

# *Foreword*

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**W**e have more diet books than ever, yet as a species we are fatter than ever. We have more books than ever about building a business, yet more businesses are failing. Why is this? It's because most books lie to you, and most authors are full of hooey. (Note: the editor made me change my original word). Most books are written by people who have never done themselves (in an extraordinary manner) what they are telling you to do, and they pontificate about some new shortcut or magic formula for how to succeed. Most spend more time positioning themselves as experts than they do offering expertise. Here's the deal: there are no shortcuts. The game isn't fair. Business is a bare-knuckle brawl, and to become a champion, you're gonna get your nose bloodied along the way. People don't like to hear that for some reason, but it's the truth. Thomas Edison said it long ago: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Marc Sparks has done it. BIG. Over and over again (and continues to). And this book tells you the truth about succeeding in business.

I've been waiting for this book for nearly a decade. Before building *SUCCESS* Media and becoming publisher and founding editor of *SUCCESS* magazine, I was president of The Success Training Network (TSTN), owned by Marc. I saw firsthand the street-smart, profoundly wise, and intuitive genius that was Marc Sparks. But most of his magic was still an enigma to me. I wanted the mystery solved. I wanted to learn how he did it—all of it—plainly and completely.

But Marc is incredibly illusive. The truth is, he is either shy, private, humble, or all the above. It takes all the verbal judo I have to get him to talk about himself even for a minute or two! I pushed him for years to write this book . . . and I'm not the only one pushing. Almost everyone who has worked for him, with him, or against has pushed him to write this book. A group of his leaders even staged a coup while visiting him at his home in Aspen, Colorado. They called it the Colorado Intervention.

At the end of a five-day dude trip filled with golf and fly-fishing, the timing seemed right. Toward the bottom of a great bottle of wine (persuasion always goes better at the end of a bottle), while sitting together on his back veranda overlooking an expansive valley and the sunset-lit Rocky Mountains strung out all along the horizon, they pounced . . . and the intervention commenced. Every member of the small circle took turns with his best pitch—passionately trying to convince Marc to write the very book you are about to read.

Marc was caught off-guard, and once he figured out what was really going on, he winced, squirmed, flicked his hand in disregard, and tried to laugh it off. Even after several attempts to change the subject and redirect the conversation—something Marc is normally quite skilled at doing—the group wouldn't back down. Trouble is, Marc had none of the typical hot buttons for

why people write books: self-adulation, promotion, fame. Even the thought of it all made him cringe.

Then they finally hit pay dirt. Marc's cofounder of Splash Media, Chris Kraft, said, "Marc, what if you just help one entrepreneur and it makes all the difference in his or her business? Think about it: if you don't write this book, that one person might not make it."

Then Marc's favorite Bible verse was brought into the conversation to land the knockout punch: "For everyone to whom much is given, of him shall much be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded" (Luke 12:48). When Marc asked my opinion, I sided with Luke.

I asked, "Marc, how many people have helped you succeed?"

"Many," was his response.

"Then it's time to pay it forward," I said. "It's a responsibility. You have an obligation to write this book." I was pushing Marc because I truly felt his hard-fought nuggets of wisdom packaged up in a book could make a profound impact on the business future of many entrepreneurs. And, quite frankly, I wanted a better look behind the curtain of Oz myself.

Marc is the epitome of a self-made success story. He never went to college, didn't inherit any seed money, and did not come from notable DNA. Marc started with nothing and built empire after empire from the construct of his mind and the grit of his determination. Marc has that rare, anything-is-possible, no-fear, fail-fast drive. He believes that the sooner you fail, the sooner you will succeed—a model that has proven to work for him repeatedly.

While Marc is not as publicly known as many of the über achievers you've seen on the cover of *SUCCESS*, he shares many of their attributes. He has the "Screw it, let's do it! If you fall flat on your face, get up and try again" mindset of Richard Branson. Like

Branson, Marc doesn't hear "No," he only hears "Try harder." Fear and failure don't frighten or paralyze him; rather, they intrigue and invigorate him.

Marc has the same "Sure we can inhabit Mars" audacious courage and wild ambition of an Elon Musk. When others think he's crazy, he is willing to make the big bet using his own wallet to fuel the rocket ship of his wild ideas. Marc sees the world in terms of what's possible and how fast (dubbed "Sparks Speed") through the same reality distortion field Steve Jobs did. Marc and Steve also share the same standard of quality and excellence, and have an intuitive sense for beautiful design and the genius of great packaging.

Like Jeff Bezos (Amazon) and Howard Schultz (Starbucks), Marc has a keen ability to find the magic factor that will ignite an enterprise and make it scale. Then he has the relentless discipline to keep everything else simple and focused on the fundamentals, just as John Wooden does.

Marc has the humble and affable quality, mixed with the negotiation prowess of Warren Buffett. They both have been known to make a multimillion-dollar deal on the back of an envelope, secured by a handshake. And in the end, they will own the heart of the deal and still leave you feeling victorious.

And maybe most importantly Marc has a sincere caring for people, similar to Tony Hsieh (Zappos) or Joel Osteen. He treats people right, fairly, and generously. He is well respected and trusted because he gives both respect and trust first.

What makes Marc different and exceptional in my eyes is that he is the rare man who has the combination of all those attributes. We can all learn a great deal from a man like Marc.

The way I see it is, this book gives you the privilege to learn from the man in the arena:

“The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

—Theodore Roosevelt, 1910

You can save lots of your own sweat and blood by studying the pages ahead. Certainly your face will still become marred in dust as you enthusiastically strive to pursue your own worthy cause, but at least you can gain direct tutelage from one who himself has dared greatly, fought valiantly, and claimed repeated victories. The man in the ring has chronicled his unorthodox methods so you too can experience the triumph of high achievement and outrageous success in the ring of business and life. Enjoy!

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