



CHAPTER 4: YOUR UNIQUENESS FACTOR

We don't achieve success by denying who we are or by becoming who we aren't. We get there by analyzing ourselves and knowing what makes us stand out as special. When we know who we are and where we are strong, we can begin the process of developing our talents and targeting success.

Many elements of our society reward us for conforming. In an attempt to "fit in," we take on the appearance, the language, and the behavior of others. Although this provides us with a sense of belonging, important elements of our personal identity are sacrificed. The key to success is learning how to best operate within a master group or culture while maintaining and developing those qualities that make us most special.

Continue to nurture your talents and don't give up. Tommy Hilfiger once sold jeans out of the trunk of his car after being repeatedly turned down by stores. He now runs a multimillion-dollar fashion label. Here are a few others who knew they had something unique, followed their dreams, and found success.

Paul Budnitz followed his dreams to Yale University where he drew comics in their Fine Arts program. Budnitz had to answer to critics who said Ivy League students didn't draw cartoons.

But it was Budnitz who had the last laugh: He now runs the unique collectible art toy company KidRobot (www.kidrobot.com), with a successful Web site and stores in three major cities.

Jesse G. James grew up with a penchant for motorcycles. He made his first bike during his freshman year of high school. After trying other careers, James decided to take the plunge and pursue his number one passion: custom motorcycles. He now runs West Coast Choppers (www.westcoastchoppers.com), builds custom bikes for celebrities, and has a show, Monster Garage, on the Discovery Channel.

Christopher Paolini was only 17 when he self-published his fantasy novel, *Eragon*. The story might have ended there, as is often the case with self-published books. But Paolini persisted, eventually capturing the attention of a prominent editor's daughter. This led to *Eragon* being republished in wide-release by Knopf Books, followed by a major motion picture deal.

Richard Williams is the son of a Louisiana sharecropper who learned to play tennis by reading books and watching videos. You might not recognize the name Richard, but you've probably heard of his two daughters: Venus and Serena. Displaying unique talent for tennis at the early age of four, Venus and Serena practiced hard, followed their dreams and later went on to huge success, including back-to-back Wimbledon wins.

Philip Knight was an accomplished runner with a dream: to overcome the monopoly Adidas had on the running shoe market. He outlined a plan to make sneakers that were better and cheaper. You might have heard of his company. It's called Nike.