



Mark Cuban

ENTREPRENEUR
Mark's Journey:

BARTENDER → BILLIONAIRE → NBA TEAM OWNER

Author and speaker John Ortberg said, “Over time, grit is what separates fruitful lives from aimlessness.” For me, grit is (and always has been) the ability to dig in, bear down, and work harder than the next guy. Grit begins when you want to give up, feel as if you cannot succeed, and simply run out of gas. It is easy to get to that point without grit, but to overcome the hump, you simply have to have it. The grittiest people are often those that refuse to stop until they reached their goals.

For most of us, we feel drawn to people with substantial amounts of grit. It is a term often used to describe athletes and coaches, but it is totally relevant to the business world. It is an attitude, a way of thinking, and a resiliency that uplifts and helps people to hit higher goals.

When I think of grit, Mark Cuban comes to mind. You probably know him as the billionaire Entrepreneur, Shark Tank phenom, and owner of the National Basketball League’s Dallas Mavericks. Mark’s successes brought notoriety in financial circles and among the hi-tech savvy. But his purchase of the Dallas Mavericks in 2000, and his success at turning a flailing NBA franchise into a world championship team in just 11 short years (by NBA standards) made Mark a household name for the rest of us.

He is gritty, passionate, and started from humble beginnings, hustling his way to his current social status. Throughout his life, he has worked to buck the common wisdom, and has realized that success is a definition all your own; it is never dependent on outside factors like good luck, connections, and other people.

Talk about a gritty attitude. Mark simply has no give-up and losing is not within his vocabulary. He says, ***“I want to kick the ass of the people I am competing with and that always motivates me to push myself to know as much as I can about my business and puts me in a position to create new ideas.”***

This son of working-class parents from Pittsburgh became a multi-billionaire overnight. But it was the gritty journey leading up to that moment that truly defines Mark and his perspective on success. He quotes his dad, an automotive upholsterer, when he says, ***“Nothing will come easy...hard work is something everyone talks about, but rarely does...if you do something you love, then working hard is easy. If you can work hard enough to be really, really good at something—anything—you can usually find a way to reach your goals.”***

More than 10 years later, I found this insanely busy mega-mogul hasn’t forgotten his roots, and he remains generous and willing to tell his story with others who need motivation as they follow their own paths. I was actually surprised by how open and excited he was to be a part of this project.

Don’t think that Mark’s success began and ended with the historic sale of Broadcast.com to Yahoo. He was definitely not a “one-hit wonder.” He went on to finance television shows and movies. He invested in a multitude of tech companies and bought a string of art-house theaters. Today his net worth exceeds some \$3 billion.

And the best part is that one of his personal *common threads* was making money through turning losers into winners. He has an amazing ability in identifying the opportunity where others simply cannot. He has done it

through the course of his career and constantly looks to those occasions where it takes grit and hard work to turn it around.

But how did this common guy from a Pittsburgh suburb come to land on the Forbes richest people list? No one handed success to Mark—he didn't inherit it. At the age of 12, he made his inauspicious entrée into the business world selling garbage bags to purchase a pair of expensive basketball shoes. He learned early to do whatever it takes to get what you want. To grit up. Later he tended bar, collected and sold stamps to pay for college, taught disco dancing and worked as a party promoter.

There lies within Mark an innate drive that has catapulted him to the top of his game and has turned him into a master self-motivator. He is pretty good at getting inside his own head and remaining there. He is his own best friend, never allowing the naysayers or the doubters take control. If that were the case, he may still be selling garbage bags.

Mark Cuban has an intense need for competition. He thrives on it. He tells his Mavericks players, ***“Business is the ultimate sport: 365 days a year, seven days a week and 24 hours a day, somebody is trying to take you down.”*** And when he identifies a “win” within his reach, he sets his sights on it with a laser focus and drives toward his endgame, never stopping until he gets where he is going. That ambition and competitive mentality generates his vivacious confidence to win.

Staying on top of his game is one way to live out another of his father's lessons—in fact, it's one of his favorite quotes: ***“Today is the youngest you will ever be, so live life to the fullest.”*** Playing to win helps Mark live life to the utmost.

His confidence comes out in an optimistic, “glass-half-full” attitude. When it comes to business planning, he disagrees with strategic approaches that include specific contingency plans for overcoming projected adversity. ***“That's a loser's game,”*** he says, ***“You have to have strategies to achieve success”***—not to project failure! Difficult challenges can be a positive force. Setting smaller goals helps you build a roadmap to success. And always retaining a large amount of grit can help to overcome those obstacles as they present themselves.

You can view your challenges as walls that hinder or stop your progress, or like Mark did, you can *grit up* and use those apparent obstacles as learning experiences that help propel you to greater heights. Seeing your “walls” as merely obstacles to overcome will increase your chances for huge success.

Grit is a term we use to describe people that are willing to go just a little farther than the competition. They are the type of people that don't just roll with the punches; they take the punches, and brush them off, recovering quickly so they can continue the journey. Grit can be a game-changer, a differentiator of sorts. For Mark Cuban, it has made all the difference.

MARK'S EMPOWERING THOUGHT: *The power to achieve success lies within you: “Sweat equity is the best equity—and everyone has a bank full of it. They just have to choose to use it.”*

DO IT DAILY:

- ***Forget Contingency Plans.*** Instead, create strategies to achieve success and view your challenges as lessons to help you reach your goals.
- ***Grit Up.*** Remain dedicated, determined and strong in the face of adversity. Grit is the simple notion of doing just a little bit more than the next guy. It is about realizing that today's failures are tomorrow's successes and not forgetting that in the process.