

## **Lessons Learned: Dream Big, Work Smarter**

I love to dream. We all love to dream. It's an action that we were all encouraged to do, from our parents and teachers as kids, to the constant barrage of motivational speakers and influencers pinging you on social media. And not just dream, but dream big.

My childhood was filled with big dreams. A little known fact, but I spent a majority of my spare time as a kid drawing and designing sneakers for NIKE for fun. I had tablets full of designs. I loved to do it. It was my creative outlet. Still waiting on that call from NIKE.

But my big dream as a kid was to have a career in baseball. From an early age, I was dead set on playing second base for the Texas Longhorns before being drafted and starring for the Philadelphia Phillies at the same position. I thought about it everyday. I pictured myself in those uniforms. I had a Texas baseball hat, and my favorite Phillies hat that my mom tried to throw away everyday (it was gross).

I would spend ten years of my life playing baseball - Little League, Teeners, and High School ball. I pestered my dad to play catch everyday, and when he couldn't, I threw a tennis ball against my front stairs to generate ground balls. Countless days in the backyard recreating moments and at-bats I watched the night before. Blasting balls off the tee, followed by a seemingly endless apology tour with neighbors for hitting balls into their yards. I had sticker books, boxes upon boxes of baseball cards, and wore out the RBI Baseball game on NES. Baseball camps every summer. I lived, dreamed, and breathed baseball.

There was only one problem, I couldn't hit. I was also slow with a below-average arm. Okay, so I had multiple problems. The point was, there were limitations that deterred me from accomplishing my dream of playing professional baseball. The drive and determination was there, but the ability wasn't anywhere close to where it needed to be. Could I have taken steps to improve more? Absolutely. I could have had a hitting coach, focused on strength training, or studied film.

I tell that story as a person who acts a lot like a motivational speaker. I'm always there encouraging and pushing people to keep dreaming and don't stop until you accomplish your goals. But those words can only take you so far. At some point, as you set out on your journey with your dream, you must face two very difficult questions: Are you willing to put in the work? Are you willing to recognize your limitations?

First question - Are you willing to put in the work? As I mentioned, I love to inspire, and watching the professional and seasoned leaders do it on a daily basis is incredible. As a son of a school teacher, I watched my mom do it for years. It's a great thing to watch. However, there always seems to be one element left out of the conversation - the work it takes to actually reach your dreams.

Case in point, my baseball dream. My parents encouraged me everyday. And I worked hard at it, but looking back, it was nowhere near the level I needed to be at, in order to reach those heights. Granted, my parents were smart. They knew the chances of me ever reaching the professional level were slim and none. However, baseball allowed me to be active, social, and build friendships and relationships that I have to this very day. It taught me about winning and losing. So that encouragement to dream big helped me tremendously (in life), but lacked the teeth needed to accomplish the main goal. You need to stress the hard work that runs alongside the dream.

Second question - Are you willing to recognize your limitations? Always a tough topic but required learning if you intend to dream. It's great to dream of becoming a musical star, featured on that Broadway stage, but if you can't sing, you can't sing. However, that doesn't mean you can't find a way to the stage - maybe you can act? Or write? Or design sets? The main takeaway is the need to be realistic about your dreams. Some things are out of your control. You can put in the hard work - get a vocal coach, sing in the choir, etc - but at the end of the day, sometimes your capabilities are limited. You need to be realistic when chasing your dreams.

So that brings me back to today. In a time when the world needs big dreamers, you must be cognizant of the multiple layers within a dream. Not like layers from the movie "Inception" (love this movie), but the layers of sacrifice and self-awareness necessary. It's okay to dream big, but understanding what it takes to get there, and what may hold you back are key. For my money, setting stages within those dreams can put you on the right path. Tasks that you can accomplish.

Since my first day at ENX2, we talked about having clients in every state. So much so that we painted a map of the US on our conference room wall, and have begun filling in all of the states we are currently in (plus two other countries). I love this dream or better known as Nicole's vision (our CEO and Founder). And we will get there, but we have to (1) realize the hard work it will take and (2) realize our limitations. After all, adding the remaining 30+ states would immediately crash our team, unless we defied the laws of growth and scale strategy. BUT, that doesn't mean we crumble up and throw away that dream. We adjust. We set attainable goals on that journey. And then we execute. That brings us to this week's "Lessons Learned:" We must dream big, but set a realistic strategy to get there.

Maybe it's opening an office on the West Coast or in the South? Maybe it's dominating one time zone at a time. Either way, as COO, it's on me to establish goals that align within the overall framework of our big dream and realize the hard work it will take to get there AND the importance of understanding our strengths and weaknesses as a team. I may not have become a professional baseball player, but I can certainly help ENX2 knock it out of the park with growth. Did I mention that I also thought about becoming a pun writer? LOL...

### **Side Note**

I've been building a nice little vinyl collection over the years. Not measured by volume but quality. My dad started me with some classic albums and still to this day will give me one or two on my birthday. From "I Got a Name" (Jim Croce) to "The Last Waltz" (The Band), he's gifted me some amazing albums. But there is one piece of vinyl I love, and maybe one that you wouldn't expect to see in a vinyl collection: Nirvana Unplugged. Such a great album, and a pivotal album in my youth. It was released around the time of Kurt Cobain's death. It lacked the flair and hits that other bands brought to MTV Unplugged stage, and that's why I loved it so much. It showed the depth of talent and creativity of that band, in particular Cobain. What's even more impressive about that set was that they recorded it in one take - and to my knowledge, the only band that ever did that for MTV Unplugged (see Neil Young's Unplugged disaster). For me, the cover of David Bowie's "The Man Who Sold the World" is worth the price of the album. If you've never listened, I recommend you do it today.