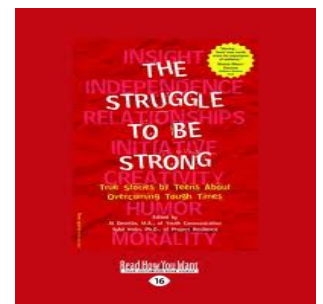


Moving Past the Struggle

I have written many blogs, and for the most part, I talk about the opportunities in the marketplace, the people, the freedom, the places, and the experiences of being an entrepreneur. Rarely have I discussed the struggle and how being an entrepreneur can be downright difficult at times. This is part of the environment that you take up when you choose or, for some, are forced into this path. The allure of the business owner draws you in, but are you prepared for the reality that will inevitably follow?

[Ben Horowitz](#), with the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, reminded me of this in his recent blog entitled "[The Struggle](#)." Yes, this is the same firm co-owned by [Marc Andreessen](#), who started Netscape, which introduced one of the original web browsers. It is the same firm that invested \$250,000 into [Instagram](#) and walked away with \$78 million two years later.



You might think there isn't much to struggle over as a successful business owner, but in reality, in order to get to that success, you experience "[The Struggle](#)." This is a world that is dark and difficult, and it is one with which I am familiar, as are most entrepreneurs that have achieved any level of success.

Some of the comments that really resonated with me are as follows:

The Struggle is when you wonder why you started the company in the first place.

The Struggle is when you are having a conversation with

someone and you can't hear a word that they are saying because all you can hear is The Struggle.

The Struggle is when you want the pain to stop. The Struggle is unhappiness.

The Struggle is when you are surrounded by people and you are all alone. The Struggle has no mercy.

The Struggle is not failure, but it causes failure. Especially if you are weak. Always if you are weak.

The Struggle is where greatness comes from.

This is not a good place to be and can bring down the best of them. I have been there before and have even felt it recently. The economy and world situations are causing many to be in The Struggle. Business is not easy, and most are reluctant to spend when they can't see past all the doom and gloom.

Ben explains that there are no answers to The Struggle, but he discusses several things that have helped him move forward. Share some of the burden; don't put it all on your own shoulders. Realize that it will not upset your people more than you because nobody feels the effects more than the person most responsible. We both think that getting the most brains on the problem, the better. Remember [collective intelligence](#).

This is a chess game and one that is multidimensional. You always have a move even when you don't think there is one. Ben says to focus on the road like they teach you when driving a racecar because if you look at the wall, you will drive into it. You go where you are focused.

Another key philosophy Ben and I share: Stay in the game long enough, and you might get lucky. To say it another way, in the technological world in which we live, the answer that seems impossible today may turn up tomorrow if you stick around.

One thing that helps me is to stay present. This is not easy

to do, but I find when I focus on my mistakes (and in the past, there have been many) or try to deal with what might come up in the future, I have removed myself from knowing that everything is alright in this moment. I think you are more open to the answers the universe brings you when you are right here right now, rather than when you are looking back or forward.

All the best deal with the Struggle. Remember, that is where greatness comes from.

How Do You Get Great Ideas?

Many of us out there hold a strong aversion and distaste for meetings. You have heard it before, or possibly even said it yourself: "We do nothing but have meetings around here, so how am I to get any work done?" Why do we have such negative feelings in regards to getting a group of people together to discuss issues and create solutions to move forward?



I believe strongly in the power of the group and think it is vital to bring people together to create the best ideas. If you have read this blog for any amount of time, you have seen me discuss my belief in collective intelligence, an ideal I trust in so much that I even started a mutual fund managed around the philosophy.

When you imagine a good idea occurring, what do you envision? Do you see Einstein with his crazy hair looking up into the sky with a light bulb going off? Do you visualize the lonely scientist looking into a microscope, and then Eureka . . . It happens?

I read about a study in [Steve Johnson's](#) book "[Where Good Ideas Come From / The Natural History of Innovation](#)" and was not surprised to find it shows that good ideas happen not in these moments of individual discovery but when a group of people are sitting around a table sharing ideas. I said to myself, "Holy moly Batman! Now I have real evidence to support my gut!"

Psychologist [Kevin Dunbar](#) actually set up cameras to watch a research group of scientists work in the early 1990s. His team transcribed all the interactions and tracked the flow of information. Dunbar discovered the physical location where the most important breakthroughs occurred – the MEETING ROOM!

They found the group interactions helped reconceptualize the problem. In his book, Johnson explains, “questions from colleagues forced researchers to think about their experiments on a different scale or level.” Group interactions allowed the more surprising finds to be questioned rather than dismissed, and this led to better ideas and breakthroughs.

So there we have it! Those all day quarterly meetings we have in order to focus, strategize, and plan along with our two day off-site annual meeting have purpose! This can also be said for any other meeting where you need important decisions made or great ideas from your team. If for some reason the team has doubts, get the book! It is a great piece of evidence.