyle that they were used to.

## Primary reasons for failure in finance



If these results are analyzed along with the fact that the majority of the business founders that failed obtained the funds to start their business from their own capital, friends, or family, it's important to ask if a relationship exists between lacking sufficient income to survive and the source of the initial investment? Is it possible to assume that the entrepreneur that finances his/her own business with personal capital doesn't carefully measure the financial impact on the business or his/her personal assets? Seeking external funds obligates the entrepreneur to execute financial and profitability analyses. However, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Mexico 2013 (Naranjo et al., 2013), business founders that failed in Mexico also justified their failure due to the difficulty of accessing financing. Is the best recommendation to finance the start-up with investment funds, in spite of the difficulties that this brings?

*"I had issues with inventory and cash flow due to poor planning."*

A business that does not generate sufficient income to survive might imply insufficient planning. On the other hand, it might also imply that given that founders financed their failed projects with their own funds, they were never able to reach enough cash flow to survive on their own. In other words, they didn't correctly calculate the time that it would take the business to reach break even and begin to generate enough income to live off of.

## Cause 2. Administration

Once a company has regular sales, has identified its target market, and has proven that the value proposition is the right one, the ability to properly manage the business is without a doubt another of the main reasons for failure. Finances are a particularly essential area. Once the company has resources to operate, it is necessary that excellent financial control be implemented. Considering this, we will analyze causes for failure that are associated with the ability to manage the company.

One of the primary reasons produced by this study is the lack of metrics and indicators for the business. Of the business founders interviewed, almost five out of every ten entrepreneurs failed due to the lack of metrics. In relation to the lack of indicators and planning, a few of the key takeaways are:



*"There were no adequate control systems in place for the administration of resources, which resulted in a lot of turnover and bad management, as well as legal problems with those responsible for the area."*

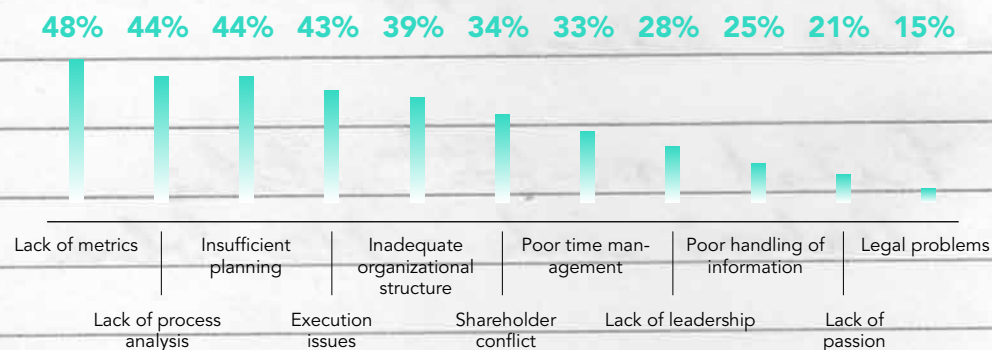
*"Very lax planning. The worst was lacking an inventory for each of the 50,000 products that I had in each of my stores, which resulted in me not noticing the theft."*

Likewise, insufficient planning was another of the main causes for failure: a little more than four out of every ten of those surveyed did not have an adequate financial plan. Carol Enman, a business growth and expansion consultant, published the following in *Security Distributing & Marketing* magazine: "You cannot run a business successfully by the seat of your pants. You may pay the bills, cover payroll, and even live a decent life. However, without a plan, you will not be likely to develop a viable, valuable, salable, and competitive business." (Enman, 2014) There are various tools that an entrepreneur can use to outline a path and feel more certain about the business project, from the development of their business idea to the launch. A few of the tools that can be great value adds include Design Thinking, Lean Startup methodology, the design of a business model, and, at a more mature stage, a formal business plan.

There are also problems related with poor execution of the plan, for example, poor administration of information.

Finally, other issues that we discovered in this study included shareholder conflict, poor time management, and an inadequate organizational structure. One of the entrepreneurs in the study commented: "I had an inadequate organizational structure. The business lacked key performance indicators to measure output, efficiencies, etc. We had legal problems of an administrative nature, conflicts between shareholders to obtain the control of the company, and ownership disputes between majority and minority shareholders."

### Primary reasons for failure in administration



It is also important to mention that given the impossibility of including all of the causes of failure, a blank space was left for "other". This allowed those surveyed to include reasons for failure that were not listed. Some wrote down specific problems that occurred with partners and/or shareholders:

*"Don't lose your vision; don't give up your vision to the partner with money. You have the vision and... you have the control."*

*"I didn't build a good team of partners, with knowledge and abilities that complemented mine."*

*"Another great thing I learned from the past was that your friend, brother, or cousin isn't always your best partner. Your choice of partners is fundamental to increase the scope and growth of the company. A shared vision can help, but I think the fundamental thing is values. People who have the same values maximize your probability of success."*

*"One of the founding partners stopped caring about the business and abandoned it. The responsibility that he left on the shoulders of his co-founders was too much, and we decided to drop the project as well."*

As noted in the statements above, having "sufficient" capital doesn't ensure success. It is also necessary to implement adequate planning and control of the activities and processes.

### Cause 3. Marketing

*"I think there was bad forecasting in everything here. And very little personal ability to learn to listen, understand the real issue, propose a possible solution, implement it, and listen again. I didn't know how to handle this feedback loop. Today, I would do everything differently. Marketing implies understanding and listening to then propose possible solutions."*

Marketing plays a very important role in the life of any business. It is through marketing that the vital resource for a company to survive is obtained: money. It must not be forgotten that marketing is much more than sales. Actually, occasionally marketing is incorrectly assumed to be just advertising and publicity. In reality, it is made up of four major areas, known as the 4P's of marketing: price, product, promotion, and place.

*"We weren't able to achieve the correct mix of location, concept, and users. We tried to execute a concept that was too broad and that failed because it was not clearly communicated."*

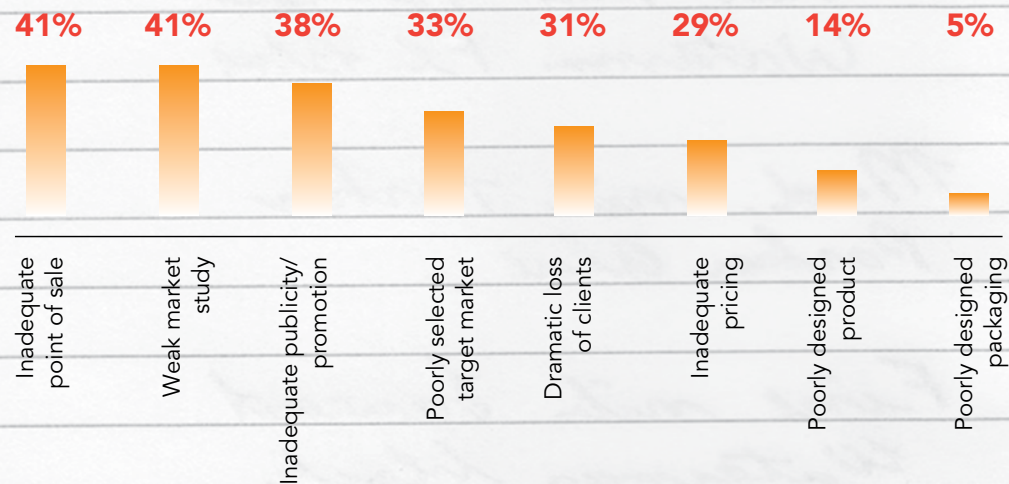
In the graph, it can be observed that the statement "inadequate point of sale" was selected by 41% of the business founders that failed. Likewise, those surveyed reported having had issues due to conducting weak market studies.

The majority of new companies develop products or services that do not have a market, and do not provide a value add to the potential client.

*"We didn't adequately identify the market that we were selling to.  
The product wasn't right for that market."*



### Primary reasons for failure in marketing



It is important to point out that only 1 out of 10 of the entrepreneurs surveyed mentioned having had problems with the product/service offered, in fact, in the qualitative research, some of those interviewed said: "We had that area under control." "It was one of our strengths. Our product was very good."

The results of this section confirm what many business world gurus have been saying for years: "A good product does not sell itself." To illustrate this idea, it is enough to review the story of one of the most successful entrepreneurs of the twentieth century, Bill Gates. The founder of Microsoft confessed that he was not the creator of the computer, or of the D.O.S. operating system, or of Windows itself. So, what was the secret of his overwhelming success? The billionaire defined it simply: "Concentrating on knowing how to correctly sell and commercialize my products."

On the other hand, in the case of consumer goods, the factors to be considered once the sales channels have been decided include: the amounts processed and the amounts required by the distributors, transportation arrangements, margins, payment arrangements, etc. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) points out that, generally, supermarket chains demand that their providers supply all their stores, and determine minimum delivery amounts, which may be difficult for small manufacturers. (Shepherd, 2003) It is also highlighted that on some occasions, supermarket chains can be very slow to pay invoices, which makes it even harder to keep a business afloat.

*"You don't want to sell to those companies that sell tons. Sell to the local candy store...get to know your market and start to earn money so that later you can sell to big companies."*

### Cause 4. Human Resources

Another crucial aspect to consider at the very early stages of a company is the team. Although much of the initial effort of starting a business is solitary, once there is enough capital to launch, a good plan is in place, and the technical and market aspects are covered, it is necessary to establish who will be your partners in this new adventure.

In practice, one can say: "I need two or three people to run the store, another two to be in charge of advertising and sales, and another person to head the administrative part." But are all this staff really contributing abilities, skills, and attitudes that benefit the business? And if the staff has already been hired, but they need training and development, is there a requirement to fulfill that need?

It was found that one of the primary causes for failure, selected by 3 out of every 10 entrepreneurs, is the lack of adequate staff development and capacity building. This is to say that there was a lack of adequate training plans in place to effectively train and develop employees.

*"There was a lack of clarity in the business objectives, in the why and what we work for, and in the required and expected performance."*

Thanks to the research, we were also able to observe that the lack of employee development in an unsuccessful company is related to a point that was already discussed in the administration findings: the lack of adequate leadership.

To conclude, a summary of the most often reported issues in the human resources area are shown in the graph below:

### Primary reasons for failure in human resources





Many of the entrepreneurs that added comments at the end of the questionnaire mentioned the difficulty of finding employees that were loyal and had the necessary skills to run the business.

*"Lack of trustworthy administrative personnel."*

*"Disloyal and untrustworthy personnel. Theft related to the competition."*

*"Hiring is very difficult, the engineering interns are completely ignorant of academic skills we consider basic."*

*"Poor hiring decisions in terms of technical abilities and compatibility with the internal culture."*

## Cause 5. External Factors

*"Fiscal reforms were passed in my country. I was considered a small contributor, but that classification doesn't exist with the new reforms. I can't pay such high taxes, my cash flow doesn't allow for that. The small contributor designation disappeared, and that was the final blow for my business."*

Sometimes, in spite of all the planning, the time dedicated, the studies done, and the effort invested, things happen that are beyond the control of the entrepreneur. Situations that, despite all of the forecasts, impact the business negatively and leave no way around them. These scenarios have been categorized as "external factors," and they include everything from intense rain that floods the business to a regional or global crisis that contracts the market economy.

*"Sudden economic collapse due to natural causes: a fifteen inch snowfall, followed by a five day freeze that paralyzed the city, all only three months after opening the business."*

According to the unsuccessful entrepreneurs, there were situations in which they had to deal with what they described, in their own words, as "bad luck". These external factors were not the same for everyone, and each entrepreneur had to confront their own bad luck.

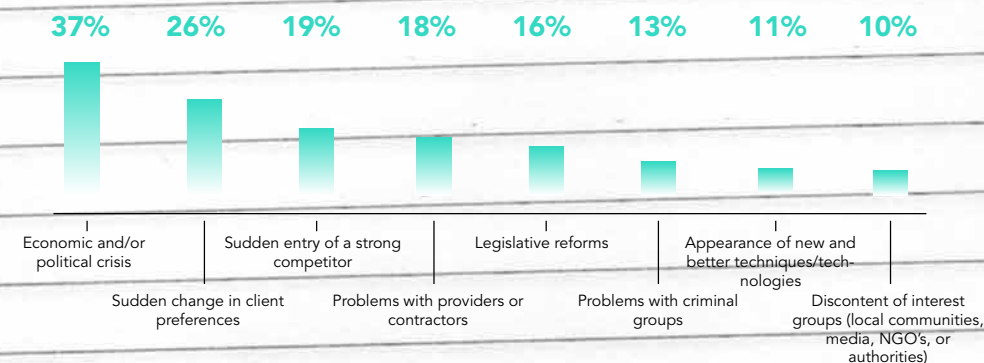
Before going into more detail, it is interesting to note that "external factors" turned out to be one of the two least often selected themes. A possible explanation for this is found in a comment made by one of the business founders that was interviewed during the qualitative research:

*"When you first fail, you try to blame everything on external factors, but after a while you mature a bit and you realize that the blame lies with yourself. If you were hit with an economic crisis, it's your fault for not studying the economic situation before starting the business. If the drug traffickers came knocking, it was a bad decision to start a business that had that risk potential. What I'm trying to say is that in the majority of cases, it's our own fault for not doing our homework."*

Now, in searching for trends in the sub-themes, it is possible to observe that "economic and/or political crisis" was the only option that generated a significant response, with 37% of those surveyed indicating that this was the cause for their failure.

*"The economic crisis of 2008-2009 severely impacted the target market for my products."*

## Primary reasons for failure in external factors



Contrary to the survey results, where external factors showed up rarely as a primary cause, during the focus group many entrepreneurs went into detail with experiences that involved a variety of external factors, such as criminal activity, insecurity, and the economic crisis, among others.

As previously mentioned, the survey included a blank field marked "other" to allow for the addition of experiences not included in the causes for failure listed. In this space, some of those surveyed indicated certain policies and actions of government and aid institutions as possible causes of failure:

*"Poor business training and lack of flexibility within the government to make the incubation process of small businesses more accessible, effective, and with fewer barriers."*

*"Lack of credit institutions to support small and medium businesses."*

*"Essentially, the national business culture and the lack of an environment in which all of us are able to compete within the same rules. A business can't grow in an economy that does not provide the appropriate conditions; we have a tax burden from the government that depletes the entrepreneur and distracts him/her from the primary focus of the business with bureaucratic issues."*

These findings confirm the results found in the Amway Global Entrepreneurship Report 2013, in which Mexico is highlighted as one of the countries with the most potential for entrepreneurship (56%), but also as one of the least entrepreneurial-friendly (45% unfriendly) (AMWAY, 2013).



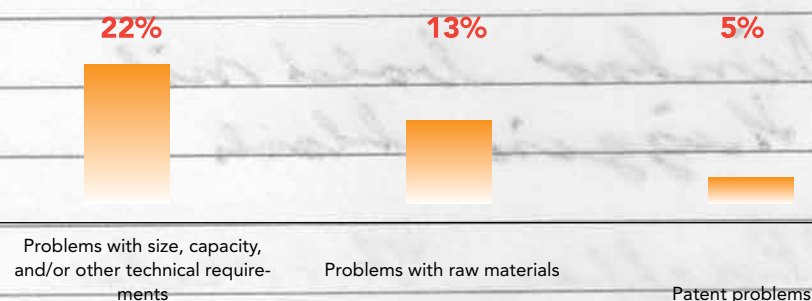
## Technical Aspects

*"I took me between two and three years to start a factory. I didn't know how to start a dehydration process factory. Now I know...production was very high, sales were zero, so I charged less, right?"*

The supplies and processes are just as important for a business. A market study is only useful if the raw materials, patents, formulas, energy, and machinery that are needed to produce the good or service in question are known, in addition to the procedures related to the size and capacity. With the intent of knowing what part of the technical aspects was most difficult for the entrepreneurs, each entrepreneur was asked to mark whether they agreed or disagreed with specific situations presented.

From among these sub-themes and situations, it was found that 22% had problems with size, capacity, and other technical requirements. Only a small percentage had problems applying for patents or issues with raw materials. The graph shows a summary of the most representative results in the technical aspects.

**Primary reasons for failure in technical aspects**



It is important to point out that during the qualitative research, some entrepreneurs noted that they had had problems due to lack of knowledge of a key method or formula in the elaboration of their product or service, or had problems with necessary machinery or equipment.

## Conclusion

*"In the end, mess up and mess up again. The perseverance that you come to have to get what you want, which might change as time passes [...]. That is what success is about, doing what you had in mind at some moment, carry it out, capture it. That's what's gratifying. Not keeping the idea hidden away all your life."*

As it has been suggested throughout this book, failure must be seen as one more step on the path to success. Sometimes, failure can even be part of one's personal growth and can contribute to an improvement in businesses sense. When we asked an entrepreneur that had experienced failure what he would change if he could turn back time, he commented: "Romantically speaking, I wouldn't change anything. Everything is part of your personal growth and it takes you to where you are now." However, failure can be avoided or, in the best of cases, mitigated, which is why it is important to understand and aggregate the main issues that can destroy a business.

The lack of sufficient income to survive was recorded as the primary reason for failure for Mexican entrepreneurs, an issue which might be mitigated if strong financial planning, both personal and of the future business, is done before beginning a project. This planning might include: I) calculate and ensure large enough savings to last until the company hits break even, II) have an alternate source of income, at least until the business can support the full load, or III) look for credit/financing (such as equity investment) that provides important operating capital.

The main errors observed in this study indicate a common denominator: the entrepreneur must dedicate enough time to carry out an appropriate planning process. He/she cannot only focus on taking care of all the operational activities of the business, but must also think through scenarios for the present and future. If we think back on the different personality types of those surveyed, we can conclude that the majority were "open to new experiences", which can be associated with the search for new market opportunities and the development of products and/or services; in other words, with the ability and energy to generate business ideas. In order to overcome the possible lack of planning in their personality, the entrepreneur may opt to surround him/herself with people with the dominant personality trait of "conscientiousness", and look to develop themselves in these areas. For any business, the planning phase is the first and the most important. As is often said, "To fail to plan is to plan to fail."

The Global Entrepreneurship Week Policy Report, which interviews entrepreneurs from 140 countries, asks interviewees for thoughts on how the public policies of a country can make the process of founding a business easier. The complaints of the entrepreneurs surveyed include: laws and taxes that limit the development of new businesses, incompetent or dishonest government officials, insufficient intellectual property laws, and lack of access to capital. On a global level, entrepreneurs seem to be satisfied, since the competition operates in accordance with the law and it is possible to hire staff with the required abilities and



knowledge. Mexican entrepreneurs in particular complained about the laws, taxes, and the incompetence of government employees. They also draw attention to the fact that it is not easy to incorporate a company, and that the competition does not operate in respect to what is stipulated by the law (GEW, 2013).

Academia, and specifically the Tecnológico de Monterrey, is working to foment in its students an entrepreneurial spirit not only in the creation of new companies, but within any of the activities to which they dedicate themselves. To accomplish this goal, in 2013 the university created the Instituto de Emprendimiento Eugenio Garza Lagüera to help all students develop and strengthen their entrepreneurial spirit. The Institute understands entrepreneurial to mean, "having the passion to propose and implement innovative solutions that transform reality and generate social, environmental, and economic value."

The Tecnológico has stood out for its solid entrepreneurial ecosystem that has allowed for its graduates to develop an entrepreneurial spirit in the broadest sense. As a result, 20 years after graduation, 70% of its graduates are entrepreneurs, and their leadership has impacted the economic and social development of not only Mexico, but also of Latin America. In terms of its recent graduates, 20% are partners in a business, or are in the process of incubating a business. But the goal is to increase that number, and for that to happen, the fear of failure has to be reduced as much as possible.

Finally, we return to the analogy of the chile and the Mexican. In *Capsicum and Culture: The History of the Chile*, Janet Long Solis writes that modern Mexican agriculture cultivates approximately 140 different chilies included in more than one thousand dishes. However, while putting the history of chile in Mexico into context, it is discovered that only 5% of the kinds of chile in the world (around 2,494 kinds) are grown in Mexico (ethno-botanik, s.f.). In other words, there is so much more to be investigated, analyzed, and tasted in terms of Mexico's favorite fruit.

There is still much to discover in terms of business failure: Does external financing result in a lower failure rate? What additional causes for failure should be taken into account? Are personality traits intrinsically linked to the types of failure? How much does the appearance of external factors influence the generation of internal problems? Is it better to have partners/employees that cover the weaknesses of the entrepreneur, or should the latter train him/herself? These questions and many others will be answered as the failure movement continues to grow, so we invite you to distribute this book and to share it with entrepreneurial friends.

To finish, let's remember the immortal words of Thomas Wayne:

*And why do we fall, Bruce? So we can learn to pick ourselves up.*

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