



My Epiphany

I felt lost—I didn't know what I was going to do.

As a child growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in middle class America, my upbringing was most likely very similar to many of you reading this book. My father worked a job during the day and my mother was a homemaker. My brother and I had chores around the house and were taught the value of hard work and proper education—because that was the mentality of that era in life. Carved in stone, we were told, we heard and we believed:

Go to school and get educated so that you can get a high paying job was the only way that you were ever going to amount to anything.

Excess importance was put on academia and good grades. Chores were deemed of high importance in order to instill a good work ethic; becoming financially literate was also weighed heavily upon.

We kids were trained to become independent and ready to live on our own when adulthood officially hit.

I guess you could say that I had a pretty *normal* upbringing. I think one major difference between how I was raised versus how most were raised was in how I was taught to *perceive money*.

A good work ethic and putting in a hard day's work is truly the way to financial freedom and wealth, right? Wrong!

When I was very young, making money was taught as “trading time for money.” I would get an allowance at the end of each week for the household chores I would perform. As I got a little older, that thought process started to change.

Seeding the Entrepreneur

When I was 10 years old, we lived in the country and I had a lawn and animal care business, getting my first lawn-mowing job from a neighbor. He had a five-acre lot that needed mowing so I took my dad's riding lawnmower to the neighbor's and spent the afternoon mowing. For a 10-year-old, the \$60 cash I earned left me feeling like the richest kid on the block! When I got home, I showed my

father the money and he was so happy for me. He said, "Son, let's sit down here at the table for a minute and talk about the money you have made. I'm going to play the banker here for a second." He then exchanged the three \$20 bills into various bills that equaled \$60. "I am the government and you will owe 30 percent of this in taxes." He proceeded to take \$18 dollars from my stack of money.

"What are taxes?" I asked.

He said, "Hmm ... you like to ride your BMX bike up the cement sidewalk to go get candy at the store, right?" I nodded. "Well you as a taxpayer have to help pay for the construction of those sidewalks." He then said, "That lawnmower is mine and cost you \$5 to rent and the gas was \$3.50." Whoa, my pile was beginning to diminish! At the end of the day, I walked away with \$33.50! His final words to my once exuberant self:

"When you work for someone else, then that person as well as the government dictate how much you can make—don't ever forget that."

At the time, this seemed like a very unfair deal, but later on in life it proved to be worth millions of dollars to me.

During that same time, Dad taught my brother and me how to turn a profit by buying bicycles at garage sales, fixing them up, and selling them for a profit to the neighbor kids. It was true business 101 at its finest. I started to understand the relationship of working hard for a dollar. After all, a good work ethic and putting in a hard day's work is truly the way to financial freedom and wealth, right? Wrong! I will reveal how this will actually stunt your financial growth within *The Poppie Factor*.

As I entered my teens, our chores became more complex as well as the lessons attached to them. One day Dad said, "Boys, come out here to the garden with me. I knew exactly what that meant. It meant that the garden needed weeding; a job that I absolutely hated. Sure enough, he said that the weeding was needed. But then he added a twist: he said, "I want you two boys to bid on this job."

I had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. He said that he wanted both of us to think about how much we would each charge him as a fee to weed the garden. The kicker was, "Whichever of you two comes to the lowest amount will get the job."

After my brother and I went back and forth for a couple minutes, I ended up getting that job as I had the lowest bid. As I was pulling weeds I kept thinking about the lawn mowing episode and thinking that I was going to have to pay all this money for taxes, rental of the shovel, rake, and anything else he would think of. When I finished, Dad said, Thank you sir, here is your money.”

“What about taxes, rentals, and all that other stuff you took?”

“You are now a business owner. You bid on this job and now you have different levels of control over your taxes and what you do with the money you make.

I liked this idea and surely enjoyed the thought of not paying out my hard earned money in taxes right off the top! And there clearly, unbeknownst to me, was another future million dollar lesson.

A couple years later, we were required to bid on another job at the house. We needed some fence post holes dug on the north side of our property. There were eight holes to be exact. Now when I say digging fence post-holes, I mean manually digging the holes by hand and not with some auger attached

to a tractor! My brother and I bid on the job and my \$100 bid was the lowest—I got the job. My father added, “I want you to get started early on Saturday morning. It’s going to be hot outside and the job will probably take you one to two days to complete.

I never will forget the events that unfolded that Saturday morning. About 9 AM, I was sitting on the recliner in the living room watching TV. Dad walked into the living room and said, “I thought we talked about you getting an early start on digging the fence post holes.” He added that it is already hot out and that I should have listened better to what he wanted me to do.

“Dad I’ve got it covered.”

“It looks like you have the TV covered but what about the fence post-holes?”

“Look outside.” He went over to the window and couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

“Dad, I hired three of the neighbor kids each at \$20 to dig the fence post-holes for me. That way I get to put \$40 in my pocket and watch TV!”

He was astonished and could see that I was starting to understand the true way to delegate and leverage

my time, and to excel in business by becoming an autonomous thinker. That day was one of the most pivotal days in my life. It essentially changed how I thought about life, money, and how I wanted to interchange the two of them together.

As I went off to college and then on to graduate school, obviously my time was spent studying for exams, most of them being pointless. Business was far from my focus as I was just trying to survive academically. I wasn't a brainiac and had to put in a lot of time studying—things didn't necessarily come easy to me. After all of the blood, sweat, and tears, along with nine years of college, I became a doctor. I wanted to get back to the “business” mentality while I honed in on my new skills as a practitioner.

Business Boom, Bust and Boom

Starting my first clinic in 2002, I knew after a couple years of practice that owning one clinic was not enough and rewarding anymore. I was always a big thinker. I had a much bigger vision. Over the next eight years, my practice grew to 12 offices encompassing three different states.

Timing is everything.

There were significant challenges that I faced with my drastic expansion. The first was going through the trials and tribulations of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Money was tight, extremely tight. I had to make many sacrifices along this journey and put many fun things that I wanted to do on the back burner. I simply couldn't afford them.

The second hurdle was me trying to literally clone myself to keep up with the demands of having a nationwide practice. I was literally chasing the almighty dollar when in all reality, I was working myself to the bone. Traveling all over the country on a weekly basis proved to be what I learned, as you will learn too in this book, that time is not money. *Time is everything.*

Along this journey, I started to reap the benefits of my hard work financially, I started investing heavily in commercial and residential real estate, venturing away from clinical practice. The art of delegation and leveraging of my time allowed me to do this. This is truly an art-form and I will teach you the art within *The Poppie Factor*.

My personal life and professional life were in good alignment and I had great momentum in my businesses. I felt like I was on top of the world. Then boom, the worldwide real estate and stock market crash hit in 2008. It literally seemed like overnight, my properties were worth pennies on the dollar. On top of that, the insurance companies basically shut down and weren't paying on claims because they too had lost so much of their invested accounts payable monies in the crash.

This was a double whammy for me in that both of my revenue streams had basically shut down. My overhead ran tens of thousands of dollars a month in payroll, and business expenses that didn't care if there was a market crash or not. During this crucial time, I felt lost in many different aspects. I didn't know what I was going to do.

Many of my colleagues were filing bankruptcy, undergoing foreclosures, and defaulting on various loans. They simply didn't have the cash to pull out of the global devastation that they were going through. Leveraging too much when the times were good, and now that the times were bad, they had nothing to leverage but the clothes on their back. Times were anything but good.

During this time, I immediately went into survival mode—there was no other choice. If I didn't, I would slowly start to lose everything I had worked so hard for. Leadership was something that I had to learn immediately in order to keep up productivity and camaraderie within my practices.

- I learned how to inspire my employees during this very difficult time with incentives while drastically decreasing my overhead and running a lean-and-mean business model.
- I learned how to renegotiate insurance contracts and borrow against my accounts receivable to increase cash flow.

Borrowing from the future to pay for the present often backfired. This was a devastating measure for me in that I was essentially getting money up front from the services being performed but the payout was at a much lower rate. Yet it was the only mode that made sense at the time. It was either this or lose everything, as I had no control over when the insurance companies would be paying on claims.

My real estate portfolio at the time looked great in photos but when looking at the market and what they were really worth during that time was a

different story. Swiss cheese would have been insulted. In most of my portfolio I was either upside down, or had minimal equity in. The mortgage companies and HOAs didn't care about the market crash. They still wanted timely payments—they themselves were all on the verge of bankruptcy. The massive bailouts that the financial institutions received never flowed to the customers. Banks were not loaning money to anyone. I don't care if you were a blue-collar worker or worth millions—It didn't matter if your basic credit was basically perfect. The banks simply shut down. They said NO to all. Once again, I had to make some pretty serious decisions very quickly.

I ended up reaching out to an equity exchange broker and thought that they may be able to help with my situation. Not surprisingly, they informed me that there is a slim to zero chance that

I will be able to sell any of these pieces of real estate, simply because very few people had cash, and financial institutions were not lending money. They made a suggestion. "We could look into trading the properties."

I was mentally and physically exhausted from bleeding money every month.

“What?” I said.

His example went like this: “You have a home in Vail, Colorado, and someone else has a home in Maui, Hawaii. You are tired of the cold and the person in Maui has always wanted a ski home. If the numbers and equity make sense, you trade them.”

I was compelled by this thought and we started looking for properties to trade. I was mentally and physically exhausted from bleeding money every month. I told him that my biggest requirement is that I trade for something that is income-producing every month.

After a few months of searching, I traded three of my properties for two hotels in the Midwest. Both had a positive cash flow and built-in equity. I was flying there every weekend to learn the business and make adjustments as needed. And, I was seeing cold hard cash every month; my Midwest hotels were like a dream come true. For the last few years it seemed as though I was just trying to keep my head above water and never had money left over after all of my expenses. The hotels stopped the drowning.

Winter changed that. On a cold night only four months after acquiring the hotels and two days after I had last visited them, I got a shivering phone call from my hotel manager. He said that both hotels had been hit by a tornado: one was a total loss; the other was significantly damaged. Catching the first plane out to assess the damages, I remember thinking: *How can things get any worse? Is this even possible?*

When I got to the properties, my heart sank; I felt a new feeling of loss. Even though I couldn't control the weather, I felt like it was a massive failure in my life. Once again, I had to go into survival mode and figure out what I was going to do next.

After the mental gymnastics of dealing and negotiating with the insurance companies over the property, contents, and business income losses in the units, I had to scrape one unit to the ground and had to repair the other. I was able to sell the remaining unit and the land from the other unit a year later.

New lessons came my way. Not only can life and or business life change in an instance, you must be able to change your thought processes to immediately deal

with what is presented to you, whether that be good or bad, positive or negative.

Slowly over time I've learned the art of being able to create money and not just make money.

Over the next few years, the market came back (stocks and real estate) and I was able to start putting cash back into my pocket. That cash was used to start other businesses that were recession/depression proof as well as capable of funding other exciting ventures in my life. During this time, I was able to exit my business as a practicing doctor and started solely working *on* my business and not *in* my business. I keep thinking back to my fence post story and how liberating it has been to let other aspiring doctors take over my throne and treat patients. Putting together deals and setting up new entities has been rewarding to me, which is something that I could never do as a practicing doctor. There simply wasn't enough time.

Today, my various business range from healthcare, commodities, real estate and apparel. They are very systematic in the way they are run, allowing me to do the things that are important to me. Slowly over time, I've learned the art of being able to create

money and not just make money. The reason? The way I have learned to *think* about life and money. The rich think much differently than the average person.

In *The Poppie Factor*, I will teach you how to think like the rich and how to sustain this thinking in order to transform your life into what you have always wanted. What prevented you was one or two things you didn't know about how to get there, or you were scared to take certain risks to get there.

I assure you that I am not a financial genius nor was I served on a silver platter growing up. I just knew that I wanted more out of life for myself and I took action on certain key elements (which I will share with you) to get myself to the place where I am today. That place is to do what I want, when I want, and how I want.

Does this life sound good to you? Well, get reading and let's meet up at the end of this book to reconvene and see how your thoughts about life and money have changed ... like mine had changed.