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ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCE

Confessions of an Entrepreneur: Power Career Moves That Help Get You Noticed

When You're Starting Out, How You Act Can Make All the Difference

Sometimes the classics just don't mesh with modern-day reality.

Take, for example, Benjamin Franklin's famous musings on the formula for success: "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

That may still be true ... for some of us. But in today's fast-paced, 24-hour economy, the words of a man who lived over two centuries ago don't necessarily apply to today's ambitious professionals.

Enter Lauren Maillian Bias, a serial entrepreneur who's making waves in the business world—and redefining what it means to kill it in any career.

After becoming the country's youngest self-made winery owner at the seasoned age of 19, Bias worked as the C.E.O. of her own marketing consulting group.

Today, she serves as a founding partner of venture capital firm Gen Y Capital and recently wrote a book, "[The Path Redefined: Getting to the Top on Your Own Terms](#)," which describes the savvy strategies that helped her excel in three different industries ... all before she turned 30.

LAUREN MAILLIAN



Curious to learn Bias' secrets? We were too, which is why we sat down with her to discuss her top get-ahead career moves — the kind meant to attract attention.

LearnVest: You've advised entrepreneurs and corporate professionals alike on how to get ahead. What's one of the simplest ways to step up your professional game?

Lauren Maillian Bias: Follow through. It's so simple yet so many people fail to do it. But you'll never know the opportunity on the other side of a conversation if you don't take the time to follow through.

Remembering to do this is really the story of my career. When I first got into the technology and venture capital landscape, I was introduced to a lot of people through friends who said, "You should know so-and-so!"

But introductions only go so far.

Afterward, it was on me to do my own research on that individual and book a meeting. And I was willing to do *anything*. I'd offer to bring coffee or lunch to that person's office, just to get the opportunity to be in their presence and learn. By saying "Thanks for your time" and sending additional follow-ups to ask for an opinion, I showed others my dedication and passion.

LearnVest: How big a role do relationships play in career development, and how can professionals expand their inner circles?

Bias: A lot of times when I'm speaking to college students, they'll say they're really well connected on LinkedIn. But being connected to people online doesn't mean you know them, or that they know you. It's fine to maintain relationships over email and phone, but really valuable relationships are created in person.

There are two types of people who are important to your development: those who you aspire to be like and those who are your competition. So find out what conferences your role models and competitors are attending and what groups they belong to, and go where they are.

Once you've found the person in the room you want to meet, make that person feel as if those few moments are important to you. Make eye contact, and be thoughtful with your words.

What's more, when the people in your network can derive value from *other* people in your network, you'll get noticed. I host a holiday party every year, and the guest list includes my rock-star girlfriends. The purpose is to show off the amazing people I'm lucky to have in my orbit.

LAUREN MAILLIAN



You can do the same thing. It can be a birthday dinner, brunch or a round table discussion that connects with your job. It could even be something as subtle as having access to an event and carefully curating it with meaningful people in your network who would appreciate being in the room. They may not all know each other, but they'll know that you're the connection.

LearnVest: In your book you discuss the value of asking to take on extra work. Can you elaborate on the rationale?

"The people who raise their hands and voluntarily take on extra work and responsibility stand out."

Lauren Maillian Bias

Bias: The people who raise their hands and voluntarily take on extra work and responsibility stand out. And the people who think they need to be compensated before they do one iota of extra work won't see the success they want.

That said, taking on more work isn't something that should be done forever, but for a short period of time — maybe two to three months — so you have data points when you want a raise, another job opportunity presents itself, or you're up for a more demanding or high-profile project. Then, you can say, "For the last few months, I have picked up the slack that

was above and beyond my job title. I deserve this."

If you don't get what you want, you still have the experience for your resume, which is an asset no one can take away from you.

LearnVest: What entrepreneurial quality could everyone benefit from having?

Bias Every entrepreneur with a breakthrough idea has acknowledged some form of "white space," which is an area of an industry or business that isn't working as well as it should and can be improved in some way.

This is a valuable skill anyone can learn. Try to pick up on cues when people discuss your business, and listen to feedback — both good and bad — to figure out how you can remove a particularly bad experience or opinion from someone's mind.

LAUREN MAILLIAN



Maybe it's frustration with a product or service you're a part of, so how would you make it better? Should it be faster, sleeker, more user-friendly or more visually appealing? The real question is this: Can I do it better? And if so, how?

LearnVest: How has being receptive to criticism advanced your own career?

Bias: I've had people rip my ideas to shreds and give me feedback I thought I didn't want to hear. But when one person criticizes you, you have to remember that someone else might be thinking the same way.

Being open to receiving criticism is a huge entrepreneurial quality, and if you can emulate that, you'll really be ahead in your career. It shows that you're committed to your own personal development, and you're capable of putting your ego aside for the sake of being the best that you can be.

LAUREN MAILLIAN