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10 Success lessons from Jack Dorsey – “Founder of Twitter and Square” for entrepreneurs

By Biplab Ghosh

You may know him as the serial entrepreneur founder of both Twitter and Square. But did you know Dorsey's also a certified masseur who dabbled in fashion design?

Jack Dorsey's two billion dollar companies are thriving. But Dorsey still takes the bus to work. Everything Jack Dorsey does, from his never-changing morning routine to his insistence on having “an amazing haircut” is meticulously considered — and his habits and attitudes are the backbone for Dorsey's continued success.

1. Start with an idea

A common misconception, Dorsey said, is that successful entrepreneurs set out to be their own boss, and then they go searching for an idea. More often, he argued, businesses succeed — when their founders take the reverse approach.

“It doesn't start by you waking up and saying ‘I want to start a business,’ it starts by you waking up and saying ‘I'm really passionate about this thing and I'm going to do whatever it takes to make it work,’” Dorsey said.

2. Build a transparent company

During every meeting at Square's headquarters, someone takes notes, and those notes are then sent out to every employee in the company. The memos “keep everyone on the same page,” Dorsey said, but there are additional benefits, too.

“We also get all these new, diverse perspectives, and it makes people think in different ways, and that creates a lot more creativity in the organization,” Dorsey said. “Making sure that everyone sees that has been the most transformative for us.”

3. Wait for your big idea's time to come

Dorsey first had the idea for Twitter in 2000. But texting wasn't big yet. The average American sent only 35 texts per month. Dorsey told Vanity Fair, “I quickly learned that... no one else had a mobile e-mail device, so the system was kind of useless.” That day came in 2006. Americans were on the verge of sending more text messages per month than phone calls. Jack started Twitter in March 2006 and launched it by July. The time was right and Twitter exploded.

4. Career paths aren't always straight lines

Right before launching Twitter, Dorsey was in fashion school designing skirts. He'd already had serious stints as an illustrator and certified massage therapist.

So why did Dorsey settle on programming and entrepreneurship? He told Forbes, “those were the tools I needed to build what I wanted to build.” Dorsey's not done making career changes either. He hopes to one day be mayor of New York City.

5. Embrace routine

Dorsey starts every morning the same way: he eats two hard-boiled eggs with soy sauce and a side of berries. Jack also has his weeks meticulously planned out. Monday is management. At Square we have a directional meeting, at Twitter we have our opcomm [operating committee] meeting. Tuesday is product, engineering, and design. Wednesday is marketing, growth, and communications. Thursday is partnership and developers. Friday is company and culture.

6. Achieve perfection through simplicity

140 characters. That's all you get on Twitter. Just like writing a haiku, there's no room for unnecessary syllables – and Jack wouldn't have it any other way. Dorsey loves to take a complex idea and begin removing “the conceptual debris... so you can just focus on what's most important.”

Jack can tell you what the companies mean to him in one word. For Twitter, that word is communication (“making that simple and easy”). For Square, it's commerce.

7. Keep a diary

Dating all the way back to high school, long before he was building companies, Dorsey was keeping a journal. Now, he calls it “probably the best thing I have ever done in my life.”

“Find a simple way way to track your progress,” says Jack. “You really get to see how you have grown, how your business has grown and how your own leadership has grown.”

8. Communication and cooperation are key

Dorsey says that if you have two departments that are not talking, if you have two people who just can't get along, that friction will manifest in the product itself, and your customers will see that friction. You are putting your company's issues before your customers, which is just rude and selfish. “We make sure we design and engineer the company and the organization as much as we do the product and the service we have built.”

9. Sometimes it's okay to break the rules

According to Jack, his father started a pizza business with a friend when he was 19 years old. “The first person they hired was my mother. My father fell in love with her, and he went to his best friend a week later and said ‘I broke the rules, I fell in love with Marcia, the business is yours. I was born 10 months after that.’”

10. Make the most of the weekend

Some might think that the best way of using the weekend is to throw yourself into work and use the extra two days to get ahead. But that's certainly not the habit of many successful people. “Saturday I take off,” Jack Dorsey, founder of Twitter says. “And then Sunday is reflections, feedback, strategy and getting ready for the rest of the week.”