



Evan Carmichael

The worst day of my life...

“Danny, I quit.”

I couldn't believe those words were coming out of my mouth. All my life I grew up believing that you should never quit on something that's important to you. My parents always told me that I was a Castrilli-Carmichael and I could do anything... and here I was telling my business partner that I was done.

I was over at my parents' house for dinner and took a call from my business partner upstairs. The past year had been really hard. I turned away six figure jobs to do my own business and ended up making \$300 per month and not being able to survive. When my friends invited me out for birthdays or dinners I had to say no. I told them I was busy working on my business but the reality was I couldn't afford the \$20 that the evening would cost me and I was too embarrassed to tell them that I didn't have any money. I mean, here I was, turning down jobs they wanted so that I could live the entrepreneur dream. How could I tell them the truth? I felt like a huge fraud.

So my business partner, Danny, wanted to talk. We disagreed on what to do next in the business. I felt like we had tried everything, and nothing was working out. Everything I had ever applied myself to, I had success with. School, sports, piano lessons... if I worked harder, I would get better. And here I was pouring every ounce of strength I had, every waking moment, every

single dollar into this business and it wasn't working. It felt hopeless. My once sky-high self-confidence was in the toilet.

Enough was enough. I couldn't take it anymore.

So I quit.

Then I cried.

Uncontrollably.

I cried so hard I didn't know what was coming out of my eyes and what was coming out of my nose. I'm not really one who cries much, but I didn't know what else to do. I felt like everything I worked on, everything I believed in, everything I loved had just been taken away from me. My mother, hearing me sobbing, came upstairs, put her hands on my shoulder, and tried to comfort me. I have no idea what she said. I couldn't hear it. I was too lost.

I went to bed and hoped better days were ahead.

I woke up the next day and asked myself “What do I want to do with my life?”

If money wasn't a concern... If I could do anything I wanted... If I had no restrictions... what would I do? It didn't take me long to figure out that if I could pick anything it would be to be back in my business.

If you're doing something just to make money then it's easy to quit. Most people do. But if you're doing something because it makes you come alive then removing the restrictions life throws at you clears the path.

I didn't want to live in regret for the rest of my life wondering what would have happened if I just got up for one more day and kept running my company.

I didn't want to go take a job that I knew I didn't love hoping one day to get back to my business meanwhile digging myself further and further into a corporate world that I didn't know if I'd be able to get out of.

I had to find a way to keep going.

The optimist in me took over. I didn't know how it was going to work out. We had no evidence that what we were doing would even work... I was making \$300 a month for crying out loud... but I had to believe it would.

I got dressed, made my lunch (lunch was always canned beans with some olive oil and herbs... it was all I could afford), and headed over to my partner's apartment as I usually did. He had a small condo that functioned as our “corporate headquarters.” He worked in his den, which was too small for both of us to fit in, so I worked every day from his dining room table.

The entire way there I was nervous. I had just quit on him the night before and now here I am coming back to work. I didn't know how he would react. Maybe he'd call me a traitor or a deserter. Maybe he wouldn't let me join back in. At best I was expecting an awkward conversation. At worst I would be out. But I had to go.

He opened the door and looked me right in the eyes. I looked back at him. To my surprise he didn't

bring anything up. We just dove back into our business. He understood how stressful this business was and cut me some huge slack.

I had hit my bottom and needed to find a better way to operate.

Hitting bottom makes you do funny things. Desperate things.

My first instinct was to quit and do something where I would get a meaningful return on the time that I was putting in. After realizing that quitting wasn't the solution, it just created another problem, I had to find another way to stand. I wanted to keep doing my business but everything I was currently trying, wasn't working. If I wanted to have success then I needed to change my strategy.

Then I found my answer: Bill Gates.

I felt like I had tried everything in my business but the Aha! moment came when I realized I wasn't the first guy to try to sell software before. I didn't have to come up with all the answers myself. So I looked to the man who was running the biggest software company in the world, Bill Gates, and looked at how he got started.

Bill Gates created his Microsoft empire through partnerships. He found people who also sold to his target audience and created alliances with them. The deal that put Microsoft on the map was when he partnered with IBM so that every IBM computer sold had Microsoft software installed on it. What most don't know is that Microsoft was already a \$7 million company when they made that deal. Now \$7 million isn't huge money... but it's still \$7 million! I would have been happy to be a \$7 million business! And how did they get to that size? Same answer. Partnerships.

I figured, if it works for Bill Gates, why can't it work for me?

So I made a list of all the people who sold to the same scientists we sold to. I reached out to them to introduce myself and see if there was a way to work together. Within one month I found a distributor in Europe who wanted an exclusive distributorship for England. I sold it to them in exchange for \$13,500 up front.

\$13,500!!!

Looking back, it seems like such a small amount of money but for someone who was making \$300 per month, I felt like I won the lottery. More importantly I had a new partnership strategy that I could replicate again and again.

Finally, some momentum.

Believe

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About the Author

Evan Carmichael helps entrepreneurs. At 19, he built then sold a biotech software company. At 22 he was a venture capitalist helping raise between \$500,000 and \$15 million. He now runs EvanCarmichael.com, one of the world's most popular websites for entrepreneurs. His goal is to help 1 billion entrepreneurs. He has helped set 2 world records, works 20 hours per week, uses a stand-up desk, rides a Vespa, raises funds for Kiva, and created a line of Entrepreneur trading cards. He graduated from the University of Toronto and enjoys salsa dancing, being a DJ, and the Toronto Blue Jays.

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