

Startup founders need to focus on downtime to uncover opportunities

 By [Ryan Kh](#)

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When was the last time you spent an entire day without thinking about your business? If you're still working on an answer to that question, chances are you're an entrepreneur. Or a rare breed of hyper-focused, success-driven, results producing go-getters.



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The world needs us. As the global economy roars back to life after the Great Recession, the flame that sparks opportunity is the small business owner providing jobs in their local community. Unfortunately, entrepreneurship is struggling in South Africa.

[Reporting](#) indicates that "...the percentage of adult South Africans involved in entrepreneurial activity has dropped by 34% since 2013..." That's a tragic indicator. This means that we have to be even more focused on paving a path for success for those that remain in the fight.

Creating an echo-chamber of success

In my own entrepreneurial pursuits, I have witnessed how easy it is to let the voice of doubt and fear shape your perspective. Creating something of value, with little more than a dream and a heart full of passion, takes long-term focus and resiliency.

Growing up, my mother always used to tell me that “You are who you surround yourself with.” In my life, although I hate to admit it, she’s been right. My greatest successes have been directly impacted and enabled by the people around me.

My inner-circle has been filtered to primarily include individuals with the following characteristics:

- *An attitude of gratitude*: My friends that were miserable and ungrateful for the opportunities that life gave them were toxic. Their negativity would infect me like a drive-killing virus. If someone has given up and wants to blame the world for their poor choices, they will wear you down over time.
- *Resourceful*: Life is an uphill battle. It’s a lot easier when you can step back and repurpose the tools and opportunities that surround you. I constantly learn from resourceful people that view every challenge as an opportunity to become bigger, better and stronger.
- *Failures*: This characteristic might sound like something I would try to distance myself from. But, you’d be surprised at how valuable failure is in business. Those that experience failure, learn quickly, and keep on moving can teach you more than a lifetime of business seminars and e-books.

The drive home is an opportunity for learning

Beyond my inner-circle of friends, I’ve gained great insights from both inspirational, informative podcasts and [small business podcasts](#). I look at inspiration the same way a mechanic looks at preventative maintenance. Over the course of long hours in front of my computer, I am depleting a limited supply of mental fortitude and heart-felt inspiration. I need to refill it to have a well-functioning business.

My drive to and from my office is a unique opportunity to refill my mental and spiritual tank. Podcasts provide an updated view on the world of business, people and personal development.

Fresh perspectives provide new opportunities

Your business will only be as smart and cunning as you are. That’s a weakness. It means that your enterprise is limited by your perspective on the world around us. By learning to actively listen to the unique perspectives of the people whose guidance and input you trust, you’ll gain a fresh lens to discover new opportunities.

Nurture relationships and actively listen to those you trust. You’ll uncover opportunities and solutions to problems that would have never occurred to you independently.

Knowledge of current events improve likeability and trust

In conversation, hyper-focused entrepreneurs can find themselves limited in the subjects they are comfortable talking about. I know I had this problem early on. I was neck-deep in my work, and there was little else on my mind. When talking to people who weren’t involved or interested in my enterprise, I came across as boring and disengaged.

By taking time out of every day to learn about current events and the things that impact our shared experience, you’ll improve your relatability. This is critical for entrepreneurs that want to build their network of business and personal contacts.

Actively listen, engage and learn from everyone you meet. “It’s amazing what doors can open if you reach out to people with a smile, friendly attitude and a desire to make a positive impact.” – [Sir Richard Branson](#)

ABOUT RYAN KH

I'm Ryan Kh, a business graduate, aims to contribute thrilling stories on startups, small businesses & big on shining platforms.

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