

Introduction

In the Spring of 2002, I realized that I was going to hit a significant milestone in my life. That milestone was that I would not have to work everyday to maintain my lifestyle. In fact, I could get away with putting in only a few hours a day and then I could kick back, relax, and watch TV for the next few years.

It didn't mean I became suddenly rich or anything. Nor did it mean that I didn't have to lift a finger to do any work. It simply meant that I had enough streaming income to support my middle-class lifestyle to take two weeks off nearly anytime I wanted to.

And you know what? I did. I did enjoy taking some time off doing what I wanted to do such as reading, talking to people, travel, and basically lounged around a bit. But anyone who knows me knows that I don't stay still for long. I like having some excitement in my life. I like learning new things, meeting new people, and taking on new challenges.

For years, I thought about writing a book but I never felt qualified to write about anything that I was passionate about. After all, writing a book which no one is interested in reading is mostly the job for a college textbook writer.

Having written small articles and small story pieces over the years, I accumulated two thick notebooks full of written material on opinions I had on different subjects.

One night in Atlanta, I was in a friend's apartment. We were sharing our thoughts and dreams of the future. Specifically, I told him one day I wanted to write a book but I really did not know what my message was going to be. He shared with me an insight that caused a chain of events that has resulted in this book.

The Intrepid Way

And what he told me was this ... “Matthew, what you have accomplished for yourself and the life you lead, I wish I could do it. I would be so happy if I could be in your position.”

At first, I dismissed it. Then I thought about it. And then he explained, “So many people like me are trapped in their jobs and don’t know how to leave to support ourselves. We don’t know what it takes. Yes, I could become a self-employed programmer but how do I be self-employed without having to work to death and be certain that the income will continue. And if I stop working or I can’t find an assignment, I won’t have any money.”

After a pause, he continued, “At least being an employee, I have some assurances that my income will continue. And yet, I know I am trapped and it is not where I want to be. I want to be free to spend my time to do what I want and when I want to like you do. I am tired of working with people I don’t like.”

Ironically, a year earlier, I had a conversation with another friend that also said that he wanted to live my lifestyle.

In both cases, they knew I was not rich, nor was I living high on the hog. I simply lived a fairly middle-class life from a material point of view. Yet, from a lifestyle point of view, I was going to different places meeting different people working on interesting projects spending time on things that mattered to me working largely on my own timetable.

I had the monetary freedom and time freedom to do so.

In retrospect, I suppose I took it all for granted. Because the fact was, many friends I have throughout the U.S. live a similar lifestyle as I do. In many cases, I thought they did even better than me. So I did not think what I did was anything special, nor anything especially incredible. I was simply living my life primarily the way I wanted to.

But today when I pause and look around, I do find that most people have a ton of responsibilities they have taken on because they have few apparent options.

And part of that is getting up early and going to work everyday to a job they dislike. Most do it because they have to. And even if they wanted to stop, they don't feel like they can. They have no idea how to move on to something new. The only refuge they have are their weekends, holidays, and vacation time.

For me, it might as well have been another lifetime ago. It has been so many years ago since I had to worry about a job that it is foreign to me. And yet there it is around me, all around me, unhappy people spending their lives doing things they don't want to do until old age.

When these separate insights came together, I understood what I needed and wanted to write about. It was about achieving personal freedom. I know many people who have achieved what I have achieved and more but few really talk about how they did it and what they went through. Similar to what I originally thought, they don't consider what they have done to be especially notable. I have since realized, it is all in the eye of the beholder.

Because I had the good fortune to meet two people who made me see, truly see what I had, I then felt comfortable enough and "qualified" enough to undertake the task to write this book. But what a fun task it has been going down memory lane to explore the events in my own life that I thought might benefit you. In some cases, it made me happy. In other cases, it made me sad. Either way, it has helped shape the person I am today and the lessons I am about to share with you within this book.

I hope you don't make the same mistakes I made. And I hope you experience successes quicker than I did. If this book helped you see things a little differently, sidestep some potential pitfalls, or overcome some personal challenges, I will have taken great satisfaction in completing this book.

Thank you for reading my book. I hope one day we can meet.

Matthew S. Chan