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The Power of Persistence

Posted By [Heather Boerner](#) On March 30, 2009 @ 12:35 pm In [Entrepreneurs](#) | [No Comments](#)



Working for free is never fun, but it's a big part of entrepreneurship. Marketing and pursuing your vision despite silence and rejection is even more important now, as businesses freeze budgets and banks withhold funding.

How do you stay motivated? Consider these stories from successful entrepreneurs:

GETTING STARTED

Patti Webster thought all her public relations clients would follow her when she left a major PR agency to start her own business in 1987. Instead, she found herself living on \$750 a month for the two years it took for her business to gain traction.

Did she get tired? Sure. But something told her this was where she was supposed to be.

She redoubled her efforts. She jokes, "If a turtle said it would meet with me, I was taking the meeting."

It paid off: Eventually, a contact gave her a big-name client at MCA Universal, and former clients came back on board. Today, W & W Public Relations is bi-coastal, representing athletes and musicians.

HOW SHE DID IT:

Low overhead

"I had the cushion of moving back in [with my mother]."

Faith

"I just knew that God had positioned me in this place and that if I just kept at it I would get a break."

Role models

"I don't have any entrepreneurs in my family, but there are a lot of persistent people in my family. I still do surround myself with persistent people."

GETTING AHEAD

Even though freelance writer and author [Damon Brown](#)^[1] has published four books as well

as articles in SPIN, Playboy, AARP, and The New York Post, he still pursues clients for years.

He's currently in talks with a prospective client to write a lengthy feature after pitching the editor more than 20 stories over the past four years.

"Here I am, with a tough publication, pitching in the middle of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and they're heavily considering a major feature that's probably worth \$5,000," he says.

HOW HE'S DOING IT:

Regular follow-ups

Over many months, Brown sent the editor copies of his best clips and his latest book, followed up and called. "Finally the editor e-mailed me back and said, 'This is totally up our alley and we need to look at what period of time is best to run the article.'"

Passion

"I have a mission to covering pop culture and subcultures that are misunderstood. I really believe in this feature idea. I have the attitude, 'We have to talk about it.'"

Ruthless self-appraisal

"All the hours I've spent pitching over the past five years, I could have been doing short pieces and getting paid. If I'm going to work for free, I have to become ruthless with myself. I need to focus and let go of ideas that don't work."

TAKING OFF

When Maurice B. Tosé wanted to take his Maryland-based [TeleCommunication Systems](#) [2] public, he encountered scores of detractors. The company didn't fit comfortably in any box: It served governments, consumers, and carriers, but analysts and investors wanted him to choose one market. It was heavily invested in text messaging before the industry understood the technology's value. It's minority owned, and some said that minority-owned companies didn't go public.

Then, in 1998, spending got ahead of finances and he mortgaged everything to the bank. He could have filed for bankruptcy, but he persisted. Two years later, Tosé's company went public and in 2008 was ranked the No. 4 best performing small and midcap stock on the NASDAQ by The Wall Street Journal.

HOW HE DID IT:

Thick skin

"Every entrepreneur has to get used to hearing no. Entrepreneurs are often criticized for having egos, but it takes a degree of that to be able to handle the no's and keep believing in what you're doing."

Determination

"As an entrepreneur, the possibility of failure makes you bound and determined to prove them wrong, whoever they are."

High standards

"Our objective was to grow 100% every year for the first five years, and while we never reached 100% growth, we did make 70% growth in the early '90s."

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[1] **Damon Brown:** **<http://damonbrown.net/bio/>**

[2] TeleCommunication Systems: **<http://www1.telecomsys.com/>**

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