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Issue 2: Never Give Up

The Path to Success: A Long, Winding Road

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Jamie Meiselman is an entrepreneur who pursued the idea of bringing the perfect surf indoors through an enterprise known as Surfparks. A veteran of the action sports industry (snowboarding, skateboarding, etc.), Mr. Meiselman nurtured his idea while studying for his MBA at Columbia University. He left school with a degree and a working business plan. Now, more than five years later, he is on schedule to open the first of many Surfparks facilities in Orlando, Florida in spring 2006. Tenacity and vision were crucial factors in Mr. Meiselman's realization of his plan. He discovered, though, that these qualities, often thought of as wholly personal, are subject to a number of external factors that can ultimately determine whether an entrepreneur succeeds.

When Mr. Meiselman began circulating his plan, he was greatly encouraged by the positive feedback he received - many business experts and savvy investors told him his idea was solid and had a lot of potential. Market conditions, however, were less than favorable. The internet bubble was about to burst and most investors were wary of even the most promising ideas. A variety of other factors combined to create a challenging environment for Mr. Meiselman's idea. The odds were stacked against him and the entrepreneurial process itself seemed to present other major difficulties.

"Even if your idea is great and you come across as a manager who will run the business competently, you're only as good as the other business plans on a potential investor's desk," says Mr. Meiselman. "Your idea may not be right for a potential financier for reasons that have nothing at all to do with you."

As Mr. Meiselman continued to modify his business plan and integrate the advice he received from those to whom he showed the plan, the positive feedback he received helped him weather the adversity.

"Seeing evidence for the potential of my idea ultimately kept me going. A business plan is all about assumptions, and when you see your assumptions validated by others - including potential investors and customers - it really motivates you."

Tenacity, beyond the role it plays in personal motivation, is a key factor in how others involved in an entrepreneur's enterprise perceive him or her. "With most business ideas you can't do it yourself," says Meiselman. "I have two partners and 50 investors. Tenacity is important because it shows the people around you that you've got what it takes to get through the rough times, and that you're going to maintain your focus and keep a level head."

Tenacity, vision, and motivation are the key elements required for any entrepreneur to reach the starting gates of his or her business. These three elements, Meiselman says, are completely interconnected, and must all be present to ensure that an entrepreneur succeeds. "Motivation is the engine, tenacity is the fuel, and vision is the course you're following. If you're missing any one factor, the others won't work or will be weakened."