

# HOW TO GET A JOB PART 10

By Mark Brownley

## *Start your own company but don't do this...*

### **Checklist**

- 1.** Consign yourself to employment. In the long run, profits are better than wages. It won't be easy but self-determination is arguably the ultimate professional state and you can also take the cap off your earning potential if you can find a problem and solve it. All those businesses you admire and want to work for? They were start-ups once too. Think job-creator not just job-seeker. It's a mindset. We've tried and failed on at least three occasions now, but we've never stopped having a crack.
- 2.** Try and solve the world's problems. Like we did. Brian Chesky, Airbnb Co-founder, said "Instead of solving high-profile problems, try to solve something that's deeply personal. Ideally, if you're an ordinary person and you've just solved your problem, you might have solved the problems for millions of people." Throughout our failures, it became obvious that we weren't solving a personal problem, we were constantly trying to solve the world's problems and thereby offering something it already had plenty of.
- 3.** Think that your ideas have value. They're actually just ideas with no intrinsic value at all. We learned this vital and very obvious lesson on start-up failure No. 1. Ideas need to be tested and validated by a market and ultimately translatable into a successful business model. Until someone is prepared to pay in hard currency – not enthusiasm, encouragement and platitudes – we're sorry to say you basically have a worthless idea. And just because you and your family and friends think it's a good idea doesn't mean the market will.
- 4.** Bypass the best-selling book *The Lean Start-up* by Eric Ries. We read it on a flight between Adelaide and Auckland in June 2018 prior to testing the waters with [myengineerexchange.com](https://myengineerexchange.com) and it has been a beacon and recipe book ever since. Compelling, sobering, depressing and practical all at once. It's the best book we've ever read on start-ups – what it takes to succeed – and fail.
- 5.** Assume all your contacts will want to help. Or even answer the phone. You're going to find people make a lot of fake promises and many will simply ignore you. We've learned that society places huge value on conformity and organised and entrenched supply chains and relationships. People are busy, they know what they like and how they like it. Disruption is vital to human endeavour but it's bloody hard to do! Resilience became our friend. Work on your mental and physical health.
- 6.** Give up your day job. Richard Branson always talks about the "side hustle" and we agree. We've tried it the other way. Based on our experience, it rarely works in real life. Get something going while you're working and if you can get some altitude, sales and backing, then take flight.

7. Focus on vision and mission instead of purpose. In our first attempt, we had plenty of both; what we didn't have was purpose. Purpose is what people buy. A company is just a vehicle to monetise purpose. Purpose is powerful. We heard Ronni Kahn, the social entrepreneur behind [www.ozharvest.org](http://www.ozharvest.org) speak in Sydney a couple of years ago. "Nourish a nation." Boy, that's what Purpose looks like!
8. Expect to be an overnight success. We did. It takes time. We didn't solve anyone's problem and ran out of time before it was time to go back to work. We've had put the cue back in the rack three times now but with no loss of enthusiasm. Churchill said "Success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm." So, we've been successful then after all!
9. Ignore "Plan B." 95% of start-ups fail. The chances are against you. Despite your enthusiasm and grit and bloody hard work, it may all come to nothing. It's dumb to keep banging your head against a brick wall. Pause, regroup and get ready to play another day.
10. Push on. Instead, play the "pivot." The ability to adapt and tune your offer or business model to the market can keep you in the game longer and actually find a market where you couldn't previously. The feedback from the market will enable you to respond accordingly. Listen to it! We just kept trying to impose our will and services on a market that had already rejected us. What we should have done was elicit a lot more feedback to see if we could shape, tweak or tune. It's called iterating.

## STILL HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Just email us at [tellus@myengineerexchange.com](mailto:tellus@myengineerexchange.com) and we'll get right back to you.

