

GBSD™

GETTING BIG SH*T DONE™



PAT SULLIVAN

WITH **MICHAEL ZIMAN**

A Serial Startup Founder's Secrets to Doing Big Things

BY THE FOUNDER OF **ACT!** • **SALESLOGIX** • **JIGSAW HEALTH** • **RYVER**

Be sure to check out Ryver at www.Ryver.com.

Copyright © & ™ 2018 Pat Sullivan

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher.

Written by Pat Sullivan with Michael Ziman

ISBN-13: 978-0-9997325-0-2

Printed in the U.S.A.

V2.0

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION	9
THE LAST CHAPTER I WANTED TO WRITE	11
BELIEVING IS THE BATTLE	15
THE ALPHABET OF PLANS	19
PLAYING WITH VULTURES	23
BE A GEOLOGIST	31
IT'S A DOG V. DOG WORLD	33
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE PROBLEMS	37
MISTAKES WERE MADE, THANK GOODNESS	41
THE STOP SIGN	47
EMBRACE YOUR INNER CORLEONE	51
BUT BE NICE ABOUT IT	55
LEARN HOW TO PASS THE SHIT	59
LOOK AND SOUND THE PART	63
SOFTWARE TO GBSD	67
FINAL THOUGHT	71

FOREWORD

The rest of the story ...

At my father's funeral, a man named Ron shook my hand and told me a story about my father, a story I'd never heard before. That story captured the very essence of the man who was my father. His essence has been the beacon - my North Star - that has guided me through life and business. I'm getting ahead of myself though...

My dad often worked 3 jobs to send all 5 of us kids to private schools and keep food on the table. He did a great job; my siblings and I all agree - we didn't know we were poor.

One of his jobs was being a politician. He ran 23 successful local campaigns and eventually ended up on the St. Clair County Board of Supervisors in Illinois. (This was way back when being a "politician" meant serving people, not lining your pockets like today.)

I have great memories of watching him help people anyway he could. Things like guiding them to financial assistance when they were in need, or even just getting a dead animal removed from their street.

My dad had oversight over the local Roads Department for the county. Ron - the man who told me the story at my father's funeral - was dad's opponent in his last successful election. (Sort of amazing Ron was even there!)

This is the story Ron told me.

Dad found out that Ron had posted all his campaign signs too close to the roads. By law, the county had to take those signs down. Now, any “typical” politician would have said nothing and let the county remove the signs.

Not Dad though. My whole life, the message he preached to me was “Do the right thing, even if it hurts.” If I heard him say that once, I heard it 10,000 times. My dad didn’t just talk the talk. He walked the walk.

So instead of doing nothing and letting Ron lose his campaign signs, Dad called his political opponent. He said to him, “Ron, get out there and move your signs back further from the roads so the county won’t take them down.”

Ron’s eyes widened as he gripped my hand. “Who would do that?” he wondered out loud. After my dad died, Ron won my dad’s seat at the next election.

I’d never heard this story before but Ron’s story didn’t surprise me. It was exactly what I’d expect from my dad. “Do the right thing, even if it hurts.” That’s how my dad lived his own life. That’s how he was remembered after he died. My dad quietly always did the right thing, even if it hurt. And that’s how he raised me and my brothers and sisters.

Starting and growing companies tests us in a thousand different ways. Sometimes I get so angry with someone, I’ll swear I’m going to “get even” with them. It usually doesn’t take me long to realize that I can’t and I won’t. Dad never would have behaved that way, and so neither will I. Yes, I can still hold a grudge, but not for very long. It’s just not the right thing to do. I become friends with business competitors so we can call each other to talk about things our sales and marketing departments are saying that just are not true. I’ve honored promises I’ve made, that I wish I’d never made, just because it’s the right thing to do.

Now I can't say I've always lived up to my dad's example. But I can say for sure that his example is the standard I hold myself to. Do the right thing, even if it hurts.

Doing the right thing may be the most powerful way to GBSD!

My two favorite books are "The Hard Thing About Hard Things" by David Horowitz and "Team of Teams" by 4-Star General (retired) Stanley McChrystal.

Horowitz's book is easily the best book for the leaders of any company to read. McChrystal's book outlines how to help teams collaborate in a totally new way. Ryver was built in such a way to facilitate what McChrystal advocates. Both books will challenge you - as they did me - to "do the right thing."

The world has radically changed over the last decade and will change even more in the coming decade. The rules are changing. Most of them, anyway.

"Do the right thing even if it hurts" is one rule that will never change.

Pat Sullivan

Scottsdale, Arizona

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning there was shit. Crap. Stuff. Things. Work. Whatever you want to call it, there it was waiting for us to face it, sort it and get it done. Since the beginning of time people have been trying to find the best way to get their shit done. Some people are good at it. Some are not.

Those who find ways to get their stuff done make progress and have a chance to do big things. Those who don't have no chance at all. A good amount of this junk ends up just sitting there undone, buried with other things, neglected or given up on entirely. This is sad shit. How much sad shit could turn into big shit if the owners of this shit focused their attitudes and energies and turned it into something big?

Some folks have developed systems that suits them and their needs for "Getting Big Shit Done™" (GBSD™ for short). I am one of those folks. For over 35 years I have tried, failed, adapted, tried again, tasted success, started back from the bottom, rinsed, lathered and repeated to the tune of three category-creating and industry-upheaving companies, plus a fourth that's poised to do the same. Every product I have been a part of building has been built to get my own stuff done as efficiently and effectively as I possibly could.

Just so happens that my shit is not much different than everyone else's. These products sold, and sold a lot. Millions of people got more of their important work done faster, better, cheaper. I am driven to GBSD (also "Get Big Shit Done™") and in the process, I want to help you GBSD too!

Here's what you're not going to get out of this book: how to make to-do lists, the perils of multitasking, the benefits of meditating, rising early or why you should leave the office at 5:00 every night and forget about work. There are no quick-fix strategies on getting big things done. This is not intended to be your typical get-things-done book because I am making the assumption that the shit you want to get done is BIG. I'm not here to tell you about getting little shit done. You already know how to do that.

My goal is to help you think differently about how to get big shit started, how to trust your intuitions and how to get what you want in this crazy and ever-changing world of business. As you'll learn, I believe new products and services should serve one great purpose: to change lives. I have the same philosophy in writing this book, and I know once you master some of the techniques required to GBSD, your world will change in ways you never imagined.

“Big” is relative. It could mean building a great small business, non-profit, foundation, etc. It could mean an organization of thousands, or five. The hallmark of big is that you want whatever it is to grow and accomplish something big to you. To one degree or another you will have to face the same problems no matter how big you want to be. You will have to learn to get big things done as you face those problems.

I don't do little. I live to GBSD. This is the story of how I learned to do precisely that. These are some of the most important lessons I've learned to GBSD. Let's get started!



01

THE LAST CHAPTER I WANTED TO WRITE

The hardest part of getting anything done is simply getting started. Everyone has that one daunting task that looms over all others, the elephant in the room that you hope will magically disappear if you procrastinate long enough. Why write a book when I could respond to an email, or check in with my dev team, or get a coffee with an old friend? These are all “to-dos,” and won’t I feel more productive the more of them I’m able to check off my list?

Here’s where knowing the secret of the “One Hard Thing” can help you tackle it with gusto. And that secret is... no one wants to do it! It is the last thing they want to do.

If everyone wanted to do the very thing they wake up not wanting to do, it would have to be re-classified. The truth is you're never going to like doing the One Hard Thing. But I've learned that getting the thing done I least want to do is a key to my own success.

Building any kind of successful business is ALWAYS hard stuff. It's rarely fun while you're doing it. Later, when you look back at what you've accomplished, you swell with pride - and that's the fun part. Other people putting off the things they don't want to do while you tackle yours gives you a significant advantage. That's why you should always embrace doing the things you don't want to do -first. Most of your competitors aren't!

Do you ever feel an impending sense of dread about a certain project or idea? It doesn't even have to be some big thing, it can be as simple as a phone call that you really don't want to make. The surefire way to make your day suck is to keep putting it off, effectively turning it into a growing dark cloud that blankets your productivity. When you feel that sense of doom consider it your signal that this is the very thing you need to do now. Make that difficult call first thing and, I promise, you will feel more courageous because you faced it and did it.

Nike says "Just do it." Few people know the most famous tagline in marketing history was inspired by a prisoner's last words while facing his executioner. Talk about doing the thing you don't want to do! That's the genius of Nike's interpretation, though - if you can stand in the face of certain demise and summon the fortitude to request that they get on with it, surely you can push through the last couple miles of a marathon or write that RFP or fire half of your company. Unlike our poor chap who never knew just what an inspiration he would become, doing the least exciting or most arduous thing on your docket ain't gonna kill you. In fact, you'll wake up on the other side feeling more alive because you did the thing you did not want to do.

That's why this chapter comes first. Because the last thing I wanted to do was sit down and write a book. I've written three and hated doing it. So I figured I might as well get the last chapter out of the way first. Everything from here on out is cake.



BELIEVING IS THE BATTLE

I get my stuff done mainly because I believe I can. Confidence comes from belief. Both are built over a lifetime. The battleground is in your mind and you must fight and win that battle every day. There are many times when issues are dark and murky, and I wonder if I can accomplish something that **MUST** be accomplished. My confidence grows as I attempt harder and harder tasks and complete them even though I was not sure I could. I love getting big shit done.

The idea of loving the process is one of the key lessons from one of my favorite books, “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success,” by Carol Dweck. If you’re not familiar with the book, it posits that there are two types of mindsets all individuals possess: either fixed or growth. Those who have a growth mindset are better equipped to tackle big problems because they embrace the difficulty of the challenge.

People with a fixed mindset are often people for whom things tend to come easy. They're the folks born with all the natural talent in the world. Consequently, they believe outcomes should come fully-formed with minimal effort, as if their talent alone should be enough to solve the problem. Stumbling blocks along the way aren't celebrated and the first failure often becomes the give-up point. Even worse, they deeply fear failure because it might expose them as a fraud, like their assumed "talent" was an illusion all along. They habitually aim for goals just below the upper limits of their ability, in effect always allowing them to succeed on paper while failing to take things to the next level. They get the little shit done.

Growth mindset folks embrace the fact that there are lots of things they don't know. They're talented people but they never rest on talent alone. They're driven to find solutions to problems big and small, no matter how much effort it takes to find an answer to something really hard.

Many companies are led by executives whose fixed mindsets inhibit their chances of building something great. Their thinking just isn't big enough. Natural talent will lose out to tenacity and belief every time. In the short term, talent will win some battles, but it's those who have the mindset to develop their talents into skills over the long haul that prevail.

I've been asked a philosophical question many times during my career: "Are entrepreneurs born, or do they develop?" I answer, "Yes." Tiger Woods was born with more natural golfing ability than perhaps anyone ever, but we only know of his greatness because of what he did with that talent. If he had a fixed mindset, he would not have grinded on the practice range from sunrise to sunset, turning his gift into an incredible skill. The wins followed.

It's the same thing with entrepreneurs. Many have all the talent in the world, but they don't know they must work thousands

of hours to develop those talents into skills. Skills are what solve problems because they're the result of talent that has been cultivated. Skills are what give you the courage and confidence to believe. You'll know you have the right mindset when you start saying, "I'm going to attack this, and I'm going to succeed because I believe I can. No matter what, I'll find a way to GBSD."

When an entrepreneur doesn't believe, it shows right away. I see it all the time when startup founders talk to me about raising money. They think small because that is all they can believe. It's almost as hard to raise \$200k as it is to raise \$2 million.

When I hear an entrepreneur meekly say they are going to raise a small amount, I can tell they don't have the confidence that comes from working to develop talents into skills. Most often they just need someone to help them believe they can raise far more than they think. And they need to learn how. Raising money is a skill you develop by doing it. For people trying to do something big, it is one of the most important skills they can acquire. Most can learn it if they believe they can. Hang tight, in Chapter 4, for the first time ever in writing, I am going to share the things I've learned about raising money – things you may have never heard before.

Getting Ryver right has been the biggest challenge of my professional career. Part of that is because I believed I could do things the same way I'd done them with ACT!, SalesLogix and Jigsaw Health. I assumed my talent for starting those successful companies would be good enough to succeed with Ryver. I was wrong. The game had changed. I've had to learn new skills. We eventually got Ryver right because we believed we could. Our mindset was not going to allow us to fail but it was hell getting there!

I've learned that I can infect other entrepreneurs with my mindset. I am often able to help others believe they can accomplish big things.

I've met with founders who had an idea of things that could possibly work but without a clear belief in what they could make happen. They were lost for lack of a clear direction they could believe in. Sometimes founders already know the answers but they don't yet believe in their answers. That is why outside mentors are so important. I have had several mentors in my career, and I still have one today. There are always times when an entrepreneur needs help sorting through the issues they face. A fixed mindset entrepreneur typically won't have a mentor. They think they already know everything. A growth mindset entrepreneur will always have multiple people who can help them sort their shit out when things get murky, and it always does.

Know your talents. Realize they are not enough. Embrace the pain of turning them into finely honed skills, and never stop. Your confidence will grow and grow until you begin to believe you can do most anything.



THE ALPHABET OF PLANS

The German military strategist Helmuth von Moltke famously said, “No battle plan survives contact with the enemy.” The mistake in planning for a specific outcome is in thinking you know how you will arrive at that outcome. Yes, GBSD requires planning, but that means so much more than just having one plan of action.

Recently, I was raising money for Ryver. I had developed a relationship with a man who said he wanted to invest \$1.5 million. He kept stressing how excited he was to invest. He had a big success with a company he had sold years earlier and clearly could do what he committed to do. My team and I spent a few weeks going through all the typical due diligence and negotiations, and after all those questions were answered, he committed once again to the investment and we began the expensive process of getting the legal documents in order.

We needed the money and here was a man who committed exactly what we needed. Plan A was staring me in the face with

an open checkbook. Time to sit back and celebrate, right? But instead, I already had my attention turned to another potential investor. Why? Because you should always have Plan B in the works even though Plan A seems certain - especially when your gut is feeling funny about Plan A.

In the case of our Plan A investor, something was odd about him though I couldn't place my finger on it exactly. I had one of my patented feelings I've learned to trust. Some people might feel a similar off-kilter energy from a person or a situation but ignore their gut because of a hand they shook, an agreement they thought they had nailed down or just hoping it works out well. I believe no matter what you expect the outcome of Plan A to be, you need to always be working on Plan B and even Plan C... just in case. This requires a lot of mental stamina to press on with alternate plans. It requires you to always have multiple balls in the air. You need to be prepared to GBSD by sheer force of will no matter what happens. My job was to make sure Ryver did not run out of money. It was what I had to get done. I could leave nothing to chance, especially because I sensed something was not right.

Sure enough, I got an email on a Monday morning before our planned close on Wednesday, informing me that he was backing out, saying he "found out we had competitors." It was laughable - of course we had competitors! We had spent hours talking with him a month earlier about all of them. Was I disappointed? Yes. Mad? Of course. Was I shocked? Nope. I had a hunch, and I had a solid Plan B.

By Thursday that same week I was in Dallas pulling together the other deal - Plan B. And I had a Plan C formulated just in case. Never underestimate the power of being prepared to go through the entire alphabet to GBSD. Virtually nothing goes the way you think it will. Don't expect it to. Expect bad shit to happen and you'll never be surprised when it does. Bad shit happening is normal!

Now, some people might view this having a Plan B, C, D, etc., as thinking negatively. Or assuming something terrible is always going to happen. That's not it at all. I never allow myself to engage in self-fulfilling negative prophecies like "This is going to fail" or "If this falls through, I'm screwed." If you carry that mindset and default to woe-is-me mode when something doesn't go your way, you'll spend all your energy pulling yourself out of your self-made depression, and you'll have none left to attack the next course of action.

If you blindly trust everything will always work out the first time, you'll be devastated when it doesn't. You'll lose faith and perhaps think you should give up. People often confuse the idea of positive thinking with never acknowledging that anything bad will happen. You should always believe things will work out and you'll get what you want/need... eventually. It could be somewhere between Plan D and Plan Q, but it's out there. You must be willing to think about "what happens if" and do the hard work needed to be prepared. Thinking through possibilities, both good and bad is your job.

All Plan A really means to me is that I am moving to a great outcome. It's my job to follow the journey to any number of possible conclusions. What if we're late to market? What if somebody quits? What if a new competitor pops up? What if I get sick? For those who think those are too negative, remember I also consider: What if we grow three times faster? What if we raise twice the amount we're looking for? Plans, plans, plans. GBSD means thinking about all the potential shit that will need to get done way before it happens, or doesn't.

The original investor backing out was the best thing that could have happened to Ryver. My gut sensed he would be difficult to work with and the alternative has been better by tenfold. I like to think I have a knack for being in the right place at the right time but I don't view it as an accident. Call it the power of intention, call it the law of attraction, call it God if you will, but there is a spiritual,

ethereal quality to how I approach getting big things done that goes beyond simple coincidence. It is my mindset that no matter what happens, my shit is going to get done. When you think like that, it is exciting to watch just how it happens. It's almost NEVER how I first thought it would.

Every time I do something, no matter which letter of the plan I'm on, I work as hard as I can as if the outcome is entirely dependent on me. But I trust that something outside myself is working along with me to get the outcome I need. If you've ever known someone for whom all the breaks seem to always go their way, it's usually because they earned their "luck" with effort and trust. I'm constantly looking for and attracting so-called coincidences, those moments that work out in ways so serendipitously they appear almost random. But to me, they're not random at all – I am constantly putting serendipity into motion.

I have learned I can strongly influence making things happen by speaking out loud my expectation that it will happen. If my company needs money, over the course of the raise, many times I will say, "the money the company needs is coming." I don't know where it's going to come from and I don't expect a certain person to deliver it. I have come to believe I "speak it into being" and then expectantly watch for the unexpected to appear along my path. It usually does.

My dogged pursuit through the alphabet of plans stems from an understanding I have with myself of why I'm doing what I'm doing. After my intentional statements for things to happen, I almost always add "for the sake of my shareholders, my employees and my customers" - not just for me. Getting what I want is a byproduct of others' success. Once you start thinking of GBSD in terms of an obligation to others, you'll never stop trying. You will find the way you GBSD becomes more powerful than just your own efforts. Trust me, it's very real.



04

PLAYING WITH VULTURES

If you are going to build something big, if you are going to GBSD, chances are high you will have to find a way to raise outside capital. If you can avoid it that is great but rare. If you can figure out a way to boot strap your startup or something like a Kickstarter program, I am a big fan of that. But if you are going to get done what is in your mind, you probably are going to have to deal with the vultures – Venture Capitalists.

I've raised a lot of money in my career from angels, venture capitalists and Wall Street going public with SalesLogix. I also lined up big Private Equity money for an acquisition that fell through at the last minute. I've learned how to raise money. I've verbally shared this with several CEO's who were trying to raise serious money and, in every instance, they had never heard any of this before. Ryver is my 5th venture backed startup so I've seen this movie lots of times and learned from some of the best. And what I've learned, very few people know. Raising VC money is one of the most challenging and yet fun things you will ever do. How do you do it? Buckle up!

I am going to assume you have at least some sales traction proving your product/service is one that is highly desirable and people will pay for it. I am assuming you have a pretty good team of people around you and you have shown you are competent CEO even if not very experienced. Your market is sizable. You have some differentiation from your competitors.

If these things are not true, you very likely cannot raise money from angels or VC's anyway unless you have several big successes and are already a big celebrity in Silicon Valley, New York or Boston. I did my startups in Dallas and Phoenix where there is little venture money. Angels yes, but not VC's. The things I am about to share also apply to angels, private equity and Wall Street to a large degree, but I am going to focus on VCs.

The number one mistake I see made is when a VC initiates contact with a CEO. The CEO assumes it means the VC is honestly interested in making an investment soon. They will come visit you, perhaps more than once. After they have stolen your time and perhaps your secrets, you will almost certainly hear them say, "We are really interested but we don't feel you are far enough along, and we would like to stay in touch and see how your company develops."

This is especially true if the visitors are associates, vice presidents or a new partner. They are nothing more than scouts whose job is to be aware of potential future investments and to learn about your category so they can help the senior partners eventually pick a winner, perhaps one of your competitors. All you are doing is helping them. They will be extremely bright and very nice, but 99% of the time they have no intention of making an investment in you but they will make you think they are serious.

I NEVER talk seriously with a junior VC (except to get them on my list of vultures) who reaches out to me unless I am ready to work my own process where I have more control over how the game is played. You will rarely have the advantage, but you can and must level the playing field. VCs' hate how people like me run a powerful process of raising money, but it is the only way to do it if the game is going to be fair.

They have lots of choices. But they have lots of money they MUST invest! Why not in you?

I raise money because I believe I can. I believe they will miss out if they don't invest in the company I am building. You must work on your attitude to the point that you truly believe it, or at least can do a great job of faking it! It is important that you approach the process with the utmost confidence. Not arrogance though - that is fatal! You must have an honest, palpable confidence. Something along the line of "You'd be stupid not to invest in me but I understand sometimes it just may not be a good fit for you right now."

I always end every meeting I have with a VC (and angel for that matter) saying "You know I am going to get funded, I'd like it to be you... thanks for your time, I have another meeting to get to."

"Another meeting" is the absolute key to successfully raising money. My process involves doing a roadshow. I pick out three weeks a few weeks out. I've already prepared a very long list of VCs' – ones I know, ones I can get introductions to, ones who previously contacted me where I put them on my list and told them I'd get back to them when I was ready, and ones I want to meet who I don't know at all. I start contacting the most senior people I can get to and tell them I am going to be in their area on certain days and I want to meet with them.

I work my ass off to fill up every single day with as many meetings as I can reasonably get done. I once had 54 meetings in 13 business days (some of those 2nd and 3rd meetings with the same VC.) You might say, “Well, Pat, they know who you are and of course they will see you.” Don’t bet on it! I started doing this when nobody knew anything about me and so can you. It does get a bit easier over time but it is ALWAYS hard. It’s meant to be hard! It is one way they sort out the ones they ought to invest in.

Being from Arizona makes it even harder because Silicon Valley VCs’ are generally loathe to invest anywhere they can’t drive to in less than an hour. They’ve gotten lazy and generally believe there aren’t many smart people outside of Silicon Valley. This is why I like to go to Utah, Colorado, Chicago, Austin, Boston, New York (and anywhere else) along with the entire Bay area. But don’t let yourself believe you can’t get money out of Silicon Valley. Money comes to great ideas and teams.

They will usually say yes to meeting in your timeframe. They will ask you to send the slides beforehand. Don’t do it. Slides are for face to face meetings. Send a 1 or 2-page exec summary and no more. Make the summary pretty, but short and to the point. It’s like a preview to a movie. It ought to make you want to see the movie and no more. Regarding the slides... 12 slides is the ideal. You can have a dozen more that are leave-behinds that have detail that you won’t have time to talk about. Practice... a lot! You won’t get to give your presentation the way you practice it so you must know it backwards and forward and be prepared to start and end differently at each meeting.

You must stand up when you present as long as there is more than one person there. Stand up! You can expect them to start asking you questions even before your first slide. They think they know everything about everything. They want to know if you know more than they do.

They want to feel your strength. Expect a free-for-all for the most part. I've had meetings where I only show one slide - my most important one. The rest of the time was nothing but rapid fire questions.

Have no more than three bullet points per slide but better is just a picture that you can talk to. NEVER have PowerPoint vomit! They listen at the beginning and the end. They scan their email in the middle. Your most important slides need to be the first three. Wow them at the start. Boring is bad. You may not get past these three. It's a good sign if you don't.

Have at least one other person with you but no more than two. Your sales or marketing and top tech person. They must be able to articulate under pressure. They only talk when you let them talk, but make sure they talk. Have fun - this is Showtime. You have less than an hour to make them want to dig in more. You won't cover it all in the first meeting. If you do your job well, there will be a 2nd and 3rd meeting. If they are really interested they may want you to come back the same day or next. Do it if you can but tell them you'll have to cancel another meeting if you do it. Make them ask you to cancel it.

The meeting is very important, but the most important element is the atmosphere you build up around the whole process which they must feel. Not overtly. Not in their face. But the key is using the power of "scarcity." You are unique. They have the chance to invest in YOU. Depending on how much you are raising, only one to three VCs' are going to get to invest in you this round. The others will all miss out.

The one thing investors HATE is to have had the opportunity to invest in you and then see you become a big success. They are competing with all the other VCs' to be the one who picked you, the winner. Winners are not easy to pick. They are not obvious and the VCs' know it. There is very real fear that you will be a winner and they are going to look foolish.

They don't want to read in a month that two of their hated competitors invested \$10MM in you and they didn't. That is what levels the playing field - Scarcity. Fear of missing out. Make that work for you. It's dynamite.

You will always get asked these two questions and DON'T EVER answer them directly. "What valuation are you thinking Pat?" My answer is always sincere and genuinely humble, "Gee, I really don't know. I am letting the market tell me what the correct valuation is."

They hate it but you are communicating confidence and that you are not stupid. Valuations are totally subjective and all over the map. There is no formula. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and you are worth what a VC is willing to pay for your equity. The second question is more obvious but damn if CEOs don't answer the question anyway. "Who else are you talking with?" My answer? "All the usual suspects, the ones you know and some you probably don't." If you do answer their question, it's possible at some point they will pick up the phone and call their buddy there and they will collude. Say it ain't so!! Happens all the time.

The trick is getting one VC to say "Yes, we are in as long as we can work out the terms." Often there will be more than one VC in the deal and they are often reluctant to be the first to say yes unless they are over the moon and want the biggest piece of the deal. VCs' are like vultures. A whole bunch of them will circle high in the sky waiting to see if something is really dead. Then a brave one goes down and carefully picks at a carcass. Once that happens they ALL come rushing down wanting to get in on the action.

It is a touchy situation once several VCs want in your deal. They hate the idea that they are in a bidding war but the fact is, they are in a bidding war. Good for you! You must be very careful at this point but you can negotiate with several of them

at once to see what terms they are willing to offer you. You want them to make the offer. In a negotiation like this, the first one who speaks... loses. Don't be the one to offer terms if you can avoid it. If they want in the deal they will tell you exactly what they are willing to do.

If it is not as good as someone else has offered, tell them and let them decide if they will go higher. But don't lie. They'll know or will find out later.

There are times where it is better to pick a VC you really like even if their terms are not as good. You are going to be married to them for 3 – 8 years. You better like them! Also, a VC NEVER wants to replace management or take control. They will do it only if you are a terrible manager and they must get rid of you. Their number one job is to make an investment and then go find another one. They bet on you! As long as you are the one who knows where all the bodies are buried, they'll NEVER want to replace you. It is actually pretty hard to get fired by an investor. The number one reason you will is if you try to hide something from them. Transparency is your job security. They expect you to have problems. Tell them your problems along the way and what you are doing about them. They only want to know someone competent is minding the store. 90% of the time venture capitalists are great people you will thoroughly enjoy working with. They too want to GBS.

When GBS requires big money to happen having the right mindset to level the playing field is the key to raising the capital you rightly deserve. So be the object that gets the vultures circling.



BE A GEOLOGIST

I almost never turn down a meeting. Doesn't matter who you are, I can usually find a half hour to grab a coffee with you. When I get a meeting invite, I scope out what the person is all about and think of how we might help each other. Nine times out of ten I see some way, even if it's small, that we can both get something out of the appointment.

The people I meet with are "rocks." My job is to turn them over and find out what's underneath. I'm a geologist looking for diamonds where others often just see plain stones. I view each new person I meet as an opportunity to learn from them and perhaps help them in some useful way.

It's amazing the number of times I've sat down with someone whom, on the surface, the casual observer would dismiss immediately as nothing more than a rock. But then they start talking, and I hear the spark of something interesting. I start really liking what they have to say. They reveal themselves to be the real deal sometimes wrapped up in a strange package. And bam, I've uncovered another diamond.

I always believe the path to every answer I'm seeking is out in front of me somewhere, somehow, sometime. Often, I'll think I'm on one path, start turning over rocks and find myself on a new trail altogether. Instead of ignoring strange rocks, I get excited about the answers that might come to me because I turned a new one over. I almost always learn something from every rock I study.

Too many people are too lazy or arrogant to be geologists. The top layer is all they care about. The stones that have rough surfaces, chipped edges or hard-to-grasp sides go unexplored in favor of the ones that fit the eye on first glance. I wouldn't be where I am today if I made every decision by the expected convention. To get the hard stuff done you must be open to influences from far afield.

While I don't have any specific expectation about each individual I meet with, I live with the expectation that the person I am with at this moment almost certainly has something useful no matter how misshapen their rock might be. It's this mindset that allows me to get things done, because I believe that if this rock doesn't have something good it may well lead me to the next moss-covered or sand-swept stone, and so on and so forth until the right one shows up on my path. Sometimes I've met them only because I have something I can help them with. What goes around, comes around.

GBSD requires a curiosity and open-mindedness that never shuts off. Many people lack the mindset and patience to turn rocks over. And even when they do, they don't examine every part of that rock expecting to discover its greatest qualities and allowing it to direct them. So, take that meeting and stick it out through a whole cup of coffee at least. You never know when that shiny diamond will reveal itself.



IT'S A DOG V. DOG WORLD

As a kid, my mom used to describe me as a dog with a bone. Once I got interested in something, I never let it go. I played every sport there was growing up and taught myself the golf swing with Ben Hogan's book and a bag of balls in a field because we couldn't afford lessons.

Golf remains my top passion just behind my passion for building world-changing products, and that's because I got myself into it early and refused to ever stop trying to get better. Bulldogs GBSD.

When I hear an entrepreneur be content with being 2nd or 3rd in their category, acquiescing to a competitor, it almost makes me angry. Competition drives every decision I make. At our peak with ACT! we had 90% market share. The bulldog in me was pissed we didn't have the other 10%.

Right now, I'm leading a company that's competing with a unicorn. Ryver is going head to head against Slack in the growing tech category of team communication, and everyday I go

unicorn hunting. You see, in the era in which I grew up there was no concept of participation awards. Little leagues kept score. Winners and losers. And the truth is, kids today still know the score of the game because competition is built into the fabric of life.

I need to know where I stand because I need to know what to agonize over, obsess over, be a bulldog about. Building any kind of successful company is only done by fanatics. Frankly, you have to be a bit crazy. We started building what would become Ryver before Slack was the phenomenon it is today, but by the time we launched, Slack was an undeniable force. Should we have quit and given ourselves a participation trophy for trying hard? How unsatisfying is that? That's specifically rewarding getting shit not done.

I believe there is always a way to win, even if you must change the rules of the game to differentiate in meaningful ways. Slack will be a big success, I can't stop that now. But that doesn't mean Ryver won't win big too. We've worked our asses off and are changing the rules of the game. David didn't win by fighting Goliath the way he expected David to fight - he did the unexpected and won. In the book *David and Goliath*, Malcolm Gladwell says, "Just because your competition is bigger than you, doesn't make them more powerful." Markets today are huge with lots of winners. There are adjacent categories you can pivot into that allow you to dominate that category. There is always a way to win. You work on it until you figure out how.

Understand - what you make must be really good. Today, a new product has about 48 seconds to show someone it's good. You can have the best sales and marketing but if the product isn't very good, you're toast.

That's so important, but it's not the prevailing notion among many entrepreneurs today.

The world, especially in tech, is much more complex, there's more competition than ever, and there are fewer differentiating factors between the haves and the have-nots.

It's one of the reasons being the captain of the Ryver boat has been so challenging. It's much harder today to build a great product that stands out on its own merits without a huge sales and marketing budget. Having the budget helps but if the product is not very good the budget won't matter.

The fact there's so much stuff out there now means a lot of it will be bad or won't fit together just right. What bothers me is when companies bring little pieces of junk products to market on purpose. They even have a name for them: "Minimally Viable Product", or MVP for short. Building a MVP product is necessary but the emphasis must be on the word "viable." It must be good to be viable. I'm all about building things and tinkering with them constantly to make it great, but lots of entrepreneurs are failing to define the "viable" part of MVP correctly. A new product must be life-changing to some degree for it to be viable in today's hypercompetitive market. Anything short of that won't work.

People just won't devote their attention to a new product that isn't quickly obvious as worth their time.

Is that a high threshold for determining if a product is good? Maybe. But I've seen the proof. ACT! had only been on the market for a couple of months and was not yet great. I got a phone call confirming that it met the threshold of life changing. Our company was only four people strong at the time, so I answered the phone.

The man on the other end said, "Is Pat Sullivan there?" When I announced myself, the first thing out of his mouth was, "You changed my life." I didn't know what he was getting on about - no one had ever said that to me before. Did he have some religious experience or a vision of me in a fever dream?

No, it was simpler than that: ACT! was the first product he'd ever used that helped him stay organized and get stuff done. That was what our product was designed to do, but to get a call completely out of the blue from someone who just had to tell me, confirmed we were on to something big. The same thing has been happening with Ryver.

There is an unknown threshold your product must get over to be good. You can't define it beforehand but you'll know when it gets there. People will begin to tell you. Moments like that are your confirmation that what you have is not a little piece of junk. Does your company have to be huge to be life-changing? Do you have to make something infallibly great? Absolutely, but not at first. But it must be good. Good is good enough because when you're good, you can keep competing and eventually become great.

I am not sure who I stole this quote from but it has become my mantra. "The Law of Least Astonishment." I prefer it to MVP. You HAVE to astonish people with at least one thing. And often it only takes one thing. In 1987 with ACT!, it was that we dialed the phone.

We sold a \$395 phone dialer! It astonished people they did not have to dial the phone number of their contacts. We did a lot of other cool things but if they didn't LOVE the phone dialer we knew they usually were not going to buy. Then you keep adding other astonishing features preferably one at a time. You have to astonish to be noticed.



IT'S GOOD TO HAVE PROBLEMS

43,560. That's the number of square feet in an acre. 208.710326 feet per side. I feel like I discovered it. You see, even in fifth grade, I passionately pursued answers just because.

If I became curious about something I typically became a fanatic about figuring it out. When I asked my teacher what the length of each side of a perfectly square acre would be, to her credit she didn't give me the answer. She told me I'd need to know square roots in order to find the answer. Square root? She told me to figure it out if I wanted to know, and for some crazy reason I wanted to know.

I got a high school math textbook (this was before the days of the TI- 83 of course) and learned how to do square roots to satisfy my strange compulsion.

Most people hear this story and ask why? What possessed me to follow through on such a seemingly random and insignificant factoid? I have no idea. What I do know is that I like having problems. Maybe that is why I love being a startup guy - mostly,

you have NOTHING but problems. Problems are the source of new ideas and they nag at us constantly, just waiting to be solved. The thought of not knowing the answer to my square acre problem was unacceptable to me. I still treat problems with the same curious wonder.

The stakes were raised in seventh grade. When I couldn't think of a topic for my required science project, I wrote my cousin who ran one of the largest pathology labs in the country. One of his ideas stuck out: paper chromatography – a method of separating a compound into its individual parts. To learn how it all worked I set up a lab in my basement complete with chemicals that today would be illegal to possess. I won my division at the state science fair.

The next year, I took it several layers deeper. I decided to apply what I'd learned to a real question: are any amino acids (what proteins are made of) lost in the processing of different breakfast cereals? The complexity of this experiment was significant but it didn't matter, I wanted to know. After testing Cheerios, Rice Chex and Corn Flakes, I discovered that yes, there was significant protein loss in the conversion from grain to cereal and I identified the specific ones that were destroyed. My curiosity was something I was born with, but I was beginning to develop it into a skill. I won the top prize at the state competition.

Pursuing with a vengeance the compulsions that call to us is an enormous catalyst to GBSD. Most problems we face don't have simple answers, mostly because we've never needed to know the answers until right now. But if you're curious, you know your urges are trying to tell you something and will often materialize in ways you never expected.

So much of the learning we do is done “just in time” to complete the tasks we face. A tip off for me that I need to do something is the feeling in my gut saying “I ought to...”

I've learned this is how my intuition works. It is usually quite subtle but persistent. I almost always follow that sense and often am amazed at where it takes me.

Everything I have built or worked on building, from a basement lab to the world's first CRM program, was engineered to solve a problem I had. When I built a prototype for ACT! (a process that took me two years in my spare time), I didn't even know it was a prototype. It was just something I programmed for my own use after learning to code, simply because I needed a better way to organize my contacts. Inevitably, other people saw how it would solve the contact problems in their lives, too. I knew I was onto something. My co-founder Mike Muhney, two real programmers and I turned that prototype into ACT! in 10 months. It eventually sold over 10 million copies.

When I talk to an entrepreneur, I'm always intrigued about where their idea came from, and almost all the time the most interesting ideas are "stumbled-upon." People will go about their daily business as usual until they happen onto a problem giving them trouble. Someone will find themselves running into the same problem over and over and ask, "why hasn't somebody fixed this thing?" They make it their obsession to solve the problem mainly because it's giving them fits personally.

You might have tried to start a business the other way - sitting around in a room with a couple other extremely bright people saying "we should start a business...what should we do?" These meetings almost never result in great ideas. Only by knowing the problem intimately and personally struggling with it do you stumble upon the right solution.

There have been plenty of skills I acquired when they became necessary and not a moment sooner, even though I was exposed to them early on. In college, I took two accounting courses, got good grades but retained absolutely nothing. That information wasn't relevant to me at the time. But today? I can

scan a P&L, balance sheet and cash flow statement in a minute and often find something wrong with them. When I became CEO of ACT, all of a sudden that skill became relevant, so I poured everything I had into learning it - just like those square roots.

I'm a huge believer in learning by doing. Some people are visual or auditory learners - not me. Immersion is the only way I can work something into my muscle memory, and I've needed to work out a lot of different muscles. Leaders must know enough about most everything under the sun to be successful. To GBSD you have to learn to delegate to people as good or better at something than you are, but if someone suddenly leaves the organization, your Plan B better be you stepping in for a while with the requisite knowledge. A colonel can still do a major's job if pressed into action.

Be curious to the point of being a pest. Ask questions of everybody and anybody. Read books and apply what you're learning. When pressed in by difficult problems learn to think long and hard to get good at seeing alternatives. Problems are your teacher. Grow your talents into skills. Most of all, start caring about everything you do and get in the mindset that you can and must learn it for the sake of your idea and your business.



08

MISTAKES WERE MADE, THANK GOODNESS

A frustrating fact of life and business is that sometimes you will put every effort into GBSD and it won't matter. It will fail. Maybe you made some miscalculations from the getgo and it was DOA. Maybe it's a case of wrong place, wrong time. Whatever the reason, to push past and continue to get more shit done, you must own the screw up and learn from it. Realize that yes, it is your fault!

Like I said in the previous chapter, the mistakes I made at the beginning of Ryver when it was called Contatta were because I assumed I could do things the same way I'd done them before. First person. Me. I'm the one who made those assumptions. Did I have help making those mistakes? Yep, lots of it! But you must take responsibility for messing shit up - once you start passing blame you're heading down a dark path.

Here's what I mean when I say I assumed I could do things the same way and still succeed. Every five to seven years, the landscape totally changes in how you build, market and sell a product. I've had many people tell me that I must have a big advantage having started ACT!, SalesLogix and Jigsaw Health. But it wasn't much of an advantage at all. In fact, it made me a little careless because even though I was aware of the sea change that had occurred in the industry, I made myself believe I could still succeed doing things the old way.

The biggest change is the acceleration of business pace. Everything is swirling around you ten times faster than ever, with more competition and more money involved. Back when we started ACT!, we were a software company in a time when most people didn't even own a computer. That meant our product wasn't a \$395 decision; it was a \$5,000 decision because people had to buy a computer to run our software. The process of GBSD moved at a snail's pace compared to today.

Making general assumptions about the business landscape is one way I messed things up. But I also had to own the truly fatal mistake that was the final nail in the Contatta coffin.

We believed we were doing everything right. We were fanatically obsessed with building something great. We really believed we had it. Except, we didn't. We assumed, or I should say I assumed, that email was the thing that needed disrupting. All the magic of Contatta only happened if a user adopted our email client and ditched Outlook or Gmail. It was a fatal flaw. I said to one of my cofounders "It was a pretty good bad idea wasn't it?"

The screw-up was an important and humbling learning moment for myself and my whole team. But I owned the mistake completely because several times I had agonized over the decision about asking people to change their inbox. Each time, I decided we were right. It could have been completely fatal but wasn't because we recognized the mistake early enough to

survive it. During beta testing not enough people were telling us that Contatta changed their lives. That was the evidence that we had assumed wrong. It was very hard to admit I had gotten it wrong but the evidence was undeniable.

Did we get feedback early and often as we were building Contatta? Yep, lots of it. People told us Contatta was so cool they would definitely switch their inbox. It was a lesson I had learned before: There is an unlimited demand for the unavailable.

Just because you show your early versions to lots of people doesn't mean their feedback is accurate. When they don't have to write a check, almost everybody says they love an idea. When it came time for the dogs to eat the dog food they turned up their noses.

It was quite painful to work for two long years, spend investors' money and end up with almost nothing. We could have given up. But we knew we had done many things right and still believed we could build something great. So, we started over. It's totally embarrassing to get it wrong, but regretting it is a total waste of time and energy. We downsized from 21 people to seven, upgraded the team somewhat and kept on going. Persistence is at least 80% of GBSD. There is a time to quit but only if there is simply no way to persist.

People ask me why Ryver has been so hard. I tell them, "if you have enough kids, it is inevitable one of them will be really difficult to raise." Out of 5 VC backed startups, Ryver was my problem child. Even so, I have the feeling this kid could be my most accomplished. Time will tell.

Now, having said this about mistakes, let me give you a different perspective, one I've learned is often true about mistakes.

Sometimes mistakes can turn out not to be mistakes at all. The saying “things happen for a reason” is something I believe is in play in a very real way. I am not saying all mistakes are “meant to be” or will turn out to be good. But I’ve found that sometimes mistakes put me in a stronger place or position I never would have chosen had it not been for the mistakes.

You hear people say all the time, “hindsight is 20/20.” I disagree. We really don’t know what would have happened had we made some other decision. We don’t get to know what would have happened; we only get to know what did happen. And we get to take the outcomes of our decisions and turn them into something bigger and better if we are open to new possibilities. Let me give you an example that is close to home since I am living it right at this very moment.

It has been quite a circuitous route to get to the product we are currently selling: Ryver. It is a truly remarkable and useful product. But we got here through a series of choices that totally seem to have been mistakes.

Ryver is not what I set out to build. It is not the vision I had. But the modules we have built are all world-class - and getting better every day. And they are ALL key pieces of the product I did set out to build at the beginning.

I know had we stayed the course with what we first set out to build, we would NEVER have built world-class Team Communication integrated tightly with Task Management. Instead, we would have built those things to be “pretty good” along with a few other modules that also would have been mediocre.

How do I KNOW this? Because that is exactly what we did with Contatta, the forerunner to Ryver. Everything in it was pretty good, but nothing was truly great in its own right.

We made the Contatta mistake and then headed down a different path, a path that has led us right back to where we originally intended to go. Only now, every module we have is world-class. Now we are on the verge of releasing something that does not exist in the marketplace. Not even close. I believe the “mistakes” we thought we made are turning out not to be mistakes at all. I can’t prove it yet, but I can see it like the back of my hand. It is so obvious and exciting. Makes me honestly grateful for the mistakes.

Regret is a very powerful emotion. Regretting mistakes you make - both real and imagined - is easy to do but often keeps us from GBSD. There are a few things that trigger regret for me, but I have learned ways to keep myself from allowing regret to dominate my emotions and thoughts. To GBSD you must learn to do it too!



THE STOP SIGN

If you've made it this far in the book, congratulations on getting eight chapters done. You deserve a break. We all do. Which is why this chapter is about no GBSD - something I make a habit of practicing.

If you are a typical person trying hard to get their shit done, seven days a week you probably find yourself obsessing over problems and beating your head against a wall.

And while you can feed that obsession with more research, more meetings and more late-night brainstorms, sometimes you can arrive at the answer quicker if you regularly make time to do nothing. Nothing! I'm a fanatic but I've learned I've learned that it is better to regularly stop trying so hard to get the answers I need.

Epiphanies come to you in all sorts of surprising and strange ways. In the middle of the night, in the shower, on the golf course (my personal favorite), watching TV - lo and behold, there's your answer, plain as day. The brain operates in weird and mysterious ways.

I don't have a word for this phenomenon, but it's very real. I think it's the product of a special kind of trust you place in the "universe" to show you the answer to something you are wrestling with. I often get clarity during the times when I'm NOT working.

One of my absolute hard and fast rules is I only work six days a week instead of the typical fanatical seven. Many people are blown away when I tell them I take Saturday off to recharge my batteries. Productivity doesn't equal constantly being engaged with work.

And when I say I take a full day off, I mean it in the strictest sense. I won't open my computer, look at email, answer business calls or texts - basically, I'm off the grid from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. It is so refreshing to take a full day to let my mind and rest from GBS. When work pushes into my consciousness on my day of rest, I've learned to ignore it for now. I guarantee I get more done in six days because I don't work seven, and so will you.

On the other days of the week there are other things I do to stay more balanced and focused. I'm a huge fan of classical music. I believe it challenges the brain in all the right ways while not pulling focus from other tasks. The greats like Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn didn't compose their movements to be used as white noise, but their creativity fuels mine. While I'm working, I always fill my headphones with their works or stuff by jazz legends like Benoit, Grusin and Guaraldi. I can listen to most anything as long as it has no lyrics. Mozart's 6th symphony is playing right now. You might find that letting your brain ping-pong between your work and the songs helps it to find its best conscious/subconscious balance.

Like most successful business people, I'm a voracious reader. I dig deep into books and articles related to what I'm currently working on. But I also make sure to explore beyond my

immediate interests.

It's amazing the dots you can connect by reading far and wide, and that includes fiction. Mitch Rapp has given me lots of ideas!

When I'm not feeding my brain with symphonies and sonatas, I'm snacking on supplements that are known to improve cognitive function. Nutrition has long been a passion of mine. I have an 11 year old nutritional supplement company I started with my son called Jigsaw Health. He runs it, but I am the chief product officer.

I'll let you Google these but I have learned after much trial and error that Magnesium, Gingko Biloba, L-Theanine, Vinpocetine, Huperzine A, Acetyl Carnitine, high dose Vitamin C (liposomal), NAD+, Vitamin E (mixed type) and Vitamin D power my mind so I can focus and get more work done. The studies on these supplements are quite impressive. You'll not only get more done, you'll live longer to do it!

I've also learned that hydration is critical to staying sharp. Living in Arizona got my attention loud and clear in this regard. Studies have proven we get sluggish when we're dehydrated, and it's not enough to just drink a lot of water as this screws up our mineral balance.

Sleeping for 7-8 hours (which I try to do every night) leaves you dehydrated, which is why the most important two glasses of water you can drink are first thing in the morning. It's critical you drink water with electrolytes throughout the day. You'll know you are getting enough if you have to pee at least every two hours which is great because you need to take breaks throughout the day too!

For both my body and mind to perform at peak capacity, I must be aware what I'm putting them through. Too many refuse to ever take their foot off the gas, sacrificing their personal

well-being in the name of their business. Like everything in life, there must be balance. Find yours to GBSD and enjoy the process even more.



EMBRACE YOUR INNER CORLEONE

Michael Corleone never wanted to join the family business in *The Godfather*. It wasn't for him. But that all changed in my favorite scene from the film. Michael visits his father in the hospital after the Don survived an assassination attempt. He notices no guards are present, and his senses are alerted: something is wrong, someone's coming to finish the job on the Don. He shifts into high gear, moving his father to a different room. Enter Enzo, the kindly baker whom the Don helped avoid being deported. Enzo's only there to deliver flowers, but Michael pulls him outside and instructs him to stand with his hand in his pocket, looking the part of a killer. It works, as men pull up in a car and then drive off.

What makes this scene my favorite is the nonverbal story it tells at the very end. Enzo pulls out a cigarette and tries to light it, but his hands are so shaky from nerves that he can't. Michael offers to help and notices his own hand is rock steady. He's not

shaken by the moment. He's cut out for this after all.

When we say business is cutthroat, thankfully we don't mean it literally like in gangster films. But the people who GBSB most effectively are the ones who handle the hard stuff with tactical precision and are not afraid to appear mean. There are times where I've been a real SOB in my career. I don't mean being rude or a flat-out jerk; those are descriptions I hope I've never been labeled with but probably have. Unfortunately, when you're a leader, the buck stops with you to do the tough stuff so you better start learning how to steady that hand.

Ideally, anyone who is in a position where they must fire people should themselves have been fired. I have, once. The company I worked with got acquired and I got a new boss who I did not see eye to eye with at all. I needed to be fired! Even so it's not a good feeling to go home and tell your family you've just been fired. So, I always empathize with the person receiving the news. It hurts! Regardless, I've fired friends, longtime associates, family - people who were personally important to me. Still had to be done. Amazingly I am still friends with most of them.

My Michael Corleone moment happened while I was at SalesLogix. One very important department was just not working as it should have. I knew I had to fire the woman running it. It shocked her and she did not take it well. After an hour of her bargaining, tears, gathering composure and then losing it again, the tough task was done. No joke, as soon as the door to my office closed behind her on the way out, I immediately sat down and started doing email. I caught myself in that moment, pushed back from my desk and told myself, "You're one mean SOB, that didn't bother you at all!" Does that make me a sociopath? I don't think so. It makes me good at doing hard stuff that needs to be done for my business.

Later, after SalesLogix was acquired by Sage Software, I had to lay off employees until we reached a satisfactory profit num-

ber for the new company. It was awful! A good old fashioned reduction in force. Well okay I thought, here's some shit I need to get done, feelings be damned. In the back of my mind I knew I was affecting people's lives, but I've always considered myself a steward of my business.

I always try to do what's best for it, not for me, and if it succeeds or fails, it doesn't mean I personally am a success or failure. I am not my business. A business develops a life of its own. Plenty of people, even high-ranking executives, really struggle with tough, emotional decisions. But, as the Corleone's might say, "It's just business." When we were deciding how many and who to let go, we had to meet several times to get to the number. After many times through the list of names we often would get to a name, look around the room and if no one knew this person, they were gone. Harsh!

At one point I half-jokingly suggested we lay off everyone who smokes (it turns out all the smokers were programmers, so that wouldn't have worked). It got a bit crazy but we were given a mission-critical assignment for the future of the company, and we got it done. It was a painful "Black Monday" for over 70 employees, but I'm proud of how we handled it in a respectful manner. No hard feelings, just business. Within a year, we became the second most profitable group within the company. Objectivity helps you GBSD.

Firing people isn't the only time my tough streak will come out. I've been at this for too long to ever suffer fools. One of my pet peeves is people who state the obvious in every situation. I once fired someone for continually saying, "Well, you know, that is going to cost money." No shit, Sherlock! I struggle even more with habitual agreeers. I tell people, "If we always agree, then one of us is unnecessary and I'm not going anywhere." To GBSD, you need to have organizational alignment, but that's a very different thing than everyone having the exact same opinion about everything. I thrive working with smart people who

have different opinions than me and can back them up. It's disarming to admit their opinion is better than yours. To GBSD, you better have smart, strong people around you who know they can disagree with you and don't hesitate to do so.

I also don't care much who you are or what you've done. Does that sound mean? It's not meant to be, but I firmly believe there's power in not giving too much deference to others based on status or accomplishments. If someone is constantly trying too hard to impress me with what or who they know, they usually don't last long around me. Competence stands out on its own without pedigree support.

Let your inner Corleone out and see how the hard things can get easier. After all, it's just business.



BUT BE NICE ABOUT IT

I don't want you to take away that the key to GBSD is being totally ruthless. There are situations where that mindset is appropriate and you absolutely must be comfortable taking the heat for being tough.

But for the most part getting outcomes you want is a matter of how much trust you can build with people. And that starts with being accountable and vulnerable yourself.

Mark McCormick's classic book "What They Didn't Teach You at Harvard Business School" gave me on a few techniques to build trust early on in business relationships, and I use them all the time. One I really love is making a point to look for a few very specific opportunities to say to someone, "I don't know, let me get back to you on that."

I love making things actionable for myself down to the precise time of day when I'll deliver on my promise. If an investor asks for more info, I might tell them I'll have it to them by 7:00 tonight - and then I move heaven and earth to make it happen.

When I send the answer, I always include “information as promised.”

As Mike Muhney, my partner at ACT!, liked to say, “There’s no traffic on the extra mile.” Very few people set themselves apart and build trust by doing a little more than their competitors. You’d be surprised. Whether it’s simply following through on a promise or adding details in your product that delight customers, you can attract people to what you’re selling by, well, being more attractive. Worry about setting yourself apart in unexpected ways instead of trying to be louder than the other guy. Often it is the tiny details that matter the most.

Another act that wields tremendous power is making a “request” of someone. Researchers have found that a person is more likely to like you if they do something for you, not the other way around. Requests are very different than demands. During the early ACT! days, we were always low on cash, and a big part of my job was calling people we owed money to and asking them to hang in there with us. I told them we would pay what we could now, but could they please help us out and extend deadlines to help us out. It was never, do this or else, and it often amazed me how folks were pretty much always willing to accommodate. “I really need your help...” often helps you get some amazing things done.

Sometimes I even go the other way just to see what will happen - be nice when the situation might call for some Corleone-style meanness. I had a lawyer help us out with a project at Ryver once, and it didn’t go very well at all. So, when I got his outrageous bill, I had to decide if I wanted to fight it, or go about it another way. I told him I could pay just over 50% of the bill right now and be done with it, or I could pay in small monthly installments that would eventually net the whole thing. I got creative with a solution in an honest and upfront way and he accepted my offer. It saved us a lot of money!

I think like an actor – what role do I need to play to get what I need to get done? I take on different roles depending on the situation. Just be aware there's a time and a place for being mean, and a time to be nice. Both can help you GBSD.



LEARN HOW TO PASS THE SHIT

There comes a point in the life of any startup when founders must delegate a lot to other people. If you're going to do something big, you can't do it alone. But the timing for bringing on new talent can make or break your success.

Great leaders get that way not because they do everything themselves but because they have an eye for the right people and hire them at the right time.

I've hired people too early before I really needed them, and I've waited too long before I added new blood to the staff. Having had the experience of doing it both ways, I believe waiting is the best approach today. It comes down to money. If you're not one of the fortunate few who have raised a ton of money before you have any proof of success, you should try to do as much as you can yourself at first. Most of the time a small team of great people can kick the butt of a much bigger competitor.

“A” players outperform B players by at least 5X and sometimes closer to 10X.

Waiting can be difficult. I know there are people who are better at some things than I am, and I’d love to have them working with me right now. But it’s better to extend the runway while you’re building product and even into early launch. Most of the time you have no choice. Focus on getting done what you can until you literally run out of hours in the day.

One thing I have gotten very good at is finding great people who are more talented than I am at something and talking them into working for my startups for stock and, if need be, a very low amount of cash. You can pull this off if you are good at selling the person on why they are going to help change the world. I’m always on the lookout for people on their way up at another company who could grow into a position with me. These people may already have the experience I need but are blocked from a promotion at their current gig. I have a knack for finding junior people who can quickly grow into what I need. Generally they work their asses off to prove me right.

I always take a “try before you buy” approach with new hires. Someone can look perfect but after 30-60 days you can see they’re not as good as you thought. That’s why I give stock options and never equity that’s already vested. That goes for co-founders, too. I can’t tell you the number of times I have counseled founders who were stuck with bad co-founders and couldn’t get rid of them unless they were rich enough to buy them out.

Once I have a “team”, I do not micromanage. The people I hire can function on their own and only check in with me when they need input. The functionality we’ve built into Ryver perfectly aligns with my delegation style. Since Ryver has both Task Management and Team Communication, I can be an observer into the conversations and projects everyone is working on

without having to constantly ask what's going on. I can't imagine running a company today without something like Ryver. It is easily 10 times better than email.

From time to time I'll see something in Ryver I don't understand and need verbal insight to clear up. But for the most part I leave my people alone. If you've hired the right people, they should be the ones calling the shots because they're the ones "on the ground" so to speak. That doesn't mean you should sit back with your hands crossed behind your head all day. There is nothing I'm totally hands-off from. Be aware of what's happening understanding you'll be the one taking credit and blame. Just don't obsess over every detail and make your employees feel like they have no personal freedom to GBSD on their own.

Same thing goes for workplace arguments. There are some things worth getting into arguments about. I don't mind getting into it and seeing my team have differences of opinion. Strong people mean strong opinions. If everyone knows not to expect to win every argument, they can be very productive. I regularly argue my points until I realize the other person is right, and I'm okay with that. If I win all the time, I know I have the wrong people (see what I said before about habitual agreers). Passion is the fuel for getting big things done, so when passion boils up, it excites me. It is a good thing!

There are times during arguments when you realize no one has any real data to support their blustering. It's only opinions flying back and forth. If I feel strongly about my opinion, I borrow a line from John Chambers at Cisco, who says, "since all we have are opinions, let's go with mine." As a leader, you're the one taking the heat for wrong decisions so why not make the decision? If we are going to be wrong, I would rather be the one who was wrong since I am going to have to own it no matter what.

GBSD is not a solo pursuit, but every important outcome should start and end with you. That means hire the right people whom you trust, make sure to stock your team full of people who are better than you at various things, and don't be afraid to let your people do their best without standing right behind them all the time. Delegate like a pro and the shit will get churned out at a rate you won't believe.



LOOK AND SOUND THE PART

When you are meeting people who can help you, how you look and talk can mean the difference between GBSD or not. As human beings, we can't help but make snap judgments about others based on first impressions. By the time I first shake your hand when I meet you, I've already made a series of subconscious assumptions about you based on appearance, just as you've done with me. Most of the time a person's look and the role they're playing sync up and my assumptions are confirmed – but I can still vividly remember the instances when they didn't and how that affected the objectives at hand.

At one point in my career I became an advisor to a guy with a great idea, right when he was preparing to raise money for his venture. He was in his 30s, super smart with a great demeanor, and I had no doubt he'd be successful...if not for one glaring issue staring me right in the face. Every time we met, he would wear a stupid-looking baseball cap.

Finally, I just had to say something. “Stop wearing those hats! Look the part you’re playing.” He only needed to be told once, and shortly thereafter he raised the money he needed. I don’t think it would have happened (at least not as quickly) with that hat on.

A similar situation played out with the CEO of another startup where I am an advisor and investor. I noticed that whenever I met with this CEO, he wore crappy shirts that were partially tucked in and his hair was usually a mess. I gave him similar advice and he took it. To me, it’s imperative to look the part that you’re playing when you’re playing it. If you’re a CEO raising money or meeting with people who can help you grow, then be a CEO and not just a regular guy. It’s not worth the risk that someone might make a negative association based on their first impression. Looking successful helps you get outcomes you need.

My personal “brand” is relatively no-frills. Jeans, a nice tee shirt I tuck in and sneakers. If you catch me in the office on any given day that’s what I’ll be wearing. But I have my “money shirts” that I pull out when I have an important meeting. If a meeting calls for a hoodie, I am too old to pull that off without looking stupid but I have sweatshirts that work well. I come from a sales background so I’m always selling (who is not?), and the most important sale I can make is myself. When you want to extract money from successful people, you must look the part. Presentation is a huge part of preparation, and I take it very seriously.

Doing your due diligence on the person or company you’re meeting with can give you all the clues you need with regards to how you dress and conduct yourself. That disheveled, hipster-looking CEO might be just fine meeting with a fellow 30-something, west coast, Web 2.0 billionaire.

I might be the one out of place in my money shirt but I wouldn't know that if I didn't do the simple digging into the background of the person I'm meeting with. It's easy to look people up and you'll feel more at ease from the get-go if you're over-prepared. When meeting someone new I always ask them a question about something in their background I learned in my prep. It lets them know I consider them important. It amazes me how often they are surprised I knew what I knew.

Another case in point - a co-founder of a company where I'm also an investor and advisor has the job of selling to prospects and potential investors. He also happened to have a very thick accent, to the point that it was often hard for me to follow him in conversations. It's not very PC and our society today would probably paint me as intolerant, but it was a big problem for him to GBSD.

As I had done with the poorly-dressed CEOs, I asked this executive for permission to offer critical advice. I told him he had to be understood 100% of the time to do his job effectively. In a caring way, I told him he ought to start taking diction lessons. He took it to heart and it just so happened his girlfriend was a linguist who taught him exactly what he needed.

Within a few months, he had improved dramatically and I could understand him 99%. It made a remarkable difference in his ability to GBSD. I was probably the first person who had given him this advice, which could be a function of the times and the fear of offending. But the fact of the matter is, his audience is made up of people like me, and to get his desired outcomes, he needed to sound the part.

I've never had a problem speaking my mind. I try not to offend but chances are I've done it more than a time or two (or ten). But many of those whose feathers have been ruffled by my honesty have seen their productivity and their outcomes skyrocket by heeding my advice.

Always think in terms of who you're meeting and what you want that person to think about you. Don't give people a reason to discount you right off the bat.



SOFTWARE TO GBSD

The world is changing and the bar for productivity is constantly getting higher. Fifteen years ago, a contact manager like ACT! coupled with email was pretty much all anyone needed to manage tasks and stay organized. As the pace of doing business accelerated, my frustration with trying to GBSD using the available tools inspired me to create a new one.

An organization moves as fast as its slowest member, especially when it's the boss. That's a big problem. The more important an individual is, the more emails they receive. Countless projects were stalled and people frustrated because I was mired in the muck of messages and my team couldn't act with urgency. The crux of the issue was that I simply couldn't quickly find my most important emails - they were buried alongside all my unimportant ones. Email sucks for fast moving teams trying to GBSD.

Other startups recognized this inefficiency as well, which is how we arrived in the golden era of the business chat tool and project managers. These were a breath of fresh air because they

pulled people out of Outlook and Gmail into a fresh interface that is far better than email. Your organization may have an account with Slack, HipChat, Trello, Basecamp, Asana or similar products to help you keep pace with the speed of modern communication.

Products like Ryver allow you to do what email can't. They give insight into what your teams are doing without you having to personally find an email and chime in. They eliminate the need to be on distribution lists, and make it easier to opt in and out of conversations you are interested in. I found that the most popular team communication tools didn't go far enough in helping me be more productive. In fact, many of them compounded the same problems with email. They can be a bigger distraction to your team.

Organization tools should have tremendous utility and shouldn't make the user feel like they're having fun and taking their mind off work. What Slack lacks is in converting chats to tasks — taking team conversations and making them actionable from within the platform. Ryver's main point of differentiation is its robust Task Manager (like Trello or Basecamp) which allows new tasks to be created, assigned and reviewed from within the very window in which the chat is taking place.

Collaboration and Tasks belong together in one UI, one product, not in several different products that are poorly integrated.

Solutions I've built to solve my own problems have a knack for changing other people's lives. I believe Ryver is no different. I've been using it for the past two years and my level of GBSD has gone through the roof.

I don't have to switch back and forth between different interfaces to get the whole picture of a project, I can just switch from chat, topics and tasks in all my many teams and refocus in a matter of seconds.

Speed wins in today's world. I like to close deals before my competition even knows about the opportunity. To do that, I need tools that allow me to focus on getting stuff done while keeping every relevant stakeholder in the loop. I have seen my entire team get complex changes to an integrated website, email and social media campaign done, start to finish, in less than an hour. We could not have done it in less than a day or more using email. Impossible!

How much further could you take your ideas if as an organization you gained an "IQ dividend" of even 20%? Now, you may think that you're plenty organized already using email. But that is because that is what you are used to. In less than a decade, no one will even consider using email as the way their most important communication and task management is done. We will all still use email, but we won't live there. We will visit email. Products like Ryver will become the standard way to communicate and move projects forward. Once you adopt something like Ryver, you will never go back.

When a system just works, mental reserves are released and everyone gets smarter as a result. That's the ultimate benefit of software that gives workers the tools to get their shit done.

Ryver is a great application to GBSD. If you use it, great - but use something!



FINAL THOUGHT

If you set out to GBSD you will be stretched to the max, but few things can be as rewarding as attempting and accomplishing something big! Even if you fail at first you will grow personally in ways that will make you a better person. In 1985, when Mike Muhney and I were discussing the risks of starting ACT! with our wives, mine asked “What is the worst that can happen?” I said, “Well in Texas, if you go bankrupt they can’t take your kids, your house and one of your cars.” With great courage she said “If that is the case, you guys should do it because if you don’t, you’ll never know if it could have been something big.”

Mike and I started the next day!

When people ask me “why do you keep doing startups?”, I always reply, “there is nothing more fun than doing something really hard with a team of really talented people.” I tried to retire twice and found out I was no good at it. I missed the game. I love the creativity required in every startup I’ve been a part of. I enjoy the challenge of trying to GBSD.

I plan to keep doing what I love for as long as my mind and body can keep doing it.

I hope some of the things I've shared here help you as you get your big shit done! If you've enjoyed what you've read I have a request of you... would you help me out and tell others on all of your social feeds about this book?

Thanks and good luck!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Sullivan is the author of *Wellness Piece by Piece*, the story of how he reclaimed his health after suffering from chronic fatigue disorders for most of his life. He also wrote *10 Keys to Entrepreneurial Success*, the story of how he built not just one but two wildly successful software companies.

Pat is a two-time winner of Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award. Sales and Marketing Management named him one of the “80 Most Influential People in Sales and Marketing History,” along with Henry Ford, Walt Disney, Jack Welch and Bill Gates.

Pat is the co-creator of ACT!, the world’s top selling contact manager. Following the purchase of ACT! by Symantec, Mr. Sullivan founded SalesLogix in 1995 and led its revenue growth to \$108 million in only five years. After a successful IPO and the repurchase of ACT! in 1999, SalesLogix was sold to The Sage Group in 2001.

He is also the co-founder of Jigsaw Health, the maker and marketer of the most popular sustained release magnesium supplement in the world. Mr. Sullivan has served as a board member for various tech companies, and is currently the founder of Ryver, the application he designed to Get Big Sh*t Donetm.

You can follow him on Twitter at @GolfSullivan.

To get a free 14-day trial of Ryver, go to <https://www.ryver.com/gbsd-offer>.