

These Entrepreneurs NYC

**Powerful Insights and Revelations
from Business Owners
Living in New York City**

Author
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These Entrepreneurs NYC

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Dedication

To my mom, Vivian E. Thomas, my greatest supporter, motivator, and investor. How do I thank you for loving me and believing in me? This book is a tribute to who you are and for all that you represent.

Also my Aunt, Julia Williams, my brother, Paul Reynolds, friends Jeff Cooper, Felicia Mann, Karen Kellman, Gloria Ellis, and Elaine Gipson: I am so proud to have you in my life. Thank you for every word of encouragement and for lifting me up.

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Preface

New York City, The Big Apple, the city that never sleeps—a thriving metropolis filled with endless possibilities that has become headquarters and home to some of the most innovative start-up businesses in the country.

Some of these businesses are run by generation X and Y, the Millennials, and the children of the baby boomers.

They have chosen to chart their own path because the opportunities they expected would await them after graduating college just don't exist.

Instead of waiting for chance and circumstance, they are thinking with creativity and intuition.

As I bear witness to the unfolding of this phenom, I am compelled to take pen to paper to document the stories of these ambitious achievers who are seeking freedom and independence over conformity.

I want to share the stories of self-discovery, focus, and determination, not just those of the young and tech savvy Millennial, but also the seasoned business owner. Through them we might come to know these entrepreneurs who have given up the security of a salary and made other tremendous sacrifices in order to do what they want to pursue enormous success.

I tell the stories of thirty-one entrepreneurs: Shayne Spencer, Think/Work/Media, Mathew Heggem, SUM Innovation, Petia Bradshaw, Stylista Group, Daniel Bellizio, Esq., Bellizio & Igel, Elisabeth Santana, e.j.blooms, Valerie Bennis, Essence of Vali, Anneliza Humlen, Social

Voice, Robert Weiss, MultiVision Digital, Ramon Ray, Smart Hustle Magazine, Nadira el Khang, NadiraBag, Maureen Fairlie, Snappy Solutions, Aki Kano, aki kano New York, Kojenwa Moit, MBA, Zebra Public Relations, Sabra Sasson, Esq., Sabra Law Group, Janice Dru, ink/why, Sue Phillips, Scenterprises, Efe Kababulut, Lazzoni US, Scott and Deborah Eisenberg, Swap the Biz, Jeffrey Vincent Noble, The Noble Touch, Cara Power, Cara Power Coaching, Daron Jenkins, SCENEPR, Chunyee Miot, CPA, Chunyee CPA, Paige Wilhide, Paige Media, Gale St. John, The Maids NYC, Darren Carter, MD, NYC SEM, Nkrumah Pierre, PLG Consulting, Michelle Nigro, MNSBC, Andrea and Amberle Reyes, A. Bernadette, Maia Spilma, Esq., The Law Office of Maia T. Spilman, and Freda L. Thomas, MBA, Freda Thomas Consulting.

I spent countless hours asking questions, recording, transcribing, and listening as these entrepreneurs described their hopes, dreams, and fears. These entrepreneurs were chosen to bear witness to their indomitable spirit and willingness to triumph over adversity.

To the entrepreneur who might be experiencing a rough go of it, I hope that you might see yourself in the storytelling, be inspired by their persistence, and somehow find the ability to go on.

For the would-be business owner, those who have dreamed of starting a project, I hope these stories will ignite a fire that will propel you to take a leap of faith. Know that if you can dream it, you can do it.

I know that you will be inspired and uplifted by these dynamic innovators who have found the courage and fortitude to turn their passion into a business.

Introduction

“An entrepreneur is one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risk of a business or enterprise.”

- Merriam Webster

I describe an entrepreneur as someone who has, without wavering, charted a path filled with highs and lows, successes and adversity.

Many of these entrepreneurs have helped me in my success by offering guidance and support when I needed it most.

What I enjoyed the most about the stories of these entrepreneurs is how the narratives unfold, from those who started out as children working in the family business, to accounts of growing up with a sort of nose to the grindstone work ethic.

Some believe that entrepreneurs are born to own their own business. This is not necessarily so, as you will learn from Daniel Bellizio, Esq., a first generation American who, prior to starting his law firm with his partner, had a flourishing career as general counsel to several of the largest companies in America. Daniel, after years of success in the corporate world, became an entrepreneur.

Others, including Sabra Sasson, Esq. and Robert Weiss, had family members who owned their own businesses.

Each person’s path to starting their business has been different.

However, in each story you will recognize common threads: passion, dedication, willfulness, focus, determination, and an uncanny sense of purpose that no matter what, the dream will come to fruition.

How did these people choose to become entrepreneurs? Who and what inspires them? What type of sacrifices have they had to make and continue to make in order to live the entrepreneurial dream? These questions are the landscape of the profiles featured here.

The criteria to be included in the book was to have a majority stake ownership in the business, reach several milestones, have a unique business proposition, and provide value to others by virtue of the services provided.

Words of wisdom accompany each profile in which I share the significant takeaways from each of the business owners interviewed. The narratives have been gleaned from audio-recorded interviews with each participant.

This manuscript is a compilation of those recordings. They are not the opinions of any other parties.



Shayne Spencer

“I never used to pray as much until I started my own business.”

Think/Work/Media

Think/Work/Media (TWM) is a web development and online marketing company serving small- to medium-size businesses through building and optimizing websites, and managing social media online marketing. TWM operates out of Brooklyn, NY, in DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass).

Background

Shayne is a native New Yorker. When he was seven, his mother sent him to Trinidad and Tobago to live with his grandparents. That’s where he had his first entrepreneurial experience. “I would pick mangoes and sell them to the local store,” says Shayne. “I didn’t have to pay for the mangoes because they were growing on a tree. That, by far, was the easiest money I’ve ever made, compared to how things are now. I didn’t care about the money. I was just happy that I could be paid for it. It was awesome!” Growing up and still today, Shayne says his mother is the most important person in his life. “My mother was the most important person in my life because she was always there. I grew up with my mother and stepfather. He was great to me. It wasn’t until later on, when I was a teenager, that I met my biological father. The one constant was always my mother. She was always in my corner supporting

me. She has stepped in to help me plenty of times. She's always been there, saying things like, 'Go for it; try it.' She didn't coddle me though, she was real with me. She had me when she was in her twenties, and she was in college attending nursing school. If I was in my twenties and a girl was pregnant with my baby, I don't think I would decide to keep it. My biological father didn't want me at that time. My mom was so young and yet she decided to put aside her youth to raise a child."

The journey

Just out of college, Shayne accepted a position working with an ad agency. "This may come as a surprise," he says. "I didn't want to be an entrepreneur. I was happy working in a corporate job. I loved the agency life. I ended up being promoted to a new position that was almost like a desk job. I had a lot of free time. I signed up for several continuing education classes, which opened me up to working on new business opportunities. I left there and I started freelancing. I wanted to get some experience in social media and digital marketing, and then try to make a play to come back to an agency." As a freelancer, one of his first clients was a friend from high school who had started his own business. That friend needed help with marketing and getting more clients. "I helped him out and he loved it, and he moved forward with most of the ideas," says Shayne. Shayne's friend-turned-client ended up investing in him. With his friend's prompting, Shayne decided to go full throttle with his business. "I was like, 'Why not?'" says Shayne." To start, Shayne worked from his home in Brooklyn. He has since expanded to an office and has hired several consultants and employees.

Owning a business in New York City

"All you have to do is go outside and network if you want something in New York," says Shayne. "You can barter your way to success because New York City has so much opportunity. You can code your way to success. That's what I love about it here. Yes, it's getting expensive because so many want to live here. It is the land of opportunity. There is always a way to make a dollar. Business can be made in cafes; you don't need to have an office. The city is your office, and because of the availability of co-working spaces, it's

much easier to start a business in New York.”

Living the dream

“Being an entrepreneur has been one of the most humbling experiences ever,” Shayne says. “It’s nowhere near as glamorous as people make it seem on television. I have the ability to help people at times and that’s a great feeling. Other times people let me down, and I have to pick myself up and keep moving forward. I never used to pray much, until I started my own business. If I hadn’t started my own business, this Shayne Spencer would not exist. It’s not that I work harder as an entrepreneur, there’s just so much that comes at you from every different angle. It’s humbled me. I have come to acknowledge that every single thing in my life as an entrepreneur and leading up to this has happened for a reason. Every client that was dissatisfied or happy with me, every person that I’ve hired or had to let go, every sleepless night, these things have made me the person I am today.”

What does Shayne like most about being an entrepreneur? It’s the hunt.

“Being able to go after that new business, knowing what’s on the line, and those times when you get to close the business or the phone rings and the person is ready to get started on a project. You’re like, ‘Yes. Thank you, thank you.’ You can’t deny that there are bills to pay and you’re like, ‘Okay, how am I going to make this happen? I’ve got to close this deal, or I’m not gonna eat.’ Or, ‘I’ve got to figure out how I’m going to explain to my staff that I can’t pay them.’ And that sucks!”

What’s in store

In ten years, Shayne anticipates a better work-life balance. He wants to teach and help future entrepreneurs. “If I were to reach for the sky, I’d like to see Think/Work/Media as part of a bigger agency, like one of the big publicly traded agencies,” Shayne says.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Startups

Shayne says, “If you want to be an entrepreneur and you’re reading this book, you’re on the right track. Read and network everywhere, even on the subway.”

Established entrepreneurs

“Be flexible,” he says. “Stay focused and centered, try and let things roll off your shoulders.”