

Inside

STEVE'S UPDATE: APPRECIATING MOM

Page 1

NETFLIX'S CEO ON PURSUING YOUR IDEAS

Page 2

SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITH THE
RIGHT STRATEGIES

Page 2

HOW TO EASILY INCREASE YOUR
WATER INTAKE

Page 3

REWARDS PROGRAM

Page 3

A MATCH MADE IN CORNMEAL
BATTER HEAVEN

Page 4



Corn Dogs and Basketball

AN AMERICAN TRADITION

It's no coincidence that National Corn Dog Day is March 20 — the third Saturday of the month. This day is traditionally the *first* Saturday of March Madness, otherwise known as the NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship. But wait. What do corn dogs and a basketball tournament have to do with one another?

Turns out, National Corn Dog Day has *everything* to do with March Madness. The "holiday" began in March 1992 when two Corvallis, Oregon, high school students needed a snack while watching a basketball game. They got some corn dogs and called it good. But somehow, this simple snack and sport pairing turned into something huge.

In fact, eating corn dogs while watching March Madness caught on like wildfire — and the teens didn't even have Instagram to promote it! Though it's not clear how, it spread across Oregon and eventually the rest of the country. It's likely that people just heard about it from friends and family and thought it was a great idea.

The corn dog, like basketball, is an American creation. In the 1920s, the creators toyed around with the idea of fried foods on a stick. They battered and fried everything from cheese to bananas, but it was the battered sausages that really stood out, and the corn dog was born. By the 1940s, the convenient creation had popped up at state fairs and drive-in restaurants all over the country.

In 2012, in honor of the original Corn Dog Day, the then-governor of Oregon issued an official proclamation naming March 17 National Corn Dog Day in the state. Several companies jumped on the bandwagon as well, including Foster Farms (a maker of frozen corn dogs, among many other meat products) and the Pabst Brewing Company.

While it's not an "official" national day recognized by the U.S. Congress, it's celebrated with thousands of events every March. And it's grown beyond its U.S. roots. An article printed in *The Oregonian* in 2009 revealed that National Corn Dog Day parties have been celebrated on nearly every continent — including Antarctica!



Steve's Update: Appreciate Your Mom While You Can

As most of you know, I have two kids. They are 17-year-old twins who are seniors in high school. I have been working to get them accepted into local colleges. For various reasons, they will be commuting to a local school. Kristina got accepted to Hofstra, and Jimmy is applying to Adelphi. This has been a good amount of work, including a lot of time on the computer filling out pages and pages of information.

This has been a pretty grueling experience, which I'm sure many of you have gone through too. It has really given me an appreciation for what my mom did to help get me into college and help me transfer as well. This was all on her shoulders as my dad had passed away when I was a sophomore in high school. I am sure it was not easy on her and not what she envisioned handling



all on her own. That's why I want to make this month's story about my mom. That's a picture my mom made me take of her a year or two before she passed away.

My mom's name was Helen. Although we did not always see eye to eye on things, I would like to think we had what you would call a good relationship. She married my dad in 1960 and helped nurse him when he got sick with cancer when he was about 40 years old. My dad fought hard for close to 10 years but ultimately passed away at age 49 in 1980. When my mom married my dad, I am sure that wasn't what she was signing up for.

At 47 years old, my mom was a widow with two teenage boys. Her world was turned upside down. I was devastated when my dad died, but it was much harder for my mom. She had the weight of the world on her shoulders. What made things worse was that her dad had passed away only three days earlier. My grandfather was a very wealthy man. However, his wife (not my real grandmother) ran off with all the money. I am sure my mom always had in the back of her mind that her father would help if she needed it, but that safety net was no longer there.

This was a lot for me to really comprehend as a 16 year old. I wish I knew then what I know now. I think I would have been a

better son. I think my mom needed more support than my brother and I gave her.

It's funny as we get older how we learn to appreciate things our parents did for us when we were kids. The lucky ones have their parents long enough that they can express their appreciation to them. Quite a few of my friends still have their parents, and I envy them.

My mom made sure both my brother and I got through college, had a roof over our heads, and food on the table. She was able to hold onto the house, and our quality of life really did not change much. Once I finally got out of school, I struggled a bit to find my first good paying job. At that time, in 1989, my mom got sick with breast cancer and passed away at age 55. Since both us kids were done with school, I imagine my mom had some ideas about how she could've enjoyed life a little more. Without any college expenses, I am sure it would have made things much easier for her. Unfortunately, she never got to experience that.

If your mom is still with you, why don't you give her a call and let her know how much you appreciate her. I wish I could do that.

- Steve Mellis

What Can a Netflix CEO Teach You About Business?

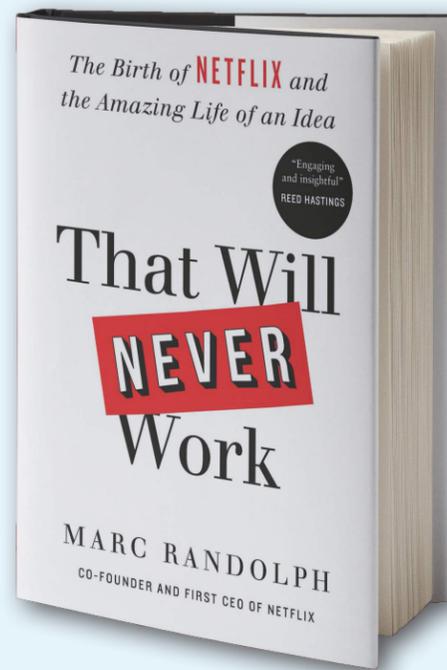
If you ask Marc Randolph about his favorite place, he'll mention an office building in Dallas, where Blockbuster had its corporate headquarters on the 27th floor. Randolph, one of the founders of Netflix and its first CEO, has no illusions about what happened to the former retail giant. In his new book, "That Will Never Work: The Birth of Netflix and the Amazing Life of an Idea," Randolph shares how Netflix disrupted an industry and took the world by storm, an example every business leader can learn from.

Randolph himself is fascinated by the nuts and bolts of business and entrepreneurship: "How does your business test new ideas? Can it happen faster? What's the cost of having sloppy content hit the internet if it gets you out there sooner?" He examines how quickly you can put an idea in front of a customer where "you will learn more than you could in five months of R&D." Randolph

addresses these issues and more in "That Will Never Work," all the while explaining their relevance to entrepreneurs.

If you're looking for more salacious details, he spends much of the first chapter debunking the stories about who had the idea for Netflix and whether or not it was an epiphany. "That story is beautiful," Randolph writes. "It's useful. It is, as we say in marketing, emotionally true. But as you'll see in this book, that's not the whole story." The whole story is one we'll let you read for yourself, and there is plenty more where that came from.

Anybody can research Netflix online, but "That Will Never Work" is a rare glimpse into the inner workings of one of the 21st century's most lucrative and secretive companies. Juicy stories pair well with marketing lessons, and the writing style is easy to get lost in — it really is a page-turner.



SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITH THE RIGHT STRATEGIES

Remember the musical, "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying"? Ralph Macchio goes from the mailroom to the boardroom by not accomplishing anything in his career other than kissing up to the right people. But, for entrepreneurs, kissing up to the boss won't help much! If you want to succeed without really trying when you're running the show, you need to focus on these six things instead.

1. Retain and Maintain Customers.

How much money do you lose each month in customer churn? What about employee churn? This is a big issue and a major reason businesses don't scale. Check out the book "Stop Losing Customers" by Shaun Buck. A section dedicated to calculating churn discusses why it matters for your business and how you can save a massive amount of money once you know the number and work to lower it.

2. Market to Convert Leads. You need marketing that generates quality leads and a sales process that converts those leads to customers for your business. This is much easier said than done, and I get that. The fundamental items your business needs are:

- Lead generation of *quality* prospects
- A customer-relationship-management system that allows you to keep track of,

nurture, and follow up with leads

- A sales process that includes long-term nurture and follow-up as well as the ability to close a deal

These are only the minimum requirements, so make sure you have them all.

3. Create Systems and Processes.

Businesses don't scale when they don't have any systems in place. "Ask the entrepreneur" is not a system, and if you have to do it all, your business will max out very quickly. If you are not a systems and processes person, hire one. A competent person in this position will be your right hand and help you scale.

4. Keep Employees Happy. If your employees are happy, they will do a better job serving your customers. If your customers are happy because your employees are serving them well, then

they will refer more, spend more, and stay with you longer. This will make you happy because you will turn a larger profit.

By contrast, it costs three times an employee's monthly compensation to hire, onboard, and train their replacement — *minimum*. Few things hurt more than high turnover.

5. Play the Long Game. Win wars, not battles. Sacrifice today for tomorrow. Don't make emotional decisions in business. Build systems, track everything, and nurture relationships.

6. Be the CEO. Invest in the skills required to become the leader you need today and, especially, tomorrow. Learn to delegate and let go of any role that "nobody can do as well as me," because that's how you become what's holding your company back.

Once you become comfortable with these six fundamental areas, you'll move your business and yourself in the right direction. Being great at the boring stuff wins business, and that's how you can afford the life of your dreams.

An Easy Way to Drink More Water

And Avoid Dehydration

Dehydration is a big problem. Many people don't drink enough water each day — some reports show that 75% of adults in the United States don't drink enough water, and over a quarter are dehydrated. Though those statistics aren't widely agreed upon, it's obvious that most people need more fluids.

Even if it feels like you're drinking a lot of water, remember that water leaves your body every time you sweat, go to the bathroom, and even breathe. Not keeping up with proper water intake can lead to dehydration. Even mild dehydration can cause health problems and impact your brain, heart, skin, and other organs, which can lead to headaches, confusion, fatigue, and gastrointestinal distress.

We all know the solution to dehydration is to drink more water, but exactly how much water do we need each day? The amount will differ depending on the person, but one simple way to approximate your necessary daily intake is by dividing your body weight in half and drinking that much water (in fluid ounces) each day. For example, if you weigh 175 pounds, you'd need to drink 87.5 fluid ounces — over half a gallon — of water per day.



That might seem like a lot of liquid, but you can easily drink it without trying too hard. All you have to do is be proactive: Start keeping water any place you frequent during the day. Keep a bottle in your car, at your desk, by your favorite chair, near your workout equipment, etc. Having water easily available in the places you spend the most time each day helps increase your chances of actually drinking it.

An alternative approach is to purchase a giant jug that can hold all the water you need to drink in a day. Seeing it all in one place might be intimidating at first, but this method makes things very simple. Keep the jug close, and your water intake will likely increase without too much additional effort. And if you're just not motivated to drink plain water, you can always add sugar-free flavoring or lemon to make it more enticing.

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