

KEVIN HARRINGTON
& MARK TIMM

MENTOR to MILLIONS

SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN
BUSINESS, RELATIONSHIPS,
AND BEYOND

Foreword by Tom Ziglar, CEO of Ziglar Inc

PRAISE FOR
MENTOR to MILLIONS

“Failure is not fatal. We can choose to stand on top of our pile of failures or be buried by them. In *Mentor to Millions*, Mark Timm and Kevin Harrington effectively give us the map to the top of the pile. They show us the mindset, focus, and action plan we need to turn personal and professional failure into exponential success.”

— Dave Ramsey, CEO of Ramsey Solutions

“If you want to know the lessons and formulas Kevin and Mark have learned over the past 30 years in life and business so you can create an action plan for greater success, then read this book.”

— Joe Polish, founder of Genius Network

“Undeniably powerful, insightful, and vulnerable approach to doing life and business. A must-read!”

— Dan Sullivan, strategic coach

“Kevin Harrington gives you the curiosity and tools you need to find new solutions, get your ideas to market, and learn how to scale and build lasting relationships. *Mentor to Millions* is like having Kevin as your personal mentor!”
— Barbara Corcoran, businesswoman and Shark from *Shark Tank*

“There is a secret formula behind why Kevin Harrington has become one of the most successful entrepreneurs today. In this book, Mark and Kevin have put this formula into a framework that shows high levels of success are attainable for anyone.”

— Roland Frasier, ID TK

“In *Mentor to Millions*, Mark and Kevin lay out a simple but amazingly effective blueprint so you can duplicate the successes they both enjoy. .”

— Ray Edwards, direct response copywriter and communications strategist

“This is a seminal book built around an idea that will clarify, energize, and transform your family dynamic as well as help you thrive professionally.”

— Michael Jr., comedian

“A life-changing book that teaches you how to be successful—not just in business, but also in family and relationships. ”

— Sonia Ricotti, # 1 best-selling author of *Unsinkable*

“For 30 years Kevin Harrington has been bringing his entrepreneurial message to students at Babson College—the global leader in entrepreneurship education. Kevin and Mark Timm have provided a holistic path for this success by sharing not only their triumphs but also their defeats. . . .”

— Stephen Spinelli, Jr., Ph.D., President of Babson College

“This book takes a deep dive into the fears and limitations that keep entrepreneurs and businesses stuck. It shows you exactly how to overcome them and find success in business and family.”

— Jay Abraham, business executive, speaker, and author

“Kevin and Mark’s authenticity and passion to serve others while incorporating the family into the ‘success equation’ is what sets this book apart from so many other business books on the market. ”

— Michelle Prince, best-selling author, speaker, and publisher

“Kevin understands life is bigger than money. . . . He is the example to follow, the leader to learn from, the mentor to model.”

— Mike Calhoun, CEO, BoardofAdvisors.com

“As I read *Mentor to Millions*—my overwhelming thought was, I would love to intern with Mark and Kevin and be a fly on the wall. An absolute must-read!”

— David J. Thompson, co-founder of Bright Line Eating

“*Mentor to Millions* shares business and family lessons that anyone can identify with and learn from.”

— Brian Evans, ID TK

“This book seeks to provide the reader access to understand the gift that a mentor brings to one’s life and the benefits a family brings to one’s heart.”

— Loren Chorn, co-owner of Ultimate Bundles

“*Mentor to Millions* is a must for any professional . . . It provides a powerful, practical, and simple system for leading your family like a business.”

— Lori Taylor, founder and CEO of Trupet

“Absolutely tremendous. . . a great reminder of all that is possible.”

— Dr. Greg Reid, author, Think and Grow Rich series

MENTOR
to
MILLIONS

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KEVIN HARRINGTON

Act Now! (with William L. Simon)

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MENTOR to MILLIONS

SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN
BUSINESS, RELATIONSHIPS,
AND BEYOND

KEVIN HARRINGTON
AND MARK TIMM



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I'd like to dedicate this book to my father, Charlie. He was my first mentor and shaped my entrepreneurial spirit. I hope I can be as good a mentor to other entrepreneurs as he was to me, and if I'm lucky, this book will share some of his wisdom with you, the reader.

— Kevin Harrington

I would like to dedicate this book to Zig Ziglar, the great motivator and disrupter. I was blessed to be mentored by Zig Ziglar at an early age and it changed the trajectory of my life. That relationship led me to constantly seek mentors in my life, and to be a mentor to others. Some decades later I met Kevin Harrington for the first time through Zig's children, Tom, Julie, and Cyndi, which directly led to this book. Zig's famous quote, "You can have everything in life you want, if you will help enough other people get what they want," was the foundation of our mentorship relationship and forged the writing of this very book. May this book serve as your motivation to become a mentor to others or to find the right mentor for your life—or both—because such a relationship is truly priceless.

— Mark Timm



FOREWORD: MUCH MORE THAN THAT

This is not just another book on entrepreneurial success. It's much more than that.

If you want to learn how Kevin Harrington started more than 20 businesses that each exceeded 100 *million* in sales, then this is a good book for you.

But this book is much more than that.

If you want a simple way to approach your business with specific mind-sets and action steps that will lead you to entrepreneurial success, then this is a good book for you.

But this book is much more than that.

This book is about much more than just being financially successful.

My father once said, "Money will buy you a bed, but not a good night's sleep; a house, but not a home; a companion, but not a friend."

Mentor to Millions has woven through its core the reason why we want a successful business in the first place—to enhance and add to the relationships we cherish most:

the relationships we have with our family, our friends, our partners, and those we serve through our business.

When we first dream about starting our businesses, we imagine all of the successes we will have. Those thoughts get our blood flowing and our imagination churning. We develop a vivid “before-and-after” picture in our mind and, with boundless energy, we tackle all of the challenges before us. The hours and days quickly turn into weeks and months. The grind begins and we tell ourselves the relationship costs are part of the “price” of doing business.

STOP. This is a lie. You do not have to suffer damaged, distant, and broken relationships as you create your dream business.

You do, however, have to be more intentional than ever about your relationships. I believe God created us for relationships, and a business done right revolves around the relationships in our life—not the other way around.

I’m betting that a number of you reading this right now are struggling to figure this out. You’re struggling to reconcile the idea that your relationships don’t have to suffer for your business, and vice versa. Chance are you’re in the thick of it and doing the best you can—and that’s okay.

Because this book will show you that you’re not alone.

Mark Timm lives a life most entrepreneurs only dream about—but he didn’t come by it easily. He reached a moment in his life where he realized that all of his successes came at the cost of deep interpersonal relationships with his wife and children.

Instead of accepting that the hustle and grind was the way things had to be, he decided to make a change. No longer would he make a choice between business and

family. He would do the right thing. He would become the right kind of entrepreneur.

One invested in the business of family.

The story that follows will teach you how to be successful in business, to be sure. But embedded in those lessons are tales of how Mark learned the true meanings of friendship, love, and hope, learned both directly and indirectly, from one of the world's greatest entrepreneurs—our friend, Kevin Harrington.

When I reached the epilogue of *Mentor to Millions*, I can honestly say that few things have ever touched me like that. It was powerful. Beautiful. It even brought me to tears. It is an *epic*-logue! You must resist the temptation to fast-forward to it. Trust me, it will be well worth the wait. Also, be prepared: you may have trouble putting this book down once you start.

Because having the business and the family life you want may seem too good to be true.

I promise you it's not.

Are you ready to become the right *kind* of entrepreneur?

Are you ready to have much more than what you've come to expect?

Then turn the page and let Mark and Kevin show you how.

Tom Ziglar
CEO of Ziglar Inc
Proud son of Zig Ziglar



PROLOGUE

Halfway up my driveway, I realized I didn't want to go home.

I should have wanted to. I'd had the kind of day at work that every entrepreneur dreams of. I'd absolutely crushed it. It was one of those days where I made 100 business decisions, and 99 of them were home runs—one of which was scoring an incredibly big sale. I'd had great meetings, terrific phone calls—everything was humming.

My driveway is about a third of a mile, and turning onto it, there is a little hill, so that until you come to the top of it, no one knows you're in the driveway. As I approached that hill, before anyone in the house could see me, I stopped the car. And I sat.

I stayed there, car idling. I didn't want the euphoria of this incredible day to end. It was a banner day, one where nothing could have gone any better—yet I knew that as soon as I made it to the end of that driveway and walked into my house, I'd be hit with the chaos and confusion of my family.

The euphoria would be gone.

It wasn't their fault. My wife and children didn't understand what I did. My children couldn't even spell *entrepreneur*, let alone comprehend what it was Daddy did all day long. I couldn't share with them the joy I was feeling that

day. They simply wouldn't get it. Once I walked in that door, I knew they'd hit me with the craziness that is family, and the charge that I'd felt all day would dissipate in an instant.

What was wrong with me? Filing for bankruptcy and losing your business—that's a reason not to want to go home. That's a reason to sit in the car, trying to figure out how you're going to explain things to your family.

My situation was exactly the opposite—but there I sat.

I felt shame about not wanting to go home. I have a deep inner sense that I was put on this earth to be a dad and a husband far more than I was meant to be a CEO and an entrepreneur. Yet my businesses were getting my first and my best, while my family got my last and my least.

It's so easy to justify those decisions because you tell yourself you're providing for your family—who can argue with that? I traveled all the time and missed games and events because I was building the business. And I was doing it to benefit them.

Still, deep down, I knew that we're all here to do something more than just sell some widgets and make some money. My family and business were competing with each other, pulling each other in opposite directions instead of working together harmoniously.

This wasn't the way it was supposed to be, but I didn't know how to change it.

How could family life be so hard when business was so easy to me? How could I make a hundred decisions at work with confidence and clarity, but the very first decision I had to make at home resulted in bedlam?

How could I justify wanting to stay at work longer because I didn't want the buzz of success to end when I was ignoring the people I cared about the most to do it?

Prologue

That's when it hit me.

What if I had this whole equation backwards?

What if the most valuable business that I would ever own, operate, or even have the chance to have the privilege of being a part of was not the one that gave me all the wins that day?

What if it was the one I was going home to?

In that moment, my businesses were still my businesses. My home was located in the same place. I still had the same family. I still drove home to them in the same F-150 truck I'd left in that morning. With that question, though, my mind-set shifted in an incredibly powerful way—and it changed everything.

In my driveway, at that moment, *I decided that I would treat my family as a business instead of an obligation or a commitment.*

We would be an actual company with a bottom line and enterprise value. I would take all of the things I was good at in business, and I would apply them to the business of my family. For every note that I took at mastermind sessions and conferences, I would take two notes about how I could apply those principles to our new family venture.

I incorporated my family.

From then on, anything I was doing well in my outside business, we did in the family business. We began to have family meetings on Sunday nights. We have a logo and a mission statement. We have shareholder meetings. My youngest child has the same number of shares in the company as I do.

In my work, we use the DiSC personality profile. I gave it to my entire family to take as well, and believe it or not, it works just as well for families as it does for businesses. It gave my family permission to know that

we're different. Our kids simply thought that their siblings were weird—they didn't understand that we're all wired differently.

Even the concepts of marketing applied to our new venture. We ask ourselves, *What does it mean to be a Timm? What does your name mean when you're at school, at church, or with your friends? What do you stand for? What is your equity?* Every family has a bottom line, and it may not be measured in dollars and cents. It's much more likely to be measured in relationships and impact.

Doing all of this gave me the ability to fully embrace this journey of being an entrepreneur. I also got permission from my family to do so. Instead of feeling resistance from them, now I heard, "Dad, go learn some more things to bring back to us. This is cool stuff."

Coincidentally—or perhaps not, depending on your point of view—this is what inspired us to start watching *Shark Tank* together on a regular basis. (In case you're unfamiliar, that's a TV show where aspiring entrepreneurs pitch their business to a panel of five investors—or "sharks"—who decide whether or not to back their companies.) We were now a family business, so what better show to view together than one whose framework is all about business? My 10-year-old daughter, Mary, decided that Kevin Harrington, genius entrepreneur and father of the infomercial, was her favorite shark.

Her fascination with him got me to thinking.

I've always been big on coaching and mentorship. Before my epiphany in the driveway, I wanted to be an entrepreneur only to make a lot of money to bring back to my family. Now I wanted to learn from the best entrepreneurs in the world, not just to be successful, but to take their *knowledge* and apply it back to my family.

Prologue

Watching Kevin give advice to up-and-coming business owners each week, I asked myself, *Who taught me the most about ideas I can pass on to make our incorporated family a success?*

Then I remembered: Zig Ziglar.

Zig had been a mentor to me as an up-and-coming entrepreneur—really an accidental entrepreneur. I met Zig in person in 1990 in Kansas City, Missouri, at the national FFA (Future Farmers of America). After I spoke with him for a time, he put his hand on my shoulder, looked me in the eyes, and said, “Young man, I believe in you. Will you come to Dallas, Texas, and be my personal guest at my ‘Born to Win’ conference?” This conference was Zig’s high-end training program for CEOs and other executives. Here I was, a literal farm boy raised in “Somewhere,” Indiana. I was told to go to school, get a college degree, and get a good, stable job working for someone. I hadn’t been raised to be an entrepreneur, and I certainly wasn’t taught how to be one. I’d needed Zig to help me have the courage to start my own entrepreneurial journey, as I had no one to guide me. The rest, as they say, is history.

What better way to help build my family “business” than to impart to them the lessons he had passed on to me?

So that’s exactly what I did.

I immersed them in Zig’s teachings. I taught them about motivation, inspiration, and mind-set, just as he had done for me. My son Markus has now listened to Zig’s first speech, “Biscuits, Fleas, and Pump Handles,” at least 17 times, to the point where he can practically quote it verbatim.

It was beautiful to watch my children not just embrace Zig’s wisdom, but actually integrate it and put it into action. Our little family corporation was coming together,

and that gap between my business and family was bridged in a way I could only imagine.

But something was still missing.

I still felt this hole that wasn't being filled by what was happening, and I didn't understand it—at first. Then, as I continued to mentor my children, something clicked. I realized that I didn't have a mentor of my own.

Of course, Zig had taught me things in the past, but it had been mostly around personal motivation and inspiration.

Now here I was, both an entrepreneur and a mentor myself—but still with no present-day, real-time mentor in my life.

And for the first time, I felt the absence. It was like a hole in my life that I hadn't even realized. I had no idea where to go find one. I mean, the only mentor I'd ever had in my life to that point was a mentor from afar, and Zig was long dead.

Where does a grown man find a mentor?

I had no idea how to deal with this, so I sat with it and felt frustrated. Mary and I were watching *Shark Tank* when she noticed.

“Dad, what's wrong?”

I have a strict honesty policy with my children, so I told her. “Well, honey, I was thinking about how I mentor you, but I don't have a mentor. I would like one, but I don't really know where to find one.”

“Dad, I know! Why don't you ask Kevin Harrington to be your mentor?”

I laughed. Her enthusiasm was so warm and infectious, but I had no illusions about Kevin Harrington being my mentor—there was no chance.

Prologue

I explained to her that Kevin had taken more than 20 businesses and generated hundreds of millions in profits. He was the ultimate serial entrepreneur and was in demand all over the world. He certainly wouldn't have time for someone like me.

Mary, though, was not one to give up so quickly.

"But, Dad, Kevin goes on TV to help entrepreneurs just like you! Why wouldn't he help you? I bet he would, you just have to ask. Doesn't Zig Ziglar say you can have anything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want?"

I laughed. The student was already teaching. "Yes, he does say that. Okay, Mary. I'll look into that."

I feel terrible about it now, but I lied to her. I said that knowing that I never would.

And I never did. I'm a risk-taking entrepreneur—but I'm also realistic. I would have to find a mentor somewhere else.

Months later, things were going so well with mentoring my family that I decided to reach out to the Ziglar family to tell them about our little experiment. They immediately fell in love with the concept—so much so that we decided to work on a joint venture together called "Ziglar Family," aimed at helping families go from merely surviving to thriving.

As we worked together and the project found its legs, the CEO of the Ziglar Family called me. He wanted to expand the program and had some ideas on how to do it.

"Mark, these are all great ideas. I also want you to talk to, and possibly work with, one of our company advisors. You might have heard of him. He's pretty well known."

"Oh really?" I said. "Who's that?"

“Kevin Harrington. He’s on *Shark Tank*. Do you watch that show?”

I couldn’t believe it.

I actually started laughing out loud on the phone. I had to explain to the CEO that I wasn’t laughing at the idea—that, in fact, I loved the idea, of course.

I am a religious man, but had I not been, this might have made me believe in God. Because seriously—what were the chances?

Kevin and I had our first phone call and immediately hit it off. The first one led to a number of phone calls, many at my kitchen table with Mary eagerly listening by my side.

Kevin agreed quickly that we’d work together on the Ziglar project, and while that was terrific and exciting, what had become obvious—almost immediately—was that even in the most basic discussions, I was learning more from him than I ever had working on my own as an entrepreneur. He was teaching me, and he didn’t even know it.

In the mission of providing mentorship to the business of my family, I had found the mentor and the lessons I had been looking for—and I wanted more. A lot more. Not just of the lessons, but of his time, in order to build more than just a mentor-mentee arrangement. I wanted to develop a relationship built on trust and respect.

Since then, Kevin and I have embarked on many ventures together. In fact, as of the writing of this book, we are involved in 10 different ventures, and it’s all because of that first one. Some will yield significantly more return than the first, but we never would have developed this relationship without it. It set the stage for us to realize that we truly enjoy working together, as well as like and respect one another.

Prologue

It also allowed me to see, firsthand, that Kevin's success was not an accident, and it had nothing to do with luck.

And it helped me realize something else: I had some value to provide him as well. It took me a few years to see it, but over time it emerged.

It started when I first asked him, "Why were you able to repetitively scale businesses to 100 million dollars or more?"

He would answer in a way relevant to the moment in time that I asked, and I would learn a great deal.

But then someone else would ask him a similar question a few weeks later, in a much different context, and he'd give another great answer—but it would be somewhat different from the one before, because the context of the question was different.

I saw this happen again and again. Kevin absolutely knew what he was doing, but he didn't know how to explain what he did based on a system or formula honed over decades of consistent results.

Yet the more time I spent with him, it was obvious that there *was* a formula to his entrepreneurial endeavors that he was using over and over and over again.

I became obsessed with figuring out exactly what it was. I made it a personal mission. How *was* he doing it?

It was so rare to see that kind of business success once, let alone twice—but more than 20 times? Nothing that happens that many times is accidental or coincidental. There was a pattern to how he was making this happen, and I was determined to figure it out.

What I discovered on this journey was nothing short of incredible. It was a master class in entrepreneurship and business that I did not think was even possible.

And this book is about sharing what Kevin has taught me with you.

I want you to experience what I experienced—not only how my mind-set about business changed, but how the way I interacted with my family changed as well.

My time with Kevin has dramatically and positively impacted the relationship I have with my children and my wife. Almost every relationship in my life is so much deeper and stronger today than it was before, when I was simply interacting with people by coming home to them as their dad and husband, compartmentalizing the entrepreneur in me.

What you're about to read is not just my interpretation of Kevin's words. I am going to take you on the journey with me, and you will hear Kevin's words out of his own mouth. My only role here is to help put it all together in a framework you can use in your life. I'll share how I was able to apply those lessons not only to myself, but to my businesses and my family.

I learned how to scale them both, my businesses as well as my family. I also learned how to scale a friendship—and, on this ride with me, so did Kevin.



CHAPTER ONE

BUT . . . WHY KEVIN?

Let's take a step back to my first phone calls with Kevin.

During one of those conversations, I sat at my kitchen table with my daughter Mary who was now 14. She fidgeted in her seat, until finally she smacked my arm.

"What?" I mouthed to her, covering the receiver.

"I want to talk to him!" she said in a loud whisper.

"No way," I said.

Mary pressed her palms together in a prayer position and stuck out her lower lip. "Please."

Kevin must have sensed my distraction. "Everything all right over there?"

I held up a finger to Mary. "Hey, yes, Kevin. I'm sorry. I'm sitting here with my daughter Mary and she's a bit of a fan and . . ."

"Is that right? Well, put her on the phone."

Mary must have heard him through the phone because our jaws simultaneously fell open. I hadn't dreamed of

actually asking Kevin to speak to my teenage daughter, let alone let myself imagine that he might volunteer to talk to her. I went to hand Mary the phone and she shook her head.

“What do you mean, ‘no’?” I whispered.

“What am I supposed to say?” she whispered back.

“You’d better figure it out,” I said, and handed her the phone.

She slowly brought the phone to her ear. “Um. Hi. This is Mary.”

Wanting to hear both sides of this conversation, I motioned for her to put him on speakerphone. She did and set the phone on the table.

“Hello, Mary. It’s nice to meet you. I’m Kevin. So, what would you like to know?”

Mary looked at me with wide eyes. I waved my hand in a circle, urging her to speak.

“You were my favorite Shark on the show,” she said. “Why did you leave?”

I had to admit, the question was an itch I’d wanted scratched myself.

“Great question, Mary. So, truth be told, not everyone who came on the show needed an investment—they just needed help. They needed advice and direction, and I wanted to give that to them even more than making an investment. Unfortunately, that wasn’t what the show was about, and ultimately, I felt like I could do more for entrepreneurs outside of the program by providing them with the mentorship they needed to succeed. On the show there were, at best, dozens of businesses that I would be exposed to in a season. That wasn’t enough—my desire was to be a mentor to millions!

“That said, Mary, I loved the show. It was a fantastic opportunity both for me and the entrepreneurs I got to work with. I wouldn’t trade it for anything, but I had to do what felt right for me, which was creating a true win-win

scenario for me and the entrepreneurs I encountered. And Mark Cuban is a great guy, and he came on and has done a really terrific job.”

Mary had an ear-to-ear grin on her face—and so did I. The spark was lit for both of us. The fact that he would leave such a super successful show because of his desire to help up-and-coming entrepreneurs confirmed everything we had thought about Kevin. We knew then and there that Kevin was even more special than we had originally thought.

“Kevin, thank you for speaking with Mary,” I said.

“And just so you know,” Mary said, “I really do miss seeing you on *Shark Tank!*”

Kevin gave a hearty laugh and thanked her. I don’t think Mary and I stopped smiling for the rest of the day.

Over the course of a few weeks, Kevin and I had more calls, and during that time, we decided to join forces to bring Zig Ziglar’s legacy to the world together. It was becoming obvious that we liked each other. The fact that Zig was a mentor to both of us during our early adulthood gave us a common bond. The next step in forming a successful partnership was to get to know each other well and to ultimately trust each other. Talking on the phone all the time, though, was not going to get us to know, like, and trust each other.

So, I booked the family on a trip to Saint Petersburg, Florida.

Kevin and I had decided that the best way to extend Zig’s legacy, since he had already passed away, was to share it as a *living* legacy through Kevin as the ultimate protégé of Zig. My idea was to interview Kevin so that I could understand at a deep level how Zig impacted him, and what he did with what he learned. I brought a small team and Mary with me to capture the content of the meeting.

Kevin decided the interview should be at his kitchen table. It was a long wooden one, and he sat at the end. We set up a recording device so that I could just focus on listening and asking him questions. I told him I thought this would take about an hour.

Boy, was I wrong about that.

TELL ME ABOUT “LITTLE KEVIN”

In all the years that Kevin had been interviewed, with those interviews likely numbering in the thousands, I had never seen or heard one that started with his childhood. I'd learned in my own entrepreneurial journey that there was no such thing as an overnight success, so even Kevin Harrington had to start *somewhere*.

To say he had me at “hello” would be something of an understatement.

“My mother was the daughter of Louis Kispert,” Kevin began, “who was one of the original presidents of Fifth Third Bank. The bank started in Cincinnati with one location, and he was one of the top men in the organization. When he passed away, he left the family a lot of stock, which got divided up among his children—one of whom was my mother. My father, after he returned home from the war, became a restaurateur and an entrepreneur. So I came from this interesting background of finance and entrepreneurship.

“My mother wanted to live in this beautiful neighborhood that my dad couldn't afford. They ended up buying the cheapest house in the nicest neighborhood. I went to school with guys like Tommy Williams, who would later become the owner of the Cincinnati Reds, and Mark Everingham, whose father was the CEO and chairman of a large grocery store chain. At any rate, there was an old part

of the street, and there was a new part of the street, and on the new part were the million-dollar houses. Guess which side we were on?" he asked, laughing.

"What do you think guys like Mark got on their sixteenth birthday? Old Mark's father gave him a Triumph—a TR6. What did I get when I was sixteen? I paid cash for an MG Midget because I wanted to keep up with the rest of my friends."

"Hold on," I said. "You paid *cash*? How did you get the money to do that?"

"I wasn't going to be given anything," Kevin said. "So I earned it."

CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

"Let me get this straight," I said. "At sixteen, you earned enough money to pay cash for an MG Midget?"

"You're a pilot, right?" Kevin asked.

I nodded. At this point, he knew that I flew recreationally. "My father," he continued, "was a World War II hero. Flew in the Air Force. One hundred sixty-five missions. Now that's a lot, but it's even more when you consider that then, you were only required to fly twenty-five."

My jaw dropped open.

"I'll tell you more about that when we have more time," he said, "but suffice it to say, the man had no quit in him. When he finally returned home from the war and opened Harrington's Irish Pub, he was determined to teach me everything he knew. One of the first things he told me was, 'Kevin, you need to own your own business.' He was all about entrepreneurship, and all about teaching.

"I'll never forget, my dad told me once that the beer guy was going to be delivering kegs and he wanted me to count how many he brought in. The guy shows up

and brings two kegs in and takes two empties back to the truck. He kept on this way for a bit—two in, two out. My dad comes walking through as he's going back to the truck and stops the guy.

“Where are you going?” he asks him. ‘Back to the truck with the empties,’ the guy says. My dad takes one of the empties off another keg below it—and the bottom one is full. The guy was taking one full one and one empty back to the truck, trying to get over on the eleven-year-old watching him.

“How did you know it was full?” I asked him. ‘The keg was sweating,’ he told me. ‘You got to know what to look for. A sweaty, cold, full beer keg looks different than an empty one.’

“He wasn’t just teaching me how not to get ripped off. He was teaching me how to look at things differently. Seeing the angles. And I worked twenty-hour shifts with him some nights. I was just immersed in all this.

“What’s funny is that my mother was just the opposite. She said to me, ‘You know you’re not going down this entrepreneur path like your dad. He’s in the bar business. He gets home at three A.M. You’re going to be a banker, a lawyer, or a doctor.’

“I had two older sisters. One ended up marrying a doctor and the other a lawyer. I said to my mom, ‘My grandfather’s in the banking business. We got all the bases covered now.

“I can be the entrepreneur.”

THINK AND GROW RICH

At this point, our hour had turned into two.

I didn’t care. I was fascinated—and so was Mary. We had to know more.

“Sunday was my dad’s one day off from work. He worked from 11:00 A.M. until 2:30 A.M. the next morning, six days a week. On one of those Sundays, he opens up a box in front of me and pulls out a heat gun that’s used for vinyl sealing. He tells me he’s starting a vinyl sealing business.

“‘Every restaurant has a problem,’ he told me. ‘They get tears and rips in the cushions of their seats. I’m going to start a repair business for them, and I want you to be a part of it.’ And I was. We’d go out every Sunday, the man’s only day off. Even when he was resting, he was hustling.

“He found out about lamination machines, and before I knew it, he had a bunch of them all over the city of Cincinnati, and I’d go collect the money from people using them. He bought the rights to Magic Fingers, the things that made the beds vibrate. We put them in all the Holiday Inns. This is what we did together, from the time I was eleven years old all the way up until college when I couldn’t focus on that anymore.

“When we weren’t out running those other businesses on a Sunday? He was sitting in his recliner with a stack of trade magazines and newspapers almost as tall as the chair itself. I asked him why he’d bother with all that when he was supposed to be relaxing. He told me he was looking for the hottest, latest, and greatest trends in restaurants. My dad was selling chicken wings long before there was WingHouse and Hooters. Every Friday night was wing night at Harrington’s, and it was because he was spotting the trends.

“He was handing me all these journals, but the thing that really impacted me was when he handed me the book *Think and Grow Rich*. I remember getting so excited about what it taught me—that whatever you conceive and believe, you can achieve. Getting handed that book was

like getting handed the keys to the MG. I told myself, *I'm going to do it. No one is going to do it for me, and I don't want them to, and there's not enough 'no's' in the world to keep me from doing it.*"

DRIVEWAY SEALING

Three hours later we were ordering Chick-fil-A to be delivered, and Mary and I scrapped all other plans for the day. We were just mesmerized. He kept going and we weren't about to stop him.

"At fifteen years old, I started my driveway sealing business," Kevin said.

"Fifteen?" Mary asked, wide-eyed.

"Fifteen," he said. "Like I said, I was motivated to have what my rich-kid friends had, but I was going to get it myself. One of the kids I went to school with, his family had been in the blacktop and driveway sealing business for thirty years, and they lived in one of those new, big mansions up the road. So my friend tells me that if I was thinking about a business, he could get the supplies.

"I first started riding my bike from house to house, knocking on doors. Twenty of them, to be exact. The first reaction was always, 'Who are you? Where's the owner of the company? Where's your dad?' They were thinking I was there to ask their kid to come out and play.

"Then my brother-in-law stepped up and said, 'Do mine for free, and I'll be your first testimonial.' I told him he had to cover the cost of the materials, which at the time was like eighteen bucks. He agreed, and we took before and after pics. I did a perfect job and put a sign up on his lawn. I got almost everyone signed up after that. I said that the first guy in the neighborhood to sign up only got charged

twenty bucks, as long as I could take pictures like I did with my brother-in-law. The twenty people who said no at first? I got eighteen of them when I went back to them, then charging a hundred bucks a pop. I showed them the magical transformation that I'd provided their neighbors, and they were hooked.

"We started scaling quickly, which meant we needed drums of sealant—which meant we needed a truck. I'm fifteen, with no driver's license. I bought a pickup with the money I had made, along with some fifty-five-gallon barrels, which saved us a ton because we were now buying sealant in bulk. We rigged the drums to spray the stuff directly from them onto the driveway, and we were doing these things like an assembly line. I was doing a thousand dollars a week in business. It's how I earned the money to buy that first car."

BABEE TENDA

"This is incredible, Kevin," I said to him. "Is there more?"

Of course there was—and he didn't skip a beat.

"Babee Tenda was something I sold when I was sixteen years old. It sold for about three hundred dollars back in the seventies. They were used in hospitals. Babies couldn't fall out of it, they couldn't tip it, and they couldn't fall down and strangle themselves."

"Wait," Mary said. "What was Babee Tenda?"

"They were safety high chairs," Kevin said.

I couldn't help myself. "You sold *baby high chairs*?"

"Absolutely," he said. "Bruce, the owner of the company, had the idea to put little boxes in the malls that offered the possibility of a free trip to someone pregnant with their first baby. They had to put their info in the box, and then I'd get sent out to the house to deliver the prize.

“Everybody won, by the way. They got a day cruise out of Miami. The guy who sold the chairs got a thousand tickets for three dollars, and maybe five people out of the thousand actually took the trip. When I showed up at their door, the husband and wife, they’re skeptical. I’d tell them I needed five minutes to tell them about all the things in the box, along with five minutes to tell them all about Babe Tenda.

“Once they let me in—and almost all of them did—I’d ask them, ‘What’s the most dangerous piece of equipment in the house when you have your baby?’ I had these articles that talked about how dangerous the high chair was. The phone rings, and the mother goes for it? The baby’s reaching for momma, flips the high chair. Someone’s at the front door? Baby slips down in the seat and chokes.

“Then I told them that Babe Tenda was used right here in Children’s Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio, and if they had just a few more minutes, I could tell them all about it.

“In the beginning, I was closing maybe one in five prospects. It was a one-day close situation. I told Bruce that if they needed the night to ‘think about it,’ ninety-nine percent of the time, that sale wasn’t happening. He told me he saw my potential and that he was going to go with me on a call. That’s when he taught me about ‘isolating the objection.’

“What it entailed was pulling the actual objection out of them. If they told me they wanted to think about it, I’d re-pitch the product, then ask them if the facts I presented were the things they wanted to think about. Once they admitted it was about the money, that’s when I was able to move in. It was no longer about the quality. That’s when I could hit them with the financing, which we were offering at nine dollars a month.

“I was closing seventy percent of them with that. But there was a problem.”

Mary and I were rapt. We leaned forward, heads in our hands, and said simultaneously, "What was it?"

"Returns," Kevin said. "Of the seventy I closed, fifty percent of them were sending the chairs back, which they were allowed to do within three days of the sale. Almost every time, what happened was the couple would call their parents and tell them they bought a three-hundred-dollar high chair. Then the parents would talk them out of it. Bruce taught me the answer for this, too.

"'Appeal to their pride,' he told me. So I'd go back and ask the couple if when they got married, did the mother pick the location? Did she choose the cake? Nobody liked having their pride challenged.

"Bruce taught me so much about sales. I had zero cancellations from that point on. I still use many of the lessons he taught me today."

RUST PROOFING

I should point out that Mary was only 14 at the time of this interview. For the trip she had brought her phone, her computer, and a book in case she got bored.

She never looked at any of them. She was hanging on Kevin's every word—like me.

Not only that, but as the day went on, she kept moving closer and closer to the conversation.

Meanwhile Kevin had gotten so excited about sharing his early experiences that he was standing up so he could share with more passion. It was like his memories were fuel to a rocket that was about to take off. And he did.

"After I purchased the MG, I get a phone call," Kevin continued. "The guy on the line is congratulating me on my new car, telling me it's one of the biggest investments that I'd make in my life. He goes on to tell me that in

two or three years, I'll see rust coming up on the fenders, but he offers a service to protect them. Done in one day, guaranteed for life. Could he drop off a brochure in my mailbox? I agreed.

"He shows up at my door. It turns out he's the sales manager of the rustproofing company Guardian that had just opened up—and they'd done it in a pretty slick way. They opened up in seven gas stations all around the city, rented a bay the station wasn't using, and paid them a percentage of every rust-proofing job. It was like the Uber of rust-proofing.

"He sees me and is shocked. He thought I was in my thirties based on our phone call. He asked me where the car was, and when I showed him, he was shocked all over again. 'How'd you get this car?' he asked. I told him I'd had a driveway-sealing business and now I was a salesman for baby high chairs.

"'You're wasting your time,' he said. 'You've got to come run with the big boys. I can give you a dozen leads a day.'

"I ended up selling as many as thirty rust-proofing packages a *week*. I became the number one salesman in the region, coming back with five or six sales a day. I would show up with my car, showing them the results of their work on my own vehicle. Back then, cars weren't rust-proofed coming out of the factory, so showing them the before and after photos was really effective. Just like with the driveway sealing."

HVAC

I was in awe of all he had to tell us. It would never have occurred to me that he had started down this path so early—that the history of his journey was so rich and

started long before he became the Kevin Harrington we knew today.

He had one more story to share to close out the day—and it was incredible.

“I didn’t always work for myself,” he said. “At one point I worked for Trane heating and air conditioning. They licensed their name to a local heating and air company, one that had been around for thirty years and became the Trane affiliate in the market.

“When I showed up for the interview, the guy told me they only hired full-time people, and that he hadn’t realized I was just a high school student. ‘Why’d you call the ad?’ he asked me. ‘Because I want to make some money,’ I told him.

“I told him I’d done my research on Trane and that I knew it was a great product. I couldn’t be at every meeting, but what I could guarantee was that I’d be selling every night, and in a month, I’d sell more than their average guys across the board. Once I’d shown him what I’d done with Babe Tenda and the like, he finally agreed. I was a senior in high school, working for Trane.

“I had six leads the first week. By the sales meeting at the end of that week, I had three sales at three grand apiece, where the next guy only had one. By the end of the month, I was teaching the other guys how to close.

“After six months of this, I discovered that Trane was subcontracting to the affiliate. So I did some math. The equipment cost on a three-thousand-dollar job was about five hundred bucks. I was only getting ten percent commission, so three hundred dollars, while they kept the rest. I knew then and there that I could do this myself.

“That summer, my first year in college, I started Tri State Heating and Cooling. Turns out that business name

belonged to a man who had long retired and had been in business for thirty years. I told him my story, and he said he'd sell me the name, but it was going to be very costly."

Mary leaned in. "How much was it?"

Kevin smiled. "One dollar. And we had to let him ride around with our crew when we did installations."

Mary breathed out a sigh of relief.

"So I went from a new business to thirty years in business. Took out a full-page ad in the yellow pages and rented out answering services. We serviced the whole city. I went down to the courthouse and bought all the new homeowner lists, called the owners up, and gave them free furnace cleanings. We went from zero to a million dollars in sales in the first year. By year two, we had twenty-five employees."

Mary and I looked at each other openmouthed. We couldn't believe what we were hearing—and Kevin ate it up. He went on to tell us about how he eventually went on to sell the business to one of his top salespeople when labor and tough inspectors got to be too much for a 19-year-old college student to manage.

THE PIVOT

When Kevin sold his HVAC business, he made a pivotal mind-set change—one that would influence the way he did business forever and would turn him into that Entrepreneur's Entrepreneur, a name I gave him, as that is truly who he is.

"I decided after my experience with the HVAC company," Kevin told us, "that I didn't want to be all about that sales hustle anymore. I needed to find a new way to do business. I had cash from the sale, and I was a young

entrepreneur, so the world was my oyster. I started down the rabbit hole of exploring every business opportunity there was out there. *Entrepreneur* magazine, *Income Opportunities* magazine, *BizOp Classified*—you name it. During this time, I met a guy, Neil Balter, who owned the California Closets company in L.A.

“Neil had sold a couple of franchises, and he told me that I should become a franchiser as well. He told me that he had a bunch of guys calling him from Ohio and asked me to sell a couple of his franchises for him until I found my path, and he’d pay me a commission on them.

“What happened was I’d talk to some of these people, but they weren’t carpenters and ended up not being interested in Neil’s deal. So I asked Neil if I could find something else for them. Neil gave me his blessing, and so I’d tell the prospect about the thirty other deals I’d seen doing my own research.”

This was the beginning of how Kevin became a franchise broker. This was the birth of Franchise America.

“I started partnering with some of the franchisers, venturing with them,” Kevin explained. “With that, I had to go get my real estate license and named my company Harrington Enterprises. In the process of selling these franchises, at the closing table, I’d discover that these people didn’t have someone to do their books, or handle their incorporation, or take care of their legal needs. I realized these people needed more than my help buying businesses—they needed my help all across the board.

“I renamed my business The Small Business Center and it was a one-stop center, the world’s first shared office space—we were the first WeWork! I rented space to lawyers and accountants and advertising agents and gave them access to all these franchisers. It was terrific.

“Right around this time, I had also read Zig Ziglar’s *See You at the Top*. It was this creation of The Small Business Center, along with the inspiration and motivation I found in Zig’s words there, that marked a pivot point for me. It changed my whole mind-set about how I’d do business—and I never looked back.”

All in all, we spent the better part of *six* hours just talking about Kevin’s life, how it all started, and ultimately why he does what he does—how he became the Entrepreneur’s Entrepreneur. He spent the first 30 years of his life learning how to become a world-class entrepreneur—then he spent the next 30 years being that entrepreneur.

Now he plans to spend the *next* 30 years teaching others, sharing his formulas, and opening up his life so that others can learn from him. Kevin will not want to be remembered for what he has done, but for how many he has helped to do the same.

It’s why we’ve written this book.

Once we finished that day, there was no question in my mind that I needed Kevin Harrington as my mentor, and I knew that someday this story—the real story—needed to be told. He was about more than just the stories we had all heard, such as the invention of the infomercial or being a founder of EO (the Entrepreneurs’ Organization). There were so many more experiences he’d had leading up to that to learn from—and so many more after. His story was grounded in sealing driveways, his father, and where he really learned to sell—baby high chairs.

It was that last story that really intrigued me—the beginning of the mind-set shift that marked the jumping-off point for the massive success Kevin would achieve in his illustrious career.

I had to know more.

MENTOR
to
MILLIONS



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



As an original “shark” on the hit TV show *Shark Tank*, the creator of the infomercial, pioneer of the As Seen on TV brand, and co-founding board member of the Entrepreneur’s Organization, **Kevin Harrington** has pushed past all the questions and excuses to repeatedly enjoy 100X success. His legendary work behind the scenes of business ventures has produced well over \$5 billion in global sales, the launch of more than 500 products, and the making of dozens of millionaires. He’s launched massively successful products like The Food Saver, Ginsu Knives, The Great Wok of China, The Flying Lure, and many more. He has worked with amazing celebrities like Billie Mays, Tony Little, Jack LaLanne, and George Foreman to name

a few. Kevin's been called the Entrepreneur's Entrepreneur and the Entrepreneur Answer Man, because he knows the challenges unique to start-ups and has a special passion for helping entrepreneurs succeed. kevinharrington.tv.

Mark Timm has been a serial entrepreneur and exponential-thinking practitioner for two decades. He has started more than a dozen companies, several of which have multiplied and been sold. He has spoken professionally for more than 25 years, giving thousands of speeches to over a million people around the globe. Mark's greatest value comes from being a master collaborator who brings people together to accomplish far more than anyone imagined. His strategic vision enables him to see future possibilities and strategically position assets and systems to take full advantage of what's next. Today, Mark believes his most important role is CEO of the most valuable business in the world: his family of six young adults with his wife, Ann. His own experience of dealing with entrepreneurial challenges fueled his passion for helping people balance the demands of family life and business. www.marktimm.com.

