



LAUREN WORDS OF WISDOM: MAILLIAN

Interviewed By: Carol Wright

YOU HAVE STARTED NUMEROUS COMPANIES, I SEE YOU CREDITED THE LEMONADE STAND AS YOUR FIRST ENTREPRENEURIAL STEP, TELL ME WHAT YOU LEARNED THEN THAT STILL RESONATES WITH YOU TODAY? WHAT INITIALLY GAVE YOU THE ENTREPRENEURIAL BUG?

What gave me the entrepreneurial bug is wanting to own my own destiny, wanting to call my own shots and always having a fiercely, independent spirit that was very determined. Determined to succeed, determined to do any and everything that I put my mind to and that's still me today. The things that I learned in the lemonade stand that are still useful and valuable skill sets today is understanding your customer and knowing your market and being ready to adapt your product or service to the needs of that market in order to stay relevant and to show your customers that not only do you listen to them but that you care about them, and in an attempt to drive brands loyalty.

MY DAD IS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN AND MANY PEOPLE THINK THAT BECAUSE OF THAT I HAVE HAD IT EASY, I RECOGNIZE I HAVE HAD MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN MOST, BUT I STILL WORK HARD, TO PROVE MYSELF. HAVE YOU FOUND YOURSELF IN THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCE?

I think everyone has to prove themselves in business in different ways and respects depending on what the industry is, where they're coming from and what other affiliations or assumptions people may assume there to be, but I think that that is a part of life in general. I think it's a part of adulthood, learning how to differentiate yourself from everyone else, learning how to play up your skill set but most importantly learning how to very quickly and undeniably add value.

WHO ARE YOUR BIGGEST SUPPORTERS AND HOW HAVE THEY HELPED SHAPE WHO YOU ARE?

My biggest supporters are my tribe, my

tribe of girlfriends, colleagues, everyone who unconditionally has my back and who has proven to unconditionally have my back; throughout my career or what it is I am going through and encountering. There is a core group of twenty-five women that are always there for me no questions asked, that always tell me the truth, that are so personally invested in my success and I am so personally invested in their success because it doesn't really matter who gets what or who gets to where first or faster. It's all about the fact that if I get there first or you get there first, that gives us each the ability to pull the other one ahead, that gives us the ability to accelerate our chances of success independently and collectively. I really credit my girlfriends and I really credit my children. My children are a huge source of my inspiration, of course I love them immensely, but they keep pushing me every single day. I could very easily retire to be quite honest, right now today if I wanted

and if I didn't have two kids. The growing cost of life certainly keeps me coming back for more, and more and more.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER BEEN GIVEN?

The best advice I've ever been given is to never give up, it's that simple. You can easily get discouraged and things can always happen in life. We can't predict or hold a crystal ball, but the best advice I've ever been given is to never give up.

YOU HAVE NUMEROUS INTERESTS, FROM FASHION TO BUSINESS TO TRAVEL. DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR DIFFERENT INTERESTS HAVE HELPED YOU CREATE THE BUSINESSES YOU HAVE? I PERSONALLY WOULD LIKE TO KNOW BECAUSE I HAVE MANY INTERESTS AND SOMETIMES I FEEL OVERWHELMED-HOW ARE YOU ABLE TO FEED YOUR MANY PASSIONS?

I think that as an entrepreneur my job is to always find opportunity by either identifying white space or realizing that I'm so passionate about something that I want to find a way to do it better, and that's what every entrepreneur does. They're either a pro at finding white space or creating opportunity or they're a pro at being so deeply devoted to what it is they're passionate about that they find ways to make that particular industry, product or service better and better and better based on their passion. So yes, I think that my passions have absolutely guided me in my career and have shaped where I have gone so far and where I will go in the future, but I think that the more and more successful I become, and the more and more successful people become, you begin to look at other opportunities based

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less on your passion and based more on your expertise, and sometimes your expertise will hone in on where you're most passionate. It depends on who you are, but I work best when I'm most passionate about what it is that I'm doing, and so I think that there is an intersection there and it is incredibly valuable.

DO YOU THINK IT'S ADVISABLE TO "SHELVE" A PASSION, WHILE YOU DEVELOP ANOTHER OR SHOULD IT HAPPEN ORGANICALLY?

It depends on the circumstance, what the passions are, what the trends are in the world and society and culture. What the opportunities are and how you think you can add value. If someone is eight percent passionate about one thing that they know ten percent about and they're ten percent passionate about something that they know eighty percent about, then I say go where the most knowledge and the most passion is.

YOU'RE A MOTHER AND AN ENTREPRENEUR. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR WOMAN WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN CREATING COMPANIES BUT FEEL AS THOUGH THEY CANNOT JUGGLE MOTHERHOOD AND BEING A CEO?

I say we only live once, take life by the horns and go after what you want.

WHAT LED YOU TO TELEVISION? WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST PART OF WORKING ON OXYGEN'S QUIT YOUR DAY JOB?

What led me to television was opportunity, meeting preparation, meeting my expertise. The things that I love about my show along with my co-stars, is that I also think not only have I loved making the show but I've also loved seeing everyone's reaction to a new voice in the world of startups and business entrepreneurship and it's been super, super, super awesome.

BEING A BLACK WOMAN IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST OBSTACLES AND/OR CHALLENGES?

I think that the obstacles and challenges I've endured, I can't tell you if it's because I'm a Black woman or not, because I've always been a Black woman so I don't know what else it would look like or feel like or what situations I would be in, but I was raised to know that I have to work harder than everyone else around me because of lack of opportunity, or lack of network that may be built into another, to someone else that I don't have so I can't honestly tell you or pinpoint one thing that I've done or had to do because I'm a woman, or because I'm a woman of color but I can tell you that I have worked in-

credibly hard to get to where it is that I want to go, and I don't know how else I would've had to work differently if I wasn't a woman of color, but I will say that I think that we are finally in the place where regardless of the color of your skin, you can finally work really hard and get where you think you belong.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS?

The advice I have for young entrepreneurs is try, try as much as you can, as early as you can because you have nothing to lose, and everything to learn and gain, and find what you love.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO YOU WILL INVEST IN? WOULD YOU INVEST IN A TWENTY SOMETHING?

Age never matters for me, and I invest in a business based on the concept, the size of the opportunity, my personal expertise and ways that I think I can or cannot be helpful and I look for entrepreneurs that show me why they will win. Either through their experience or expertise, their networks, their team or their approach