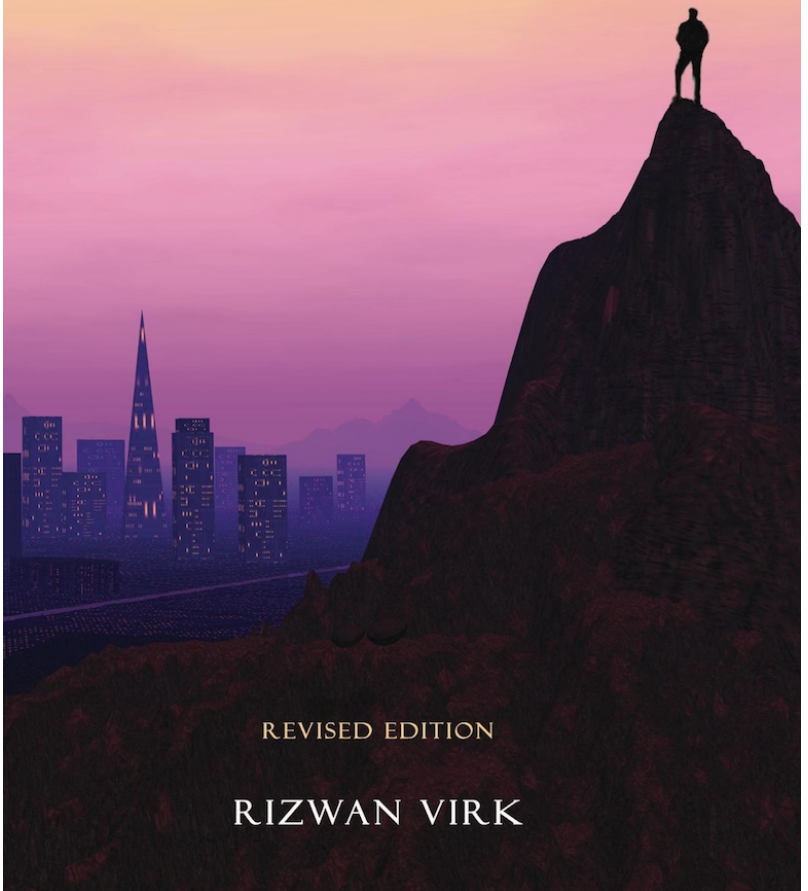


ZEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WALKING THE PATH OF THE CAREER WARRIOR



REVISED EDITION

RIZWAN VIRK

ZEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ZEN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Walking the Path of the Career Warrior
(Sample Chapters)

SECOND EDITION

RIZWAN VIRK

BAYVIEW



BOOKS

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For my Dad, who brought us from the East into the West.

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INTRODUCTION

If you are called to the spiritual life, perhaps the most difficult (and interesting) challenge you face is how to bridge the gap between what you do during the day in your ordinary life — your job, work, career — and what is happening in your non-ordinary life, that part of you which exists in the spiritual worlds. How you walk between these worlds will give you insights not only into how successful you are but also how successful and fulfilled you *feel* in this life.

This book is a compilation of lessons I learned about how to bring the magic and mystery of the spiritual worlds into the business world, where many of us live on a daily basis. These lessons, taken together, represent the Path of the Career Warrior. A Career Warrior is someone who can harmoniously bring the insights gained through spiritual practice into the every day world. And someone who can take the challenges and insights gained in the wonderful world of work with them into the hidden worlds. It's a two-way street.

How this book came about

In 1993, I started on an interesting journey in the business

world: at the age of 23, I became President & CEO of my first high technology company, called Brainstorm Technologies. My co-founders and I grew this company rapidly and for a time we were known as one of the ‘hottest’ start-ups on the East Coast. As the company grew, so did my understanding about the business world and how it worked. I learned a series of lessons over the next few years that I’d like to share with you.

However, around the same time, I began another journey of personal growth, which became inextricably entwined with the growth of my business. In fact, it led me to some startling lessons about entrepreneurship as a path of personal growth; I learned a set of spiritual practices, techniques, and principles, which had to do with what my mentors called ‘the hidden worlds’.

Eventually, I realized that these lessons were part and parcel of what I learned in the business world, and the only way for me to explain one is to also explain the other. Though my chosen career, high-tech entrepreneurship, is more risky (and potentially more rewarding) than most careers, I believe the lessons that I learned were universal and can be applied to any ‘life path’ — with the result being that anyone can walk the Path of the Career Warrior.

It took some time for these lessons to sink in, and it was not easy for me to come to the realization that success or failure in the business world is not simply about ‘dollars and cents’, that it could in fact be an integral part of a path of spiritual growth and personal discovery.

I discovered that starting a business is as much an act of self-expression as it is a professional one. I found that our beliefs, energetic patterns, and our thoughts manifest themselves in our careers in ways that I couldn’t have imagined. I also realized that many of us feel the need to bring more spiritual consciousness into the workplace, so that each of us can contribute to the world in ways that are more self fulfilling and holistic. This inability of our current system to let our individuality shine through is, in my opinion, one of the most important failures of our current private enterprise system.

How to use this book

This is the story of what happened in the everyday world, and how it led to a gradual awakening of what was happening behind

the scenes, in the hidden worlds, during my formative entrepreneurial episode. I have re-arranged some events to draw out the spiritual lessons, and have combined characters (including rolling several of my mentors into a single personality) in order to bring coherency to the story, but this book is otherwise based on my own experiences.

The chapters taken together not only represent what happened as I started and grew my first company, but they also represent the crucial elements of the Path of the Career Warrior, as I learned it. Since the first edition of this book, the thing that most readers asked for is more commentary and clarification on the various principles and practices mentioned in the story. As a result, I have added a summary section at the end of each chapter to draw out the lessons from that chapter.

If you like spiritual adventures, you can simply read this book and enjoy it as a *tale of power*. If you like business stories, you can simply read and enjoy this as a most unusual tale of entrepreneurship. On a first reading, you might want to skip the summaries altogether and just enjoy the story and let it sink in.

On the other hand, if you are further called to understand the relationship between your own experiences in your career/job/business and your own path of personal growth, then you'll want to re-visit the summaries and comments at the end of the chapters that speak to you the most. Each chapter deals with an important issue that you may come up with in walking your own Warrior's Path, the unique combination of the lessons you are here to learn (your soul's development) and the contribution you are here to make (your life's work).

In addition to advancing the story, each chapter introduces a conceptual model, often contains one or more assignments, and represents a level of awareness that you can carry with you into your own life and career. In this expanded second edition, in addition to the chapter summaries and comments, I've added an appendix with a recap of all the major lessons from the book—the Principles of the Career Warrior. Because many of us learn better visually (even more so now than during the time this story takes place), I'm often asked to give more up-to-date movie assignments. I've refrained from doing that in this book, but will make those available online for those interested.

I started on this path because I thought that *meditation* and *spiritual development* could help me to achieve my goals in the business world. I ended up realizing that the business world and all aspects of life are there to help me with my meditation and my spiritual development, leading me to my own unique ‘Warrior’s Path’. May these words help you to do the same,

—Riz Virk, *Palo Alto, CA, January, 2013*

Part I: Baby Steps

1 MEDITATING FOR MONEY? A STRANGE
ENCOUNTER
MAY, 1993

“I trust you’ve been meditating?” he asked as he gestured for me to sit down in the chair facing his desk. Behind him was a wall of glass that revealed a stunning view of the Charles River and the Boston skyline.

The late afternoon sun was reflecting off of two of Boston’s tallest (and most famous) buildings: the Hancock and the Prudential. There were so many small sailboats dotting this stretch of river that it resembled a maritime parking lot. And though each boat had its white sail raised and was obviously ‘sailing’, each also seemed to be standing still within its own plot of water.

“I’ve been meditating a little bit, based upon the instructions that James gave at the meditation center,” I responded as I sat down in the cushy black leather chair facing him.

Normally, at an opportunity like this my eyes would be taking in the breathtaking scenery just outside; but this time they were glued to the enigmatic man I had come to visit. He did not look at all like I expected. When I first heard the name, Ramaswami, I immediately assumed that he was from India. Instead, Ramaswami was a tall, skinny white guy with curly blond hair, wearing a double-breasted, designer suit (which I would later find out was Italian).

I was a bit taken off guard by his looks and his demeanor. I

knew, from James, that he had been teaching meditation since he was 19, and I guessed that he was in his early forties now. And I knew, also through James, that he had started several technology companies and had made millions of dollars from them, which explained how he could afford such a luxurious office.

James had been studying meditation with him for a number of years, and when he mentioned his teacher, Ramaswami, I immediately wanted to meet him. I thought that anyone who taught meditation *and* knew how to make millions in the business world was someone I wanted to meet.

I was 23 years old at the time, and was on what I hoped would be a fast-track career in the high tech industry. Ever since I was 12, I have wanted to start a software company. Some of my earliest memories of junior high school are of reading about the founders of companies like Apple Computer, Microsoft, and Lotus Development Corporation, which were started in the midst of the personal computing revolution of the early 1980's. Not only had these companies gone on to create whole new industries, but their founders had also made many millions of dollars in the process, a fact which was not lost on me, given my modest middle-class upbringing.

This ambition propelled me to learn about computers at an early age. It fed my desire to study computer science at MIT, which was located at the center of Cambridge, Massachusetts, a hotbed of technology entrepreneurship. And it persuaded me to quit my well-paying computer consulting job in order to join a small startup in Cambridge called DiVA Corporation, for virtually no pay. I only spent a few months at DiVA, but my working there had unexpectedly put in motion a chain of events that brought me face to face with this interesting, if unorthodox, teacher of meditation.

He leaned back in his chair and put his arms behind his head, as if he was evaluating me. The light streaming in from the window made it difficult to see the details of his face.

"I ... I've been thinking of starting a company..." I continued. Before I could say any more, he interrupted.

"Yes, yes, you have." He started waving his index finger in front of him as he talked. "And you thought that because I too

have started a company, many companies, in fact, and you are, indirectly, a student of mine, because you have been learning meditation from James, and James is a student of mine ... that I might be able to help you, maybe even give you some startup capital, correct?"

It was the longest run-on sentence that I had heard in a while, but he was essentially correct. "Yes, I..." I started, but he held up the palm of his hand, as if to silence me. I could tell he was used to having his way, and his manner made me a bit nervous.

He closed his eyes and turned his chin slightly upward. It was as if he was gazing into and beyond the spot just above my head. Of course, he couldn't have been looking at me, because his eyes were closed. He slowly turned his head to the left a bit, and then just as slowly to the right, as if he was a video camera, scanning an image of me.

"What are you doing?" I asked, not quite sure how to proceed. Everything about this initial encounter was off, and I began to wonder if it was such a good idea to have visited him after all.

He held up his left hand again in a motion that could not be mistaken: *wait a minute, don't say anything, let me finish*. Then, after a few moments, he smiled and started to nod his head, as if he approved of the picture he was seeing in his mind's eye.

He opened his eyes, lowering the hand that was stopping my barrage of questions, and gave me a childlike, almost innocent smile. He reminded me of a little kid who had gotten just what he wanted, and was now very pleased with himself.

"Well," he started, extending both hands out in front of him, as if offering me the chance to make the next move.

"Well, what?" I asked, still not sure where he was going with this behavior. In my mind, I began to rehearse what I had come to tell him about: my idea for a new business.

"Hmm..." he started, and now I was thoroughly confused and a bit miffed that he wasn't going to offer me an explanation. He still seemed to be moving his face slightly to the left and slightly to the right, this time with his eyes open but clearly gazing behind me and not looking at any one thing in particular.

"What were you doing?" I ventured, trying to buy some time before I jumped into explaining my startup idea.

"Aha, of course. Let me explain." He got up and walked

around his desk. Then he leaned back on the desk, and crossed his arms. *How odd*, I thought, when I noticed that he had been sitting at his own desk, in his own office, *with his suit jacket on*.

His manner now changed to that of a friendly teacher, having a quiet fireside chat with a pupil. “I was studying your energetic patterns, and trying to determine probability of success of your new business,” he said, matter-of-factly. He moved his hands in the air in front of him as he talked, pointing to things that only he could see. His gestures and general demeanor reminded me a little of Jeff Goldblum in *The Fly*.

I hesitated for a moment, trying to understand what he had just said. I understood probabilities, but *energetic patterns* was a term that I wasn’t familiar with. This meeting was getting stranger by the minute. I looked at the door to make sure I had a clear escape path in case things didn’t go well. “Isn’t it typical for a venture capitalist to ask about the potential market, the competition, and my experience, in order to determine the probability of success of a business?” I asked politely, trying to sound knowledgeable.

“Yes, that’s what a typical venture capitalist does,” he nodded and laughed. “But, I am not a typical venture capitalist. How many VCs do you know that also teach meditation classes?”

I had to admit I knew none. But then again, I didn’t know any venture capitalists at all. I was only a year out of college and hadn’t yet started my first software company. My mind turned to the chain of events that led me to meet him in his office.

I had been in Europe in the fall of 1992 working for a consulting company, shortly after my graduation, when I suddenly decided that it was time to join a small startup in preparation for starting my own software company someday. I quit my job in Europe and came back to the Boston area to work for DiVA, a multi-media software company that was spun off from the MIT Media Lab. I had only been there a few weeks when I noticed that the office next door had a sign that read ‘Boston Meditation Society’, and a poster that advertised ‘Free Meditation Classes’.

The first time I noticed the sign, I didn’t pay much attention to it. Then one evening, around 7 p.m., I was talking with some of my co-workers when a gentleman wearing a gray suit that looked a little too small for him wandered in. Technology startups,

particularly in Cambridge, aren't known for dressing up, and we were all dressed very casually in jeans and t-shirts. He introduced himself as James, from the Meditation 'studio' next door. I had no idea what a meditation 'studio' was but studied his appearance to see if I could learn anything.

He had dark hair, a hawk-like nose, and always seemed to be leaning forward on his toes, as if he was wearing sneakers and was about to spring forward. I looked at his feet to see if in fact he had gym shoes on; he did not, his black wing-tips were 100% business-like.

"That's a strange way to dress for meditation," started one of my co-workers, Lisa, who seemed to know a little bit about the subject. I knew very little about meditation, but listened with interest.

"Huh?" he looked confused for a second. Then his eyes did a complete 360-degree circle at a pace slightly quicker than the pace of his head, which was also circling in the same direction, while he lifted himself up on his toes. At the end of the strange circling motion, he stopped, fell back on his heels, and looked directly at her.

"Oh," he smiled and laughed. "You mean the suit! No, I'm a computer consultant, as many of the members of my meditation group are. We only do meditation classes at night. I'm still dressed up from work. I just wanted to invite you guys over for a free *'how to meditate'* class sometime. It's at 7 p.m. every night."

Then he went on to explain how their meditation wasn't like normal meditation, how they used it to help them get ahead in their computer careers. It was difficult for me to pay attention to what he was saying, because of the weirdness of his facial expressions and movements. He kept leaning forward and turning his head in arcs both clockwise and counterclockwise in between (and sometimes during) his sentences. He was obviously very passionate about the benefits of meditation.

After he left, Lisa laughed at how odd it would be to try to learn meditation, which was supposed to be about relaxation and peace of mind, from someone who was so *wired*. And *weird*. Then she went on and on about how she felt this guy didn't understand meditation at all. "Meditation isn't about making money," she explained, "it's about giving up your worldly possessions and

being spiritual! And if you're really committed, you go up into the mountains to meditate, not wear a suit and brag about how meditation helps you with your career!"

She had obviously written him off. In her mind, making money and meditating did not mix at all. They were two completely separate things. I, on the other hand, was secretly intrigued by the idea that there was a group of computer consultants who had formed a meditation group. James had insisted that meditation could help me grow personally, reduce stress, and help in my career. Of the three, I quickly latched on to the two practical ones: reducing stress and helping in my career, and I decided I would check out his class sometime. I didn't mention it to my co-workers because they didn't seem to think too highly of the ideas that James was presenting.

On a Tuesday evening during the following week, I wandered in to the studio and there was James. As I was the only student to show up that evening, he taught me a basic meditation technique and spent a lot of time asking about my background. If I was interested in learning more, he said, I should show up again the next week. I started meditating for a few minutes each day and followed his instructions, but wasn't sure if I was doing it correctly, so I kept coming to his classes.

I soon noticed that he kept mentioning his teacher, particularly in the context of esoteric teachings. James would always begin with "My teacher always says...", then go on to talk about something that I had either never heard of, or if I had heard of it, wasn't sure I believed: things like auras, energy lines, astral travel, past lives, and on and on. He alluded to so many of these things that I lost track of them quickly.

One day, several months after I had started meditating (and had moved on from DiVA to work at Lotus, which was one of the largest software companies in the world at that time), I told him that I was considering starting a software company with my roommate, and asked how, if at all, he thought meditation could help me.

That got him really excited. He started telling me about his teacher, who was an accomplished entrepreneur in the computer industry, and how he had formulated a path that that combined career success with spiritual success. Finally, after about fifteen

minutes, he told me he'd introduce me to his teacher to see if he would help me start my company.

I didn't know (or really care) much about spiritual development, but I figured that if this teacher could teach me 'advanced' meditation techniques that could help me start my company — I'd be there in a heartbeat! And, if he was that accomplished an entrepreneur, maybe he could teach me about business, or better yet, could give me some start-up money so that I could get my company off the ground!

With that in mind, I found myself in Ramaswami's office trying to ask him for business advice but getting some strange reply about how my 'energetic patterns' would influence my success in the business world, before I'd even had a chance to explain my business idea to him.

This meeting, which came at the very beginning of my journey into the business world, was also the start of a hidden journey that kept pace with what was happening with my entrepreneurial activities. I call it a hidden journey because Ramaswami would explain that his path of teaching was as much about the 'hidden worlds' (another term that I didn't fully understand) as it was about the world around us.

His teachings introduced me to a whole new side of meditation, human relationships, career paths, spirituality, and what can only be termed, for lack of a better word, the 'occult'.

This journey would go through the rocky rise of my first company, Brainstorm Technologies, which during its time became one of the fastest growing and well-known startups on the East Coast. I didn't realize it at the time, but my success and failures in the business world would be intertwined closely with my mastery of a set of 'spiritual principles' concerned with these 'hidden worlds'.

I started meditating, a path of personal growth, because I thought it could help accelerate my career. By the time I was done, I would begin to view my career as a way of accelerating my personal growth. I realized I had it backwards.

But all of that comes later. As I stood in his office, overlooking the Charles River with the Boston skyline in the distance, I was simply wondering how and if Ramaswami could help me to get

my business up and running.

“I guess I don’t know any VCs that teach meditation classes,” I answered sheepishly.

He nodded and then asked me to go ahead and describe my business idea. “Since you are so convinced that it’s important for me to hear about your idea, the potential market, *et cetera, et cetera*, then I will listen.”

I didn’t even recognize that he was only humoring me and didn’t really care if I had a coherent business idea or plan at this point — he was just trying to get to know me better.

I was now working for Lotus and was excited about their collaborative computing platform, Lotus Notes. I had come across Notes before, when I was still a college student, and thought it might make for the start of an interesting business someday. I rapidly described my idea to him, which was to build a link between Lotus Notes and various products that were sold by Microsoft. I explained in detail how companies spent so much money on both Microsoft and Lotus products, but had difficulty making them work together. “These companies,” I finished, trying to sound business-like, “aren’t leveraging their investments.”

He was nodding his head slowly but remained silent.

“Well, what do you think of the idea...?” I asked, thinking that I made a good sales pitch. “My business partner and I are planning to do some market research starting next week,” I added, hoping to impress.

He rubbed his chin slightly. “You know, it doesn’t really matter what I think of the idea ... the only thing that really matters is your energetic patterns at this moment in time, superimposed onto the energetic patterns and timing of the marketplace.”

It was not the answer I was looking for.

“Look, people think that starting a business is simply a career decision and that factors in the market determine the success or failure of a business. But do you know why most businesses fail?”

I had to admit I did not.

“Because of the energetic patterns of the founders, of course! Their patterns cause them to fail. Bad management is the #1 reason why business fail in this country. They don’t know themselves well enough, and this causes them to do stupid things.”

He waited for it to sink in, then went on: “That’s so important that I want to repeat it! The #1 reason why business fail is: *entrepreneurs do stupid things*. Now, most entrepreneurs aren’t stupid people — yet they do stupid things. Isn’t that interesting?”

“I ... guess so,” I responded.

“Why is it that most businesses implode? Because starting a business isn’t really about starting a business. What makes you do these things are your karmic patterns, your energetic patterns in the hidden worlds, and your hidden beliefs about this world. That’s why I was studying your energetic patterns to determine how successful I think you will be.”

I had no idea what he was talking about, but ventured a guess that ‘energetic patterns’ were a way of talking about different management styles, and/or different personality types. “And, what did you learn ... will I be successful?” I asked.

“Are you sure you really want to know?”

“Are you saying,” I responded, regaining my confidence, “that you can tell the future?” I was a little flabbergasted that he would make such a ridiculous statement.

Suddenly he hunched down, puckered up his lips and face, and walked in front of me as if he were a very old man with a cane. He waved the imaginary cane in the air and spoke slowly with a raspy, deliberate voice delivered from the back of his throat: “Always ... in ... motion ... is ... the future ...!” Then he waved his imaginary cane at me, smiling.

“Huh?” I responded involuntarily and then I had a flash of recognition. “Yoda,” I replied, recognizing his impression of the character from Star Wars.

“Yes, yes...” he replied in his normal voice. “It is not possible to know the future exactly ... because it is always in motion ... but it is possible to see how things are likely to play out, given today’s situation.” He walked back to his chair and sat down before continuing.

“I learned that you will have some success in your business venture ... but it will take longer than you think, and will lead you down a path that you’re not expecting to be on ...” He chuckled as if he knew something I didn’t know.

I didn’t understand what he meant. “You mean that I will end up creating different products than I’m envisioning now?” I was

naturally thinking about the inevitable evolution of a business concept. I had read many books about how the first idea is not necessarily the one that makes you successful.

He broke out in laughter unexpectedly. The he stopped, folded his arms, putting the elbow of one arm in the hand of the other, with his fingers tapping his chin. “Such a serious young man,” he said, in mock-seriousness. I could see that he was enjoying his feigned look of concern.

“No, kid, I’m not talking about what products you’ll make — that’s the content of the business. I’m talking about the form and structure of your business and your life.” He stopped to see if I had grasped his meaning. I had not.

“I’m talking about your energetic patterns. You will have some success, to a degree, and may even make some money, but what you will learn on this journey is the most important thing! I’m talking about personal, even spiritual twists and turns. Let me ask you a question: why do people start businesses?”

I answered without hesitation. “To make a lot of money and retire early so they don’t have to work anymore!”

He started laughing. “What you don’t realize is that there is no such thing as *not working* for someone like yourself ... Your Energetic Pattern won’t let you stop working! Okay, let’s say that is the obvious reason for starting a company. It is a universal law, I repeat, a uni-ver-sal law, that every obvious thing, has a hidden counterpart. So what is the hidden reason to start a business?”

I had no idea what he was talking about and told him so.

“The hidden reason, my young friend, for starting a business, is that it is simply a step along a path. This journey is not unlike the journey spiritual seekers embark upon when they begin to meditate, and they do something like committing to go to a monastery. They think they are doing it because they want to gain something; in their case, the thing they want to gain is Enlightenment, the Big E, or in your case, it’s Money, the big M.” He smiled as he emphasized the word.

I still had no idea what he was talking about.

“For most spiritual seekers, they see Enlightenment as some goal that, once attained, will give them freedom. In your case,” he was now pacing back and forth in front of the window, “you see money as a goal that, *once attained*, will give you freedom!”

I thought I was beginning to understand. “But money will give me freedom,” I replied quickly and went on to describe how without money, I wasn’t free to travel when I wanted, wasn’t free to spend my time in my own way, had to get up in the morning and go to work, and so on.

He slammed his hands on his desk so hard that I almost jumped out of my chair. “Hogwash!” he yelled. I eyed the door, planning my escape route from this madman, but he calmed down just as suddenly and resumed his very cerebral, almost soothing tone.

“The real reason that you are about to embark on this path has a lot to do with your future, much more than you know. I saw things in your aura which confirm this. Starting a business is like a stretch of a road, you could call that road your career, or you could call it your life. Each of us who embarks on it learns lessons that are much more important than whether you make a ton of money or not. Sometimes, how much money you make isn’t directly under your control – it’s all about the market you’re in.”

“Saw things in my aura? How did you do that?” I asked, now a bit intrigued. I had heard of auras, recently from James, but hadn’t met anyone who claimed to be able to see them. And I had never heard of them mentioned in a business context.

“Yes, in your aura. Let me ask you another question: what was your favorite activity in high school?”

I thought back to my high school days. I had been quite active in a number of extracurricular activities, but my favorite had always been speech competitions. My success in those competitions had helped me to get into MIT so that I could study what I thought was my real passion, computer science.

“Yes, yes, that’s it. When you have some time, think about that—your past is inevitably linked to your future, in ways that you can’t even imagine...” He was turning his head from left to right in a strange way that I didn’t understand again.

“Your business idea. We will talk of it again, when you are more ready,” he said.

“But I am ready!” I exhorted.

“I have students all over the country who are teaching introductory meditation classes. It was no accident that you met James — James will act as your mentor as you learn some basic techniques. Remember this, it’s the second universal law: there

are no accidents. Do you like movies?”

I nodded my head. “It’s the only way to get through to you Generation-X’ers,” he blurted out. “You’re all so visual, it’s the only way to get you to tap into a state of mind. I will give you a movie assignment. The fact that you recognized my Yoda impression means that like most computer geeks, you’re probably a fan of science fiction and fantasy, am I right?”

Though I didn’t like being called a computer geek, it was true. I did like science fiction and fantasy movies. I didn’t realize it at the time, but time and again he would use things that already intrigued me to teach me about this particular path of spiritual development, which he called the Path of the Career Warrior.

“Your assignment is to rent and watch *Excalibur*. Have you seen it?”

I hadn’t. But I was more than a tad disappointed. I hadn’t expected a movie assignment. I had come to talk about business, and all he had done was utter strange remarks about auras and told me to go see an old movie about King Arthur. Not that I disliked medieval adventure movies, but I had a thousand and one questions for him about business, and unfortunately, it was clear the meeting was over. He dismissed me abruptly.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER

Is it possible that career success and spiritual progress are not mutually exclusive but inter-related?

Like my co-worker in this chapter, we all have a deeply ingrained picture of a serious spiritual seeker: someone who renounces his worldly possessions and goes off into the desert or to a monastery to meditate or pray.

This chapter introduces a new idea: that you can be successful in the world and be deeply committed to your own spiritual growth. What we need are mentors and role models who have travelled this path before. Ramaswami was one for me, and that's why I wrote this book for you.

Similarly, this chapter introduces the heretical idea that it's okay to ask "what's in it for me?" when exploring spiritual practices like meditation, Yoga, martial arts, or even prayer. It's okay to start a spiritual practice because you think it might help you in some way as long as it sets you firmly on a spiritual path. If you travel the path correctly, the process itself will change you. What we need is a "way in" to the hidden worlds — once you're in, you can't help becoming a totally different person.

Starting a business is a journey, not a destination. So is meditation.

Many of us think that the reason entrepreneurs start a business is to become rich, to make enough money to have the freedom to do whatever we want to do. The reality is that only a few entrepreneurs get rich; most don't. It's the journey of a startup that is always rewarding in and of itself, chock full of lessons about ourselves that we didn't even know we needed to learn.

Similarly, some people view meditation as a way to reach "Enlightenment" or freedom from the world – freedom from what Buddhists call the endless cycle of life and death. But meditation is also a journey, and the process is as important as the destination. If you do it right, or even if you do it wrong, you'll learn lessons about yourself that you definitely didn't expect!

Everything that is obvious and visible to us has a hidden side.

Every single mystical and religious tradition in the world tells us that what we see around us is not “all there is.” In eastern traditions, everything travels through the causal and astral realms before becoming physical reality. In some Native American traditions, everything that is going to happen in the physical world happens in the dream world first, before it shows up in physical reality. Shamans journey into these other realms and they are referred to as non-ordinary reality. Meditation is a practical way to clear our minds so that we can open up and sense what’s happening in these other, normally “hidden” worlds.

Success in our career may have as much to do with our Energetic Patterns as it does with external factors.

This chapter also introduces the idea of the Energetic Pattern. If there are hidden worlds all around us, then our Energetic Pattern defines our character and personality in these worlds – the sum of all of our hopes, fears, experiences, tendencies, aptitudes, and even our destiny in this life. More to the point, our Energetic Pattern impacts how we make decisions about our careers and our lives, and manifests itself in the world around us as External Patterns of success, failure, and repetition in our lives as a result of our decisions.

As Ramaswami warns me as a would-be entrepreneur: “Why is it that most businesses fail? Because of the Energetic Patterns of the founders, of course! They don’t know themselves well enough, and this causes them to do stupid things ... what makes you do these things are your karmic patterns, your energetic patterns in the hidden world, and your hidden beliefs about this world. That’s why I was studying your energetic patterns.”

While our Patterns affect the future, the future is always in motion!

Our Energetic Pattern isn’t so much about destiny or free will, as much as it is about how we interact with the world around us, and how that world affects us. Yoda’s famous statement about the future always being in motion may be obvious on one level, but it has powerful implications for all of us. What this means is that what we do, how we think, how we interact with other people, is constantly causing our future to shift. Although our energetic

patterns have influence on this, we can change those patterns and thus change the future!

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2 A LITTLE DÉJÀ VU *JUNE, 1993*

James called me at 3:30 p.m. and asked how I was doing. I was actually quite bored with my work at Lotus; even though I hadn't gotten in to work until 10:30 a.m., my mind had already wandered. His call was an interesting distraction.

"Swami asked to meet you this evening after work," started James. "Are you available?"

It had been several weeks since my meeting with Ramaswami, and I was quite surprised to hear he wanted to meet with me again. During the first week following the meeting, I thought about it incessantly: what had he meant by my energetic patterns? What did he think about my business idea? Did he think I'd make a good entrepreneur?

The abruptness with which he ended our meeting convinced me that the meeting went poorly, and that he wasn't going to help me get my business started. Given his strange philosophy on what it took to be a successful businessperson, I wasn't completely convinced that I wanted his help yet. But, my own need for approval led me to obsess with whether I 'sold' him on my business concept or not. He was the first really experienced entrepreneur I had presented the business idea to.

"Ah, sure," I answered, after hesitating for a moment, "I can make it. Did he say what it was about?"

"Yes, he's taken a very strong personal interest in you. I don't

know what you said but it definitely left him with the impression that you are someone he wants to work with!”

I was a bit surprised. “But, I didn’t say anything to him! Half the time he had his eyes closed during our meeting, and when I tried to ask him questions, he cut me off and abruptly ended our conversation. I was sure that we didn’t mix well.”

“Oh,” James laughed. “Don’t worry — that’s what he always does — he was using his third eye to look into your past lives and your future selves...”

“Huh? Past lives and future selves?” *Here we go again*, I thought. “Say, James, do you really believe in that stuff?”

He suddenly became non-committal. “Well, why don’t you ask Ramaswami about that...”

... (to be continued)

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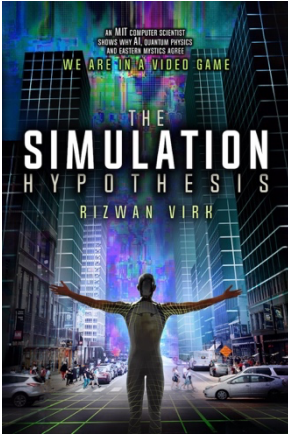
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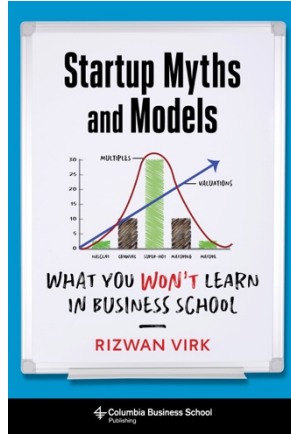
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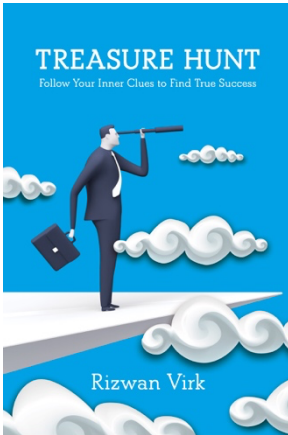
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Rizwan (“Riz”) Virk is a successful entrepreneur, investor/venture capitalist, bestselling author, video game industry pioneer, and indie film producer. Riz was the founder of Play Labs @ MIT (www.playlabs.tv), and is a venture partner at Griffin Gaming Partners. Riz is a graduate of MIT in Computer Science, and Stanford’s Graduate School of Business in Management, and is currently at the School for the Future of Innovation in Society at Arizona State University.

Since catching the startup bug at the age of 23, Riz has been a founder, investor and adviser in many startups, including Gameview (DeNA), CambridgeDocs (EMC), Tapjoy, North Bay, Funzio (GREE), Pocket Gems, Disruptor Beam, Discord, Telltale Games, Theta Labs, Tarform, Upland, and 1BillionTech. These startups have created software used by thousands of enterprise and video games with millions of players, such as *Tap Fish*, and games based on *Penny Dreadful*, *Grimm*, *Game of Thrones*, *Star Trek* and *The Walking Dead*.

Riz has produced many indie films, including the online phenomenon *Thrive: What On Earth Will It Take?*, *Sirius, Knights of Badassdom*, *The Outpost* and adaptations of the works of Philip K. Dick and Ursula K. Le Guin.

Riz is the author of *The Simulation Hypothesis*, *Startup Myths & Models: What You Won’t Learn in Business School*, *Zen Entrepreneurship* and *Treasure Hunt*. Riz’s writing and startups have been featured everywhere from Tech Crunch to The Boston Globe from Vox.com to NBCNews.com, from Coast-to-Coast AM to the History Channel.

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