

IT'S
YOUR
MOVE

IT'S YOUR MOVE

JOSH
ALTMAN

**My Million Dollar Method for Taking Risks with
Confidence and Succeeding at Work and Life**



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To my amazing family—
Matt, Mom, Dad, and Heather—
for your love and support.

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Foreword

Success is about ideas and relationships. Do you have the ideas to approach the world in new ways, push new strategies, and create new products, and do you have the relationships that you need to turn those ideas into a reality?

I learned these lessons pretty quickly because when I was starting FUBU I was basically broke. I had to practice, something I call, the “power of broke” and make sure I fully leveraged all of my assets and connections. For me, in the beginning, it was just asking my next-door neighbors to help me sew some hats. As time went on, it was the help and advice of my mom, my guy LL Cool J, and many others that helped me take FUBU from the basement to the penthouse. I understand and appreciate the importance of human relationships in the business world, and now, on *Shark Tank*, I try to return the favor by reaching out to entrepreneurs who are just starting out in business.

One of the men I know who understands the importance of personal contacts in business is Josh Altman. When we met in an airport a few years ago, he was forward, enthusiastic, and vocal about telling me how he could help my business. I meet a lot of people who claim to have “great” ideas, I’m on a show about it, but unlike many of those people, Josh Altman made sure to *show* me he could follow through on a handshake.

Since then, Josh and I have become friends, and I've come to appreciate how much Josh values relationships. He is always ready to lend a hand, and he understands how to create mutually beneficial deals. Josh is full of good ideas, but it's this heart that has allowed him to create a business with strength and longevity.

This book is a great compilation of the strategies Josh has used to make sure he is always on point and ready for those handshakes—to walk up to a stranger in an airport, introduce himself, and say “we should be in business together.” It's full of useful advice for real estate, and business more generally, but it's really applicable to any aspect of your life. Confidence, integrity, and respect for your friends, family, and colleagues isn't just a business strategy, it's a philosophy. Josh's life and career are proof that that philosophy is a path to happiness and success.

—Daymond John

Introduction

Ready, Fire, Aim

America is a ridiculous place. Two hundred years ago, in a world full of rich and powerful kings, a bunch of farmers and businessmen thought they could run a country better, and then they did. Then generations of foolhardy people gave up everything they had to move to America on the outside chance they could make a better life. People born into poverty and slavery had the crazy optimism that this country was better than its past, and they believed that despite the crap that had happened to them, this was a place where they could build strong businesses and families. Women who were only offered jobs as secretaries after business school ignored the disadvantages they faced to work toward taking over the companies that had once rejected them. None of these people should have believed this stuff was possible, but they did.

America is a country built on confidence that defied the odds. That confidence was foolish, but it wasn't stupid. My

goal in life is to be one of those idiots who see all the odds that aren't in their favor but still take the risk. I want to be one of the fools who make America great. That's what this book is about, and if you're a person who doesn't like to take risks, who just wants to keep your head down, do your job, and make money so you can pay your rent, you should probably stop reading, because this book isn't for you.

Okay, now that we've gotten rid of some of the dead weight, let's talk about confidence.

If the people who made this country great had anything in common, it was confidence. Despite poverty, war, and discrimination, they knew that the best thing they had to invest in was themselves. These days we live in a softer, nicer, more comfortable world, but it seems like people are constantly getting caught up in much smaller problems. Spending your life thinking about who is or isn't following you on Instagram is a great way of doing nothing with your life. America's greatness has always depended on smart people trusting themselves, but it feels like we've forgotten how. If you want to succeed in life, the key is confidence.

Confidence has gotten me everything I have. From meeting my fiancée to selling \$20 million homes, it's only because I've known what I wanted and believed I could achieve it that I've been able to make my dreams happen. This rubs a lot of people the wrong way. They are threatened by me knowing what I want and how to get it. They call it arrogance. Look, when I was younger, I may have been a little brash, a little too confident, but I've spent the past ten years of my life honing my instincts to work in the world of high-end real estate. I'm not confident because I stupidly think I can't make mistakes;

I'm confident because I've made mistakes and learned from them. Despite what some viewers of *Million Dollar Listing* may think, what I present to the world isn't arrogance; it's informed, intelligent, *calculated* confidence.

Calculated confidence, to put it as simply as possible, is training yourself in your chosen field to the point that you can trust your gut instincts are guiding you toward the best possible option. It's learning, working, and listening enough so that when key opportunities present themselves, you'll be ready for them, you'll actualize them, and you'll learn from any mistakes you make in the process. It's making yourself your most trusted advisor.

It's not just about taking risks. Stupid people take risks all the time. Investing twenty grand with some guy claiming to be a Nigerian prince requires confidence. So does getting a "Subway Rulez" tattoo on your neck so you can get free footlongs for the rest of your life. That's the wrong kind of confidence. If you're going to take a risk, make sure it's a smart one.

Though if any companies want to give me free sandwiches for the rest of my life, let's talk. There may be terms that work for me.

Think about the gold rush. In 1848, a guy named James Marshall found gold at Sutter's Mill in Northern California. For the next decade, guys from around the world rushed to California to try to make their fortune. That was an amazingly brave choice for all of them. But how many guys made millions from the gold rush?

See, picking gold up off the ground isn't the biggest risk. It's a simple strategy. Everyone can see how that can make you money. Those guys found some gold and made some money,

sure, but who made the *real* money off the gold rush? It was a guy who sold pants. Tailor Jacob Davis noticed that gold miners kept tearing their pants, and he approached Levi Strauss, who knew enough about clothing retail and San Francisco gold miners to realize the answer wasn't to just sell more pants like everybody else, but sell better pants. They saw a problem no one else was ready to see, they had the tools to solve that problem, and most important, they trusted those judgments enough to take a risk. "Oh, I had the idea for PayPal.com" isn't enough to make billions. You have to do it. You have to make the pants.

That isn't really the best business slogan: "Make the Pants." It's no "Lean In," but you get what I mean.

The risk those gold miners took was simple: they moved to California for a chance to pick gold up off the ground. Levi Strauss took a calculated risk. He took advantage of the opportunity to pick up gold where no one had imagined seeing it before: in the fraying pockets of those gold miners.

I've spent my life trying to be ready for moments like that one. A few weeks ago I was in the middle of finalizing a deal on the phone, and I said to my brother, "What we do here is 'ready, fire, aim.'" It was a joke, but the more I think about it, the more I realize it's also my philosophy. You have to be ready to identify opportunities, you have to have the confidence to make quick decisions and fire when those opportunities arise, and you have to learn from your mistakes and aim for better results in the future. You can be a success, but only if you train yourself to constantly be creating your own opportunities.

The most amazing day of my life was one of those "ready, fire, aim" moments. It started out the way most of my days start out: on a treadmill. I've been active my whole life—soccer

when I was young, then in high school and college, and I still work out pretty regularly. In high school and college, it was mostly about sports and looking good, but these days, it's more about getting the blood pumping in the morning and making sure I have the alertness and stamina to take care of my clients all day long.

Damn, I'm starting to sound like a grandpa.

So it was a Sunday. I'd had a good weekend and my brain was pretty shut down, but despite the Friday and Saturday night cocktails still swimming around in my body, I noticed something: the guy next to me was somebody. He was a tall, good-looking, African American guy, and it took me a couple of minutes before I could place him. It was Tyler Perry.

I work in real estate, but I work in real estate in Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, all industries are the entertainment industry. If I recognize someone, they're probably famous, which means they probably have money, which means they probably have high-end real estate needs. Every celebrity I meet is a client I haven't signed yet. Tyler Perry is not just an actor, writer, producer, and director; he's someone I admire greatly. He's a mogul in the truest sense. This was a guy I needed to be in business with.

I was staring down at the treadmill, I was sweating, and I was wondering what I should do. A lot of people with a day as overpacked as mine was that day probably would have just looked at this situation as a celebrity sighting and kept going. I don't know if I was thinking straight or it was just the dehydration, but I couldn't let this opportunity pass me by. I was running next to a guy who was an amazing potential client. I had identified an opportunity, and I had to be decisive. A

person can act or not act. Spending too much time considering a situation like this is, in the end, the same as doing nothing. So I reached over, tapped him on the shoulder, and said, "Hey, Tyler, my name's Josh Altman. I'm a real estate agent."

"Okay. Nice to meet you."

That was all I got. This guy was focused on his run; he didn't need me bothering him. It was an opportunity to walk away with dignity.

Dignity is for senators and bald eagles. I'm a real estate agent. I don't take no for an answer.

I said, "Hey, you ever think of selling one of your houses?"

I'm sure this guy thought it was weird that I knew where he lived. If Tyler had called the cops on me for stalking him, I would have understood. But I work in Beverly Hills: it's my job to know where the stars live. Plus, it means if real estate ever falls through, I can run one of those tour buses where you visit the homes of the stars.

He said, "Yeah, sure, for the right price."

That was it. Was it a commitment? No, but it was somebody who was interested in being interested, and that's all I need. Tyler finished his run, so I figured mine was over too, and I hopped off the treadmill. As I followed him into the locker room, I am *sure* Tyler Perry was starting to get more than a little annoyed. "Listen, Tyler, I've got tons of buyers who are looking for beautiful, modern homes with great views." I knew that's what he had. I wanted him to know I'm not just a part-time real estate agent-actor-bartender looking to squeeze some money out of a rich guy; he needed to know I was a serious professional who knew the market and could help him make a nice profit on his home. "Why don't I get your number? If I've

got somebody and you'll entertain it, maybe we could make a deal.”

I could have just sat on the number, but one of the first things I learned in real estate is that you should always have a house to show, or someone to show a house to. Intentions can fade, so the quicker you start the process of turning the intention into a deal, the better. I racked my brain, thinking, *Who do I have who might be interested?* I remembered a guy I'd been showing places to for six months. He was looking for something modern with a view in the \$10 to \$15 million range.

I called him up and told him that I had the best view in LA just waiting for him. I told him it was Tyler Perry's place so it was going to be great. He asked me how much Tyler was asking. I told him, “I don't know. Somewhere between \$10 and \$15 million?”

This guy didn't know exactly what he wanted. Tyler wasn't even really thinking about selling his place until I'd hit him out this morning. The house had been previously on the market for three years, but hadn't sold. It wasn't even listed at that moment. So Tyler probably didn't have a clear idea of what he wanted either. Why not try to help them figure out that what they wanted was what the other one had?

He said, “Let's see it.”

I told him I'd make an appointment. He told me that he was only in town for a few days and asked me to make an appointment that day. So just hours after I had tapped Tyler on the shoulder on the treadmill, I was calling him up.

“Hey, Tyler. Josh Altman on the phone.” I'm sure he was wondering who this annoying dude was who wouldn't leave him alone, but when there's a potential \$15 million deal on the

table, I'm willing to be a little annoying. "Tyler, listen. I know I just saw you, but I've got the perfect buyer for your place and I have to get him in there today."

Twenty minutes later Tyler's assistant was letting me and the buyer into the house.

I showed this guy Tyler Perry's 9,725-square-foot, four-bedroom, six-bath mansion at the end of a cul-de-sac in the Hollywood Hills. It was perfection, and when I had said it was the best view in Los Angeles, I wasn't exaggerating. My buyer said he had to have the place.

I sent the offer over to Tyler. He liked it, but he's a businessman. For some reason, when you're dealing with people for whom money is no object, they *always* negotiate hard. I guess that's the lesson: you don't become someone who doesn't have to care about money unless you always make sure to care about money.

We went back and forth; we negotiated. Tyler told me he was getting on a plane to go back to Atlanta. I knew that the minute he was on that jet, his brain would be focused on his production empire in Atlanta. He might intend to give his attention to the deal, but with the thousands of things Tyler Perry has to focus on, I knew that if this deal was going to happen, it had to happen that day.

As Tyler was on his way out of town, I sent him a number he liked, he agreed to accept it, and the deal was done. From seven in the morning until five-thirty at night, I double-ended an eight-figure deal. Ten and a half hours earlier, I was on a treadmill and I thought I knew what my day was going to look like, but I was willing to be wrong. Seeing an opportunity, pursuing it, and not stopping until I closed the deal meant that I

sold an \$11.25 million home I barely knew existed at the beginning of the day.

That's what "ready, fire, aim" is about: being alert, educated, and savvy enough to recognize when there's an opportunity in front of you; being confident enough to make a decision in the moment and pursue it to its completion; and being wise enough to learn from the times your gut sends you in the wrong direction.

Let me be clear: This isn't just a strategy for real estate, and it's not just a book about real estate. The skills I learned for closing deals were built as much by hitting on girls in college as by selling houses in Beverly Hills. I learned to dress for success from my football coach, and my best investment strategies come from techniques my dad told me at the dinner table. These are skills I learned from real life, and they can help you in any aspect of your life. You're making decisions all the time about work, relationships, and family. It doesn't matter what the decisions are about; it just matters that you make decisions with calculated confidence.

You have to be *ready*. Life is short. You're never going to get what you want if you aren't ready to make big choices. You can't go through life waiting to feel ready. You have to be ready and know you're ready. It's a hard call for anyone to make, but I'm here to mentor you through it.

You have to *fire*. Life is about making decisions. When an opportunity presents itself, you shouldn't waste time. You should do everything you can to take advantage of it. In just about every situation, you know instinctively what the right decision is. The challenge is to not stop yourself.

You have to *aim*. Life is about learning from your mistakes and readjusting your aim. If you trust your gut and something

goes wrong, you're going to be second-guessing yourself all the time. That's not the answer. The answer is to learn the lesson from your mistake and aim not to make the same mistake again.

Whatever your background is, whatever your skill set is, you have what it takes to be a success. The first step is to trust yourself.

You have infinite potential inside you. You have skills and aptitudes you haven't even touched yet. They're not going to magically appear, though. You have to create a set of goals and apply a structured plan to achieve them, but if you work hard and believe in yourself, you can achieve them. That's not false confidence, that's calculated confidence. And I'm here to put you on that path to success.

Part One

Ready

Every day when I get ready for work, it's like I'm preparing myself for battle. I know that I'm going to get into my car, and for the next twelve to sixteen hours I'm going to be on, pitching people houses, fixing deals, and making sure contracts close. When I'm in the heat of battle, I'm not going to have the time to ruminate on these decisions; I'm going to need to be in a space where I can trust my gut reactions. That's why that time working out, showering, and getting dressed is so important. I'm preparing for my day, thinking about what's on my schedule, but I'm also getting into a heightened state of mind, clearing my head of the unnecessary chaff from the night before, and remembering the kind of real estate agent I want to be.

Treating every day like a battle is the right idea, but a lot goes into a battle. It's not just about being brave; it's about having the right equipment in place, knowing your opponents, and making sure you fight on terrain that's advantageous to you. The same goes for business, hobbies, or any activity you want to pursue. The only way you can give it everything is to have the right strategy and ideas in place.

This makes it all sound pretty technical and military. It's not. It's just a question of giving yourself the best chance to succeed. Maybe you always get mad at yourself for not being the best, but how much do you actually do to give yourself that chance? You don't just turn around one day and get better. You don't go from not working out to having a disciplined, responsible workout schedule. You don't go from being a shy wallflower to being a great dancer. You don't go from living paycheck to paycheck to financial comfort in a moment unless you win the lottery, and a lot of people who win the lottery end up losing all that money and being broke again. Why? Because they weren't ready.

Readiness is composed of the structures you use to build your life. It's rhythms, habits, and awarenesses that allow you to maximize opportunities.

You want to start working out every day? Know yourself, know when you are most likely to work out, know when you're most likely to crap out and be lazy, and be honest about it. Know what your goal is. Give yourself a concrete objective: *I have to work out four times a week. I will lose twenty pounds. I'm going to make sure every desk clerk at this 24 Hour Fitness knows me by name.* When you know where you're going, it's easier to get there.

Find ways to love working out. Play music; make friends; flirt; don't use the machine you think you're supposed to use, use the one that makes you happiest. Any working out is better than no working out, and if you give yourself a positive feedback loop, you're going to create better habits. And stay positive, remind yourself constantly how achievable your goal is, and seek out situations that will help you on your path. Luck isn't random chance; it's work.

Tell people you're working out. Talk about it. You'll find workout partners, you'll find out helpful tips, and if you talk about it constantly for three months, when you get busy and feel like you don't have time to work out, one of those friends is going to call you on it. Be physically prepared to be the person who works out every day. Buy workout clothes you like. Have your gym bag with you every day. If you have the right equipment, you'll feel like the kind of person who works out.

And most important, be ready to face setbacks. Things worth having aren't easy. Let problems roll off your back and keep your outlook positive. If you keep working, you'll achieve your goals and life will get better.

When you're educated, prepared, and have a network of people who understand what you want to do, anything is going to be easier. I know you want to get out there and *do* stuff, but I assure you, readiness is not a waste of time. It's organizing and clarifying everything about yourself and your goals so that once you are out there doing stuff, you won't be wasting time, effort, or opportunities.

Life is short. You want to do the most you possibly can with it, so you can't afford to noodle around with success. Achieving your goals requires hard work, quick decisions, and big risks, and you're only going to be able to manage those successfully if you put structures in place that make you ready to achieve those goals.

So why not start now?

Know Your Gut

Never ignore a gut feeling,
but never believe that it's enough.

—Robert Heller

Human beings are animals. We're full of a powerful range of instincts evolved over millennia to keep us alive in the wild. Most people today ignore those instincts. They think they don't apply to our lives in a complex, scientific, urbanized world. They're wrong. Your gut instincts aren't the antithesis of rational thought; they are a quick, direct synthesis of the things you've learned, the things you want, and your body's physical reactions to the world.

This book is about being able to react to situations quickly, intelligently, and with confidence. It doesn't require that you be better or smarter than you are already; it just requires that you learn to use your intelligence and instincts together to

make informed decisions quickly. Calculated confidence is a skill you can learn, and the first step is to get in touch with your untrained gut instincts.

Your gut is constantly sending you messages: *I don't feel safe. I am hungry. My boyfriend is lying about eating the last tamale.* Some of them are right; some of them are wrong. Getting on a plane can seem really, really unsafe to some people's guts, even though they intellectually understand that flying is one of the safest methods of travel. Throughout this book, we'll talk about how to manage the relationship between your head and your gut, but for now, let's just focus on being receptive to the messages your gut sends you.

Gut instincts are fundamental, animal messages. A lot of our gut instincts deal with stuff like food and shelter—the kinds of things we had to figure out before we were rational, thinking humans driving Priuses and living in townhomes. We can ignore these instincts as anachronisms, holdovers from our ancient past that don't apply anymore. However, if we ignore these instincts, we're giving up one of the most powerful tools we have for decision making.

Sometimes the messages your gut sends you are pretty clear. The summer before my last year of high school, I was going on a trip across the country with other teens from the East Coast. It was like summer camp on a bus: six weeks driving around between big cities and national landmarks. It was cool. There was fun stuff to see, some cute girls on the tour, and they kept us moving enough that we couldn't really get into any trouble.

Or so I thought.

About a month into the trip, when we were heading from the Grand Canyon to Hoover Dam, we stopped off for lunch

and I got a burger and cheese fries. I didn't really understand it at this point in time, but my gut isn't the most tolerant of dairy products. We got back on the bus, and fifteen minutes later, I needed to use the bathroom.

There was a bathroom on the bus, but it wasn't exactly working. (After handling forty kids for a month, I'm surprised anything on that bus was working.) I wanted to tell the driver to pull over, stop the bus, and let me do my horrible business in some rest stop bathroom, but I was embarrassed. I knew that if I marched up to the front of that bus and announced I needed to drop a deuce, no guy would stop making fun of me and no girl would be interested in me ever again.

I waited. We'd have to stop somewhere, sometime. My stomach was telling me "sometime" wasn't soon enough, but I wasn't going to break. I was going to keep my, well, you know, together. My body was screaming out for me to ask the driver to stop the bus, but I just couldn't.

Forty-seven minutes later (you can sure as hell believe I counted), another guy asked if we could stop at a rest stop. The bus pulled in . . . I was so relieved . . . until I remembered I somehow had to walk to the bathroom. I tried to gently, gently stand up, and as I did, all the potty training my mom drilled into my head when I was three was useless. I was starting to lose control.

In the most awkward possible way, I waddled down the bus's center aisle, down the steps, and across the picnic area. With every step, a little bit more of the most embarrassing thing that'd ever happened to me leaked out. I got to the bathroom, said good-bye to that underwear, and did damage control as I hoped no girl had noticed my little bowel-control issue.

It was a simple, direct, physical instinct, but I ignored it, and I paid the price. Most of us have figured out how to pay attention to instincts that are fundamental by the time we're adults, but this book is about listening to all of your instincts and training them to be more sophisticated. The same instincts that tell you when you're hungry or tired can also process complex mixtures of data, judgment, and professional savvy to give you the quick reactions you need to be a success.

Your brain works more quickly and more subtly than you realize. Psychologists did a study where they showed people six pairs of numbers in rapid succession, then asked them which set of numbers was bigger. People got it right about 65 percent of the time. Then the psychologists showed them twenty-four sets of numbers in the same rapid succession. People were right 90 percent of the time. When there were only six pairs of numbers, people had to think about the problem. They did okay, but not great. When there were too many numbers to keep track of, people had to just trust their guts, and almost all of the time, they were right.¹

Gut instinct is the biggest asset I have in business. I recently got to meet a businessman I really look up to, Daymond John, the founder and CEO of FUBU and one of the investor-judges on ABC's *Shark Tank*. My brother, Matt, and I were at the airport in San Francisco. I'd just completed a speaking engagement, and we were heading back to LA. Matt spotted Daymond looking pretty incognito in a hoodie and sunglasses, *definitely* not looking like he wanted to be

recognized, but I'm such a huge fan, I had to go say hi and tell him how much I respected his entrepreneurial skills.

Now, look. I may have been walking up to compliment Daymond, but I still took the opportunity to tell him that I work in real estate. I tell *everybody* that I work in real estate. I let him know that if he had any real estate needs, I could help him. He told me he was looking for office space in Hollywood, and I assured him I could find him a better deal than any other agent in LA. As soon as I was out of earshot, I was on my phone, setting up appointments for us to look at spaces. Daymond would only be in town for a couple of days, but I packed in everything I could. I'm a closer. I close deals.

We found a space that worked for him. The owner was asking in the low eight figures. I countered. We did the dance, we found our number, and Daymond was ready to sign the deal. I'm a closer. I close deals.

And then I did the unthinkable: I told him not to sign.

My gut told me it wasn't the best deal. Conventional wisdom would tell anyone that it was a solid deal, but my gut told me no, and I trusted it in that instant. I didn't spend a lot of time weighing options. I just *knew*.

What did I know?

I knew that this was commercial real estate. A house is all about your heart: it's the place you raise your family, share your Saturdays with the person you love, and kick back after a long day at work. If you find the house that's right for you, you know it. Commercial real estate is about your head: it's numbers. I knew that we'd seen as many places as we could in the few days that Daymond was there, but that probably wasn't

enough volume to be able to find a place that was really *perfectly* suited to his needs.

What were his needs? Daymond's an entrepreneur. He's always got new ventures starting, and the place we were looking at didn't have the capacity for growth he was probably going to need. If I got him in the space, he'd be happy for now, but soon enough he'd be outgrowing it and looking for a new place.

I close deals, but I also serve customers. One multimillion-dollar deal will bring me a nice commission check, but an ongoing relationship with a money machine like Daymond John, in the long run, is worth way more to me. I knew that the best way to start this relationship was to put him in the space that was perfectly suited to his current *and* future needs.

I knew all that stuff, but I didn't have the time to think through it all, to weigh pros and cons. All those facts and pieces of professional expertise were like the numbers flashing in front of the people in that psychological study. My gut put them all together and synthesized them into a judgment without me rationally understanding all the pieces of the equation. The gut is the engine of calculated confidence. It powers you with instincts you have to be smart enough to train and understand.

The first step in training your gut is to understand yourself, your past, and the forces that shape your worldview. Your gut tells you the lessons you've already learned. It's the essential truth of all your collected experiences up to that point. My gut didn't always know how real estate works. It's been a long, slow, painful process of learning enough to trust myself to make the right decision in almost all situations. Training your

gut requires that you look at the way previous experiences have shaped you and figure out how to supplement that with more sophisticated instincts.

I grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, a rough, aggressive town full of big personalities. It was a world where aggression and being able to express yourself weren't just valued; they were necessary to survive. Boston guys have a lot of opinions, many of which they're ready to express with their fists, a lesson you learn really quickly when you're a kid. So from the start, one of my core instincts was to prove that I was a guy you didn't want to mess with.

My dad, Dr. Alan Altman, was an ob-gyn and a professor at Harvard Medical School. My mom, Judith, worked in the fashion industry. I guess they taught me the core lessons of my life: achieve great things and look good while you're doing it. Having a dad who achieved so much was a lot of pressure, but if you want to understand what real pressure is for a teenager, try having a dad who's a professional sex expert. Asking questions about sex is a bit intimidating when your dad literally wrote the book on vaginas. (Seriously, his last book, *Making Love the Way We Used to . . . or Better*, is available on Amazon.com.) Some parents teach you to work from a place of fear or doubt. Mine didn't, and for that I'm eternally grateful. I'm sure there are moments when they may regret raising me and my brother, Matt, to be unswervingly confident (some people even call it arrogant), like when I told them I was going to be on some Bravo show about real estate agents. I assured them

the show would be great for my life and career, but they were skeptical. I hope four seasons later they share a little more of my confidence. I think they did a great job raising Matt and me. I hope they think so too.

And what about my brother, Matt? He's my best friend, business partner, former roommate, mentor, icon, and, for most of my childhood, primary sparring partner and bully. Matt's three years older than me, and growing up, I did everything he did. He played soccer, I played soccer. He became a field goal kicker, I became a field goal kicker. Then we grew up and went into real estate together. Look, there are totally times when Matt's opinions—always expressed very loudly—have gotten on my nerves, but I've always appreciated having a best friend around to give me advice and support. That's another one of my core instincts: anything I can do, I can do better working together with Matt.

Let's not forget my grandpa. He came over to this country from Russia when he was a kid, and he started selling stuff from a pushcart not long after. Pretty soon, he worked his way up to a (semi)respectable business in finance. And by that, I mean he was a hard moneylender. I'm definitely my dad's son, but when it comes to business, I take after my grandpa. He was a guy who solved problems for people. They needed money, and he got it for them. When people need houses, I get them for them.

When I was little, my grandpa would always tell me "Money is for lending, not for spending." I didn't always heed his advice, but the words stuck with me and provided me with one of my most basic understandings of money: it should always be

working as hard as I am. That's a great quote and a great idea, but for me it's more than that. It's a gut instinct. It's something that was so hammered into my head that it is reflected in my actions without me even thinking about it. Investing just feels natural to me, and that's a good thing.

So what does the rest of my upbringing tell you about my instincts? It tells you that I grew up with hard-working, moral parents. I was trained from childhood to (pretty much) be a good person. I grew up with parents who always made me work for anything I got, so I'm going to be inclined to solve problems for myself. My upbringing also tells you that I'm used to having a mentor, competing, and trusting business relationships, and I'm going to be most comfortable going into situations that resemble my working relationship with Matt.

So maybe it's not so surprising that my fiancée is a real estate agent . . .

But knowing your gut isn't just about knowing what you're good at; it's about being brutally honest. You can only practice calculated confidence if you assess your good and bad instincts and are aware of them. So let's do it: let's talk about the ways my background can maybe send my gut in directions that aren't in my long-term best interest.

I'm not the tallest guy in the world. I'm five feet nine inches, which is a pretty average height, but it means I spent a lot of my adolescence and college years trying to prove myself: on the streets of Boston, in athletics, in business, and most important, to girls. As a guy with strong competitive instincts, I've got to be aware of when I'm going too far to prove that I may not be the biggest guy in the room, but I am the biggest *player* in the

room. I have to know, love, and trust my instincts, but I also have to know which of those instincts are most likely to get me into trouble.

I grew up in a family of very hard workers; they taught me to work hard. That makes it easy to be confident, but it also means I'm not scared of some things a normal person should be scared of. I've fallen on my face a couple of times. I've taken big risks and they didn't work out, and in the process, my gut learned there are some risks to avoid. Whatever your background is, it's given you strengths and weaknesses, and you can shape those and build on them. Many people have overcome horrible backgrounds to achieve amazing things, and many kids with all the opportunities in the world never do anything, as you can see any day on Rich Kids of Instagram. What's important is to be honest with yourself about who you are, where you're starting out, and what it's going to take to get you where you want to go.

Your gut is constantly evolving, taking in what you've learned along the way. When I was twenty, my gut didn't know *anything* about real estate. It was making decisions based on lessons learned on the soccer field or hanging out with my boys. Those are valid skills, but the more you know what you want, the more you can focus and hone your instincts to fit your field. Knowing your gut instincts is the start. It will show you where you're going to instinctively push yourself in any situation. Calculated confidence is about deciding where you want to go and building instincts to push you in that direction. Following whatever gut instincts your background provided you with will make you an ordinary, regular person; shaping your instincts to go in new directions will make you extraordinary.

I had a decent upbringing, but anyone's background brings with it a huge volume of experience and training. We all have hardships. Maybe your parents divorced when you were three. Well, that probably means you've developed strong instincts when it comes to interpersonal relationships or managing multiple people. Maybe you got in a terrible car accident when you were twenty. It may have made you risk averse but confident in your ability to recover from devastating loss.

Your life is a treasure trove of lessons. You've been learning them and turning them into tools along the way. You just have to figure out what those lessons are and where your resulting instincts are leading you. Then you can try to shape those instincts to take you where you want to go.

Here's an example. I love soccer. Since I was a kid, nothing has felt as natural to me as that game, and it's all about instinct: knowing where the ball is going, knowing where your teammates are going, and knowing where your teammate needs you to be. I was good at the game because I knew what to do without thinking. I worked by instinct.

But I'm not a perfect soccer player. Soccer is a game of speed, and I'm not the fastest guy on the field. That doesn't mean I'm bad at soccer; it just means I need to shape the way I play to the skills I have, and develop instincts that push me toward using footwork and ball handling to avoid competitors instead of trying to outrun them.

I'm sorry. I never intended for this to become a book about ball handling.

The point is, when something is right, you know it. When you're good at something, you know it. Real estate is the right career for me because most of the skills it takes to be good at

real estate are the same things I'm naturally good at. I could probably be a pretty good real estate agent just off of my basic gut instincts. Natural skills and passions are great, but they're never enough to be truly stellar at something.

I was never interested in just being good at something. I want to be the best, so I had to sharpen the gut instincts I developed during childhood, high school, and college into something a bit more focused. That's the difference between saying "Hey, dude, follow your gut" and the ability to apply calculated confidence to your objectives. The sharpening process is the "ready" in "ready, fire, aim." It's putting yourself through a kind of boot camp to train your instincts to take you in the directions you want to go, and to stop you from doing the stuff you find natural that holds you back.

You need to make success easy. Not just business success, any kind of success. Let's say you're someone who wants to get back into shape. When are you most likely to work out? Don't ask yourself when it's best for you to work out. Don't get mad at yourself for not being the kind of person who prefers weights over cardio. Don't get mad at yourself for not liking CrossFit. Start out by asking, *What's the way of making this good choice that feels most natural?*

Then do it.

Then do it some more.

Do you get super hungry after working out, then pig out? Make sure you've got healthy options *you actually will eat* there. Don't get mad at yourself for being someone you're not. Just know who you are, then find the ways to let that person be as successful as possible.

My dad gave me the best investment advice: invest in the products you use. Look, you're a magical and unique flower unlike any other, but you're also pretty average in a lot of ways. You watch some popular TV shows; you use the phone that's best and easiest for you; you drive an affordable car that looks good. So invest in that. If you believe in Apple enough to own an iPhone, buy some Apple stock. Clearly they're doing something right. Other people's guts are going to be as smart as yours, and they're going to make the companies with the good products successful. It's just that simple.

Jeff Bezos of Amazon has made thirty billion dollars doing just that: knowing people's basic instincts. Amazon doesn't just make shopping from your home convenient; it also *learns* about you. It finds patterns in when you buy and what you buy, then tries to make it as easy as possible for you to do that shopping through Amazon. It's called "predictive analytics," and it's the process of analyzing consumer data to predict behavior patterns.

If Jeff Bezos can learn about you from just a couple of Harry Potter book purchases, just think about all the behavioral patterns you can predict with a lifetime of data about yourself.

Learn what you do, then create a life where you're usually doing the best of what you do.

You have skills. Amazing skills. You have strengths the people around you take for granted and that *you* take for granted. I'm just a guy who likes to talk, thinks houses are cool, cares about other people, and isn't scared to take risks. I've been able to leverage that into a billion dollars in real estate sales. It's not about being the smartest, the handsomest, or the

strongest; it's about having the right mix of head, heart, and gut to use the skills you have in the ways that are most advantageous to you and most valuable to the people around you.

I'm not guaranteeing you'll be a millionaire, but I'm saying you can be. And I'm saying you'll be a lot happier than you would be if you spent your life trying to fit into somebody else's model for success. If you're smart enough to find the ways your natural instincts can lead you to success, that success is going to be easier and more fulfilling. You'll be able to make high-speed decisions you can trust. You'll be able to see opportunities other people won't. The first step is just to step back, look at yourself, and figure out what your basic gut instincts are and where you picked them up. I'm going to show you how to sharpen those instincts into the confidence it takes to succeed.