

Australia's smartest Gen Y millionaire?

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Jack Delosa explains how he became successful after a failure.

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Jack Delosa teaches rich tips.

Hey kid, want to be rich and happy? Don't go to uni. Forget trying to shimmy up the greasy pole while working for The Man. Go start a business without a business plan. Hire your mates to staff it. Oh, and don't overthink your exciting new enterprise – it will become apparent what consumers want soon enough.

Say what you will about failed call centre operator turned millionaire business educator turned best-selling author Jack Delosa, he certainly knows how to craft an attention-grabbing pitch. He's a master at using the media to promote his personal brand and is getting even more press than usual following the release of his first book, *Unprofessional* (... how a 26-year-old university dropout became a self-made millionaire... and how you can do the same).

Delosa's concept of "unprofessionalism" arises from a description of Virgin as an "unprofessional professional organisation". When Delosa advocates his readers be unprofessional, what he means is they should exhibit a Bransonesque unorthodoxy.

Delosa's book is a mix of timely small business advice, spiced up with contrarian counsel. Unashamedly tailored to the Gen Y mindset and attention span, *Unprofessional* aims to be a "permission slip to throw out the rulebook ... and build your business to a position of market leadership using strategies that still haven't found their way onto the notepads of the management consultants."

The book is "a summary of everything I've learnt over the last nine years working as an entrepreneur," says the now 27-year-old Delosa. "There are ideas that are my own and others that I've got from mentors or books."

Delosa's thesis can be boiled down to this: play by the rules and you're at serious risk of being played for a chump. "There's a saying that success comes from one of two things: inspiration or desperation," he says. "Like most of my generation, I've got a lot of both. Gen Y has seen previous generations doing everything by the rulebook, studying hard, working hard, raising a family then being left unrewarded. The coming generation is saying, 'That's not for me.' There's a dissatisfaction with traditional education, career paths and wealth-building strategies."

Delosa doesn't claim everyone can or should become an entrepreneur, nor does he gloss over the hard graft and emotional toll involved in building a business. Nonetheless, he doesn't hesitate advocating a high risk, high return approach to those of his peers with the stomach for it.

First off, they should forget about tertiary education: "Uni teaches about the way things have always been done whereas if you want to be successful you need to innovate." Next, they should save up to go into business, not buy a house. "Encouraging young people to commit to a mortgage robs them of flexibility. People should build up their income-earning capacity before investing in assets." Finally, they should go into business as fast as they can. "Go to market as quickly, cheaply and leanly as possible and learn by trial and error. That's the most efficient way to learn how to build a successful business."

What if it's not successful? Don't worry, that's all part of paying your dues. "My first business venture was a call centre that was in the red for most of the two and a half years I ran it. I regard that period as my apprenticeship."

But is Delosa comfortable generalising from his own experience given the likelihood much of his audience doesn't share his drive or intellect?

Absolutely.

"I don't buy the argument there are certain people who are superior, who have the intelligence and personal characteristics to be entrepreneurs. Talent is overrated; academic research has now proven that. I don't believe I'm naturally talented at business. I've become very competent at building businesses but it didn't come easily. But if you work hard and commit yourself ongoing learning you really can achieve anything – the world is a lot flatter than it used to be."

Delosa, whose major focus is his business education company The Entourage, is out to disrupt the global education sector. "I'm focusing on getting the education we provide accredited and taking The Entourage to the US. The vision is for it to become the world's leading entrepreneurial institution."

And once he's revolutionised the way the world does business, what next?

"What's driven me over the last decade and what will continue to drive me over the ones to come is helping people be a success on their own terms and create a meaningful life," he says.

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