

PREFACE

Webster's Dictionary says an entrepreneur is “a person who organizes and manages an enterprise, esp. a business, usu. with considerable initiative and risk.” I used to tell people that an entrepreneur is someone who pays wages to others on a regular basis and always makes the payroll. If you can make a payroll, you get to make a lot of the decisions affecting how you run your business and your life. You get to be free. I was an entrepreneur for over thirty years, and enjoyed the freedom it brought me in my business and in my personal life.

Why am I qualified to write this guide? Here is my story:

My father was a career military officer, and growing up I had little knowledge or understanding of business. After completing college and serving in the Navy, I decided to go into business. I worked for a year, went back to Harvard Business School, then launched my career in business. In 1966, when I entered the cable television industry at age twenty-seven, I had never earned over \$3,000 in a year. In 1999, when I retired and sold Summit Communications, the company I had founded twenty-six years earlier, we had over 40,000 customers and were a significant player in the cable television industry. As more fully detailed in my biography at the back of this book, I had been a “success.” During those thirty-three years, I had employed as many as 130 people, operated businesses in seven Western states, and had built, purchased and sold over fifty businesses in several communications-related industries. At age sixty-one I asked for my Social Security statement. It came with earnings noted for

each of the previous forty-five years. That is a lot of years spent developing approaches to the problems encountered in business and in life. In this book I share those approaches with you.

This book is also about how I achieved freedom. In relating what worked for me in mapping my road to success, I wanted to give you new approaches to consider when you find you are up against new problems. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive primer. Rather, think of this book as a weekend “clinic.” It concentrates on the key issues that seemed to be the primary determinants of my success, and gives you my approach to those issues.

One of my life goals was to be successful both financially and in my family life. I am particularly pleased that our three children each completed college in four years, picked up a couple of master’s degrees, and are all gainfully employed in fields which excite and motivate them. I know a lot of people who have been successful financially, and I know a lot of people who have fine families. I know fewer people who have done both. I used to schedule school conferences, Boy Scout meetings, and similar events on the same calendar where I scheduled my business meetings. Coming home after a day at work, I felt there was nothing finer than getting down on the floor to play with my kids. You can be highly successful in both your business and in your family life. But it does not come automatically. It is a choice.

My father, a career U.S. Coast Guard officer, used to say, “Different ships, different long splices.” He was referring to splicing lines—joining together two ropes at their ends—and saying that there are many different ways to complete a task effectively or to

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produce a desired result. For that matter, there is always a diverse range of desired results. There is no single “right” way.

In this book I talk about the ways that worked for me. I lay out the rules, guidelines, and principles that helped me to successfully execute my life. They worked for me as an entrepreneur, and I believe they will be useful to you as well.