

James Caan's

TOP 5 TIPS

for winning a business proposal

UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE

It is absolutely key to understand the backgrounds of prospective investors and their motivations prior to presenting. Extensive research will enable you to tailor the pitch accordingly. As you would with any other presentation, if you know your audience you can engage with them on a personal level where possible.

MAKE THE JOURNEY COMPELLING

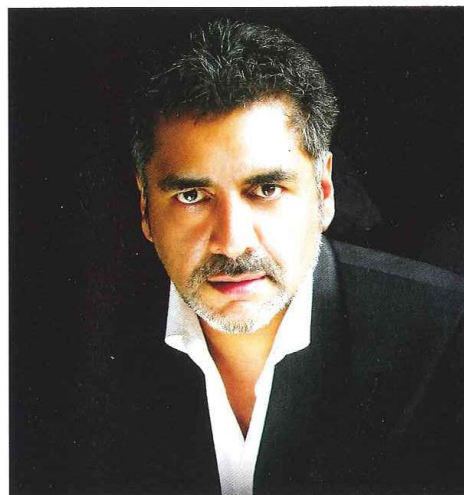
I think an effective pitch is one which places the investment opportunity in the context of a journey. For example, you need to focus on a problem encountered and demonstrate why and how you came to develop the idea to solve the problem. But you must pitch it with conviction to grab their attention. Personally, if I could relate to the problem, and found it compelling enough, I would be more likely to invest. I would then want to quickly assess the size of the market, whether I think it's profitable and if there is anything to currently compete with it in the market.

IT'S NOT JUST THE IDEA

I have always been passionate about investing in people, sometimes more so than a great idea. If a person has the drive and determination to make a business work, then their proposal is going to be more appealing. So I would say you need to succinctly explain why you are a sound individual to invest in, whether that's down to your qualifications or your experience and, importantly how you plan to execute the idea. Give yourself as much credibility as possible, but keep it short and relevant.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Investors focus on numbers so make sure your facts are realistic and prepare them as much as possible. Just like you see in the Den, be prepared for indepth



questions on turnover, sales figures, break-even points, gross and net margins (profits) and so on. Investors like hard evidence so don't try hide behind technical terms or future growth projections.

PRACTICE AND MORE PRACTICE

It sounds obvious but I've seen many pitches where the presenter simply hasn't prepared enough. Preparation for the pitch is absolutely key to its success. You should go through every possible line of questioning and eventuality so that you are totally ready. By confidently articulating a business plan and presenting your case persuasively you'll significantly enhance your chance of funding.

James Caan is one of the UK's most dynamic and successful entrepreneurs. He is founder and CEO of Hamilton Bradshaw Private Equity which manages a portfolio of over 40 UK companies.

Are you being served?

The art of loving your customers



Business Expert, Bev James

Have you ever walked away from a sale because you didn't like the attitude of the sales person? I once delayed buying a car because the salesman bombarded me with more detail than I could tolerate listening to.

Instead of thinking, 'What does the customer want?' (which, by the way, was to pay and drive away in a lovely brand new silver BMW). He was determined to tell me about the engine, the emissions, the safety features and just about everything else he knew. Some people want loads of detail whilst others just want a silver car! When you are selling your product or service, you need to listen for these differences and adapt your style to each customer's need. If a sales person is programmed to deliver the same pitch regardless of individual requirements they will win some and lose some. Successful sales people have a gift for 'tuning in', asking the right questions and adapting the information they give to suit the needs of the customer. Some people need all the facts to make a decision and others will switch off if bored by too much detail. The best sales people know that when they connect with their customers a sale is more likely to be made.

Strong sales skills are essential for business survival. Every time you exchange goods or services for other people's money you are in the business of selling. Business owners who are motivated solely by profit or a love for their product are likely to think, 'I want to sell this and I need people to buy it,'

rather than, 'What does the customer want and how can I best solve their problem or fulfill their need?'

Understand your customers' needs
Selling is not something you do to people; it is a service that you provide for people. At the end of the day, customers won't buy what they don't want. Closing a sale should be about helping the customer to make up their mind. Leaving a decision open-ended can lead to procrastination, which does not help anyone. If you can provide your customers with what they want, closing the deal should be seamless and painless, for both people. There will be no awkwardness. No one needs to feel pressured or uncomfortable. The process is fun, because both parties are achieving the result they want. But first you need to be able to recognise your customers and know your market niche. There is no point in trying to sell to everyone. If you are fishing for salmon you do not wade into the river with a trawler net. You need to provide a juicy incentive to make that salmon notice you.

Offer your customer incentives
We all respond well to incentives. That is why the January sales work so well. Being offered a rare opportunity within a limited time helps us to decide what

we want: a free gift or a discount helps to justify the wish to buy. Incentives work best when you target your market carefully. Focus on attracting only those who you know are likely to bite. It is about having a personal connection. I know I have a connection with coaches, with entrepreneurs, with people who want to set up a business. I understand just like them, so I instinctively know what they want; the problems they need to solve; and what will attract them to our courses.

Keep the love alive
You can tell when a business owner has disconnected from their work. They lose the 'spark' that drives their passion; they have 'fallen out of love' with their business and the people they serve. That has a knock on effect, because if a customer feels uncared for, they will complain. Complaints mean that the business is not serving their customers properly – which means the owner is not doing their job properly.

There is a saying: "Business would be great if it wasn't for the customers." That can go two ways. If you do not like and respect your customers it is a slippery downhill slope. If you spend a disproportionate amount of time fielding customer complaints, you will eventually 'go off' your customers and lose your love for your business. Your focus will become less about service and more about money. You will focus mainly on the financial return and stop putting the needs of the customer first.

Be excited about meeting your customers' needs
If you serve someone well and with integrity, you are less likely to have complaints and more likely to stay 'in love' with your customers. They will want to buy from you because they feel cared for. They will sense that you are not selling just to make yourself lots of money.

If you create something that people need and want, and you promote it in such a way that your customer makes a connection with you – the money will come. Nobody would deny that Richard Branson is passionate about what he does. Whatever he launches, he steps out in public and links himself directly with the product – be it him wearing a wedding dress or dressed as a can of cola – so we can share the feeling that this is something he is excited about. Because if the business owner is not excited by it, why should somebody else be – and why would anyone buy it?

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View your business THROUGH your customers' eyes

Do you know how customers see your business? Have you ever viewed the journey through your customers' eyes? What does it feel like? How easily do they get their needs met? What kind of experience do they have? Do they enjoy a first class flight with extra leg room – or is it more akin to the rush hour crush on a railway platform? Do you anticipate their needs; or do they have to shout and push to get your attention? Customers are king – but never more so than in the current climate.

Anything a customer wants, a customer can have. If you cannot provide it, someone else can. So it is important to provide a positively memorable experience that makes them come back for more. You can always make a difference to your business through your customer care regardless of the industry you are in.

As the founder and MD of Diva Cosmetics my clients were fast-paced fashion chains. I offered each company a bespoke service, providing Own Brand make-up that matched their customer profile. I needed to understand not only their unique market position but also what their customers wanted. The buyers relied on me to understand my product and to be ahead of the trend each season. They trusted my commitment, and so they trusted my advice. The success of the business relationship was built on that foundation (if you will pardon the pun). Now, I apply the same principle when I am mentoring business owners. Contented customers will recommend you to others. They add value to the volume of your sales and the value of your business. Your reputation begins and ends with the quality of your customer commitment.



Customer commitment is the sixth of seven essential disciplines explained in my business book, *BOOM!* It involves anticipating what your customers will need or desire before they realise it themselves and providing what they want before they have to ask. Here are my top tips for improving your customers' business journey:

KNOW YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Customers are your main business asset. Without customers you have no business and you will not survive. Every business owner should be able to answer the following questions:

- Who are our customers and what do they want and need?
- What leads customers to choose us – and what may cause them to turn away?
- Which customers currently contribute most to our annual revenue?
- How many customers did we get via referral?
- What can we do to attract more of the right kind of customers?

First impressions are lasting impressions. If you want to leave a positive impression you need to ensure that your values are being transmitted throughout your company, at every level – and throughout your marketing material and website.

MAKE YOUR CUSTOMERS FEEL SPECIAL

Always ask your customers plenty of questions. Find out their expectations. Get their feedback. Build a profile and keep in touch with them. On one level what customers want is what they ask for, but they also want to feel special, appreciated, understood, welcomed back. They want to buy the qualities that you and your brand represent. The personal touch is the key to further business.

HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS TO HELP YOU

It is more expensive to attract new customers than it is to retain existing ones, so look after the ones you have. Customer care and marketing are natural partners. Market feedback, contact data and personal testimonials are often willingly given in exchange for a free offer or other incentive.

DELIVER WHAT YOU PROMISE

The only way to make a customer truly happy is to deliver on your promises. Remember that you and your values are part of what your customer is buying. No one wants to change suppliers unless they have to; it is time consuming and inconvenient.

BUILD POSITIVE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

This tip applies to your team and suppliers as well as your clients. You are much more likely to get fast-track service when occasion demands it if you always treat people with courtesy and respect. Income makes your business profitable but the quality of your business relationships determines lasting success.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

You can't be all things to all people; and you will not please everyone. If something goes wrong, evaluate it honestly, make adjustments, put things right and learn for the future.

- ✓ Don't work with people whose styles and values are likely to clash with yours.
- ✓ Don't agree to anything that you do not understand or cannot deliver. Honesty is always the best policy.
- ✓ Nip problems in the bud. If you feel something is 'wrong', you are probably right. Find out your customers' concerns so you can put things right.

KEEP REVIEWING YOUR CUSTOMER CARE

What additional things could you introduce to improve your customers' experience and create a lasting impression? REVIEW your current customer strategy. PLAN your next steps. DO what you need to do to improve your customer commitment. You want customers to feel as if they have received more than value for money – at no extra cost to you.

Erma Winkurst is a motivational speaker, business turnaround expert and author of *BOOM! 7 disciplines to control, grow & add impact to your business*.
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"Without customers you have no business and you will not survive."



The secrets of being 100% CUSTOMER-LED and successful in business

There are enormous opportunities for business growth in the current climate and there is every reason to be positive about the future. The key to success is to adopt a positive mindset and to ensure that your business adapts to the needs of the modern market place. Customers, like employees, do not leave companies – they leave people – when they are no longer fulfilling their wants and needs. So here are my ten steps to win more business and keep your customers happy.

1 IS YOUR COMPANY FIT FOR PURPOSE?
Every business owner must make sure that their service is fit for purpose. You must continually make sure that your customers need or want what you have to sell. I meet many people whose approach is outdated and who are not adapting to the changing needs of the marketplace. They are in love with things the way they are. We must continually reassess and ask ourselves, 'Have we got the right product for 2011 and 2012? Is the service right for 2011 and 2012?' If not: change it, move it, do something completely different.

2 IF YOU HAVE A GOOD PRODUCT, DON'T KEEP IT A SECRET
Too few people are putting the required effort into proactive business networking. They keep their business venture secret by remaining invisible. It is no longer enough to be good at what you do; you have to connect to your marketplace. That means going to meetings, talking to people, listening to what other people are doing, doing joint ventures and doing enough marketing and promotion to ensure that prospective customers are aware of your business.

3 PUT YOURSELF IN YOUR CUSTOMERS' SHOES
When you want to attract new customers, always begin by putting yourself in your customers' shoes, especially when you are developing your website. Too many business owners focus on selling the company rather than emphasising the ways they will look after their clients. Of course, you need to tell people who you are and what you do, but that in itself will not drive customers to your door. Your customers do not want to buy your company; they want to buy what the company does. They want to understand what the unique benefits are and what care you will offer them.

"The best way to demonstrate customer care to your clients is to offer them guaranteed risk reversal in the form of a money-back guarantee."

4 MAKE YOUR WEBSITE IRRESISTIBLE
Having a strong website is of crucial importance. It is your primary mode of exposure for attracting enquiries. For optimum impact, I recommend including a short video on your homepage. On average, web browsers will spend no more than three seconds evaluating whether or not to explore a website; but if there is a video clip, they will click on it. It needn't be long; 30 seconds is enough. If you are uncomfortable talking to camera yourself, record a customer giving positive feedback instead, or record a two-way conversation. It is a valuable way to communicate the company benefits to your prospective customers.

5 WINNING MORE BUSINESS – WHERE FROM?
Every business owner or entrepreneur should have a prospective customer list. These are the people we would like to do business with, whether or not we do so already. Most business owners want more customers; but they do not make time to focus on their customer profile. They become reactive rather than proactive in building their client base. If we know who our ideal customers are, where they are, what they do and how to approach them, we are more likely to take action in order to do business with them.

6 INVEST IN DEVELOPING YOUR SALES AND PRESENTATION SKILLS
Having a passion for what you do and how you deliver it will attract prospects, but you need to have excellent sales and presentation skills too. A written proposal will only take you so far. It is possible to win trust and confidence on the phone or in a follow-up meeting – but all that good may be lost if you fail to give a strong account of yourself and your business in a more formal setting. Paying for training will return great rewards, for very little investment.

7 SELL VALUE NOT PRICE
There is a tendency for entrepreneurs to believe they need to compete on price. They may feel they have to be the cheapest in the marketplace; some try to avoid discussing the price or hide it altogether. Statistics show that in reality only about one third of buying decisions are based solely on price, the great majority are based on perceived value. Be proud of your price and always focus on selling the long-term value of your product or service. What else are you offering in addition to the product?

8 LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS AND DO NOT KEEP TALKING
The traditional image of the glib-talking salesman is a thing of the past. Modern day selling relies upon being a very good listener who tunes in to the true needs of their customer. The key to long-term business success is to become a solutions-provider rather than just a sales person. If your customer has a problem that you cannot solve directly, is there someone within your network who can?

9 EVERY CUSTOMER WE WIN SHOULD LEAD US TO THE NEXT CUSTOMER
One of the finest ways of winning business is via customer recommendations. Your future reputation and financial success relies upon the quality of your customer care. If your customers are happy they will become your ambassadors and will often recommend you without you even knowing they have done so. Looking after your customers is inexpensive to do and the rewards are enormous.

10 ALWAYS OFFER A 100% MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE
The best way to demonstrate customer care to your clients is to offer them guaranteed risk reversal in the form of a money-back guarantee. I have sold millions of copies of my books all around the world with the promise that, 'If you're not 100% satisfied with the result – I'll give you your money back.' I have had only a handful of copies returned. Why should your customer take the risk? Would you pay your plumber if his repair struck a leak? You do not ask for your money back from someone who has done a good job. It ensures that you take the initial brief carefully. Guaranteed risk reversal is quality control in the form of a 100% money-back guarantee.

Richard Denny is known as The Millionaire Maker. He joins the EBA as a business growth specialist. Richard is author of five international best-selling books. He was quoted by The Times as 'The master of professional salesmanship.'
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The four mistakes you must avoid on your website

The reason why a business needs a website is to sell, claim and simple. It either needs to sell products, sell services or sell a brand. Like the sales person who never closes a deal and simply becomes a professional visitor, the website which does not encourage and ask for the business is no more than a business card.

Let's look at how we can take our website, whether we are an e-commerce or service based business, and improve the results it provides us and create a great return on digital.

The first, and often simplest mistake, is when companies hide their telephone number.

If you own the kind of business which is involved in a complex or consultative sale, having potential new customers ring you is probably the best outcome a website can provide you, yet time and time again people hide their telephone numbers at the bottom of their pages. Telephone numbers should take pride of place in a prominent position on every page of the site. To take that one stage further, a simple call to action next to the telephone number will encourage more calls. For e-commerce businesses, especially start-ups or non market leaders, a phone number adds credibility and subconsciously says 'If there is a problem with the order, real people are here to help', which adds a level of credibility to the site.

The second mistake is writing copy for the site that is so generic that any company, not just a competitor could use the same copy on their site. Let me give you an example... 'Now Co Ltd. Was established in 1904 and is now the market leader in said industry. We are so good we have won every award under the sun and our chief executive is on the board of several charities.' Now, I don't know about you, but this just doesn't do it for me. It's boring and bland, but most importantly it has no relevance to what the browser is looking for.

You see, when people are on the internet, they have an itch they want to scratch. They are looking for a present for a loved one that is either unique, hard to find or cheaper than elsewhere, or they are looking for a solution to a complex business issue. At no point are they looking for a self-indulgent epitaph.

So here is how you produce a great opening paragraph.

You know the pain points people are facing who buy your services. If you are an estate agent, you talk about the fact that the biggest frustration people face is the lack of proactivity and that you are different. If you are an engineer, you talk about the company that ground to a halt before finding you and

using your solution. If you are an e-commerce based business, you write unique product descriptions and have great photography. The copy on your site has to whisk people straight between the eyes and make them sit bolt upright in their chair, not because it is literary genius, but because finally people will find the answer to their problem.

The third mistake is to not 'try' and collect data from your website which continually builds your database and gives you a base of people to market to. Now, I'm not a big fan of using the word 'try'. I think you either do it or you don't, but collecting people's email addresses is becoming much harder. It's harder because people are fed up of being spammed. Therefore, there are some crucial factors which will encourage people to pass over their details, and it is mostly down to ramping up the value. Sign up to our newsletter 'does not cut it' anymore. So when you are asking people for email addresses you always need to give good reasons. This can be keeping up-to-date with a fast-moving market, or receiving free money-off vouchers or consultations, or even, a combination of both.

With the usage of social media increasing every day, it could be argued that it might be better to get people to follow you on Twitter or become a fan on Facebook. I think this is greatly dependent on the market and what you have to offer. Simply having a fan on Facebook is not enough. If you want them to become new customers they need to be kept in contact with and nurtured to a point where they will pick up the telephone.

The final mistake is not having video on your website. Technology makes it very simple to do this and with the likes of YouTube and Vimeo you don't have to worry about hosting the video or the cost of bandwidth.

The best kinds of videos are either customer testimonials or product explanations which both fall in the category of not being overly self-promotional. To generate great testimonials, focus them on the issues that you know most new customers would face. If you are a market leader with premium costings, ask people for testimonials which talk about return on investment. If you are new to the market, ask people for testimonials which talk about the benefit of working with fresh minds. A great testimonial should answer the issues people are conjuring up as to why they shouldn't do business with you. For product demonstration videos, think show not tell! Don't tell them what it does, just show them!

By using the strategies discussed in this article, you will be able to mix a potent cocktail which will provide a noticeable and pleasing increase in the amount of business your website generates. It is not unusual to see conversion rate increases of between 40% and 100% from adding video alone.

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Are you fit 4 business?

The hardest part of getting fit is getting started!



My name is Toby Garbett and my background in the world of health and fitness originates in the cut-throat world of Olympic rowing where the time and effort you put in is precisely what you get back.

The margins for success and failure in the world of sport come down to hundredths of a second. This can be likened to the width of an apple and in 2002 cost me a gold medal, this equated to just 0.02 of a second! I was a World Champion in the preceding years and went on to represent Great Britain at the Athens Olympics.

In business, you may or may not be accountable for business being won or lost by fractions of a second but being as fit as you can be, mentally and physically, could help you win, or stop you from losing that important contract!

I now thoroughly enjoy bringing my experience, understanding and motivation to assist others in the office or at home as a personal trainer.

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Practice what you preach

I always think it is very important in all areas of life to lead by example and there is no better example than one of the busiest people in the country making time to get fit.

I was delighted to see recently that the media was drawing attention to our Prime Minister, David Cameron, as he started a new fitness regime, which includes running along the Thames in the early morning.

I often hear the excuse 'I never have enough time', but surely, if one of the busiest people in the world has realised that being physically fit enables him to do the job of Prime Minister, to the best of his ability, then surely this gives us no excuse.

Who's stealing your lead?
As we all know in business, it is important to keep up-to-date with your competitors. However, I am aware, from the world of

elite sports, that spending too much time watching and worrying about your competitors can leave your head in a mess and, you, not fulfilling your potential. Do not worry about the 'what ifs'. A sport psychologist once told me to control the controllables! This is as true in business as it is in sport.

Whether you are an individual or company you need to get the most out of yourself to compete in the marketplace. The best way to do this is to look at all areas of your life; your diet and hydration, exercise or lack of it, and sleep, how much or how little. Once you have gone some way to improving your lifestyle you will be giving you and/or your business the best possible chance of success. You may have the best website and the greatest strapline in the country but if you do not back this up with an excellent, passionate and enthusiastic service, you will not get business.

Simple exercises

Office sciatic solutions

Sciatic nerve impingement, also known as sciatica, is common in people who sit for prolonged periods of time. The sciatic nerve runs from your lower back, down through the back of your legs to your feet.

Pressure on the sciatic nerve, from bad posture over a period of time can cause pain down the leg. The following exercises are great in combination for any type of sciatic nerve pains.

You cannot beat this second stretch; the yoga position known as 'the downward dog'. It incorporates your calf muscle as well as your hamstring.



Start in a press-up position with your feet hip-width apart.



Slowly send your bum pointing to the ceiling to form a pyramid shape, aim your heels to touch the ground keeping your legs straight and back as straight as you can get it.

If you are reading this and you do not have sciatica they are still great exercises to do on a regular basis as prevention is better than cure!

Good luck, Toby.

If you would like to book a fit-4-business session with Toby, go to www.tobygarbett.com

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Simply start on all fours and straighten your left leg back with your toes still touching the ground.



Then sweep your right foot under your left leg and slowly sink your bum down and back towards your right heel. Reach your arms out in front of you and hold this position for at least one minute. Repeat this on the opposite side.

Renaissance Retreat

Describe your business and your target market.

Renaissance Retreat provides one-to-four-week residential Fitness & Wellbeing packages and Weight Loss programmes with a focus on lifestyle change.

Everything we do is aimed at bringing the body back into balance naturally, to increase the metabolism and aid digestion, thus improving overall health. The retreat provides guests with a break from their normal daily routine and allows them to focus on how they really feel. Though guests book to get fitter or lose weight, they usually find they are on a different journey and sometimes make major decisions about their future before they leave.

What makes your business unique?

The Fitness industry provides blanket solutions to fit everyone. We provide a totally personalised programme based on the clients' needs. Whilst most retreats and boot camps work with large numbers/groups, we work with a maximum of six guests per week, offering a largely one-to-one programme.

Our Holistic Approach focuses on the person as a whole - Mind, Body & Soul and our expertise allows us to work with adults of all ages, differing levels of fitness and states of health. The majority of our guests travel alone and enjoy the cosy, friendly environment of the Retreat. They often say it feels like being part of a family.

What has been your proudest day in business?

There have been many! One guest wrote to tell us, seven months after leaving, that he had followed our guidelines and despite a personal tragedy, had remained focused and lost a total of 45kg. He said he couldn't have done it without our support.

Only two weeks ago a guest who had limited arm mobility following a mastectomy two years ago, was able to raise her arms above her head for the first time after only three days of fitness rehab. Her ecstatic display brought a tear to everyone's eye.

What has been your hardest business day?

When your product is all about people and service the whole experience must appear seamless. It can be a bit nerve-wracking when a key team member calls in ill or an incident leads to having to change the daily schedule. Luckily we have a fabulous back-up team to draw from as "The show must go on"!



What is the most important lesson you have learned in business?

It's true what they say, imitation is the greatest form of flattery. Don't waste time worrying when someone tries to copy your idea, just focus on being the best. Competition is a great motivator.

Who or what is your biggest influence?

Feedback from our clients has helped us improve our original products and led to ideas for new products and services such as the "Head to Toe" Detox and "dancefit breaks".

Who or what is your biggest inspiration?

We watched "The Secret", liked the idea of the Law of Attraction and created a Vision board. It made us think about what we really wanted.

Where do you hope to be in five years?

To be known as the leading brand in Wellbeing and to be on Bev James and James Caan's team of Millionaire Mentors at the EBA!!

What advice would you give to a budding entrepreneur?

Make sure the business you choose is something you are passionate about and enjoy as it will consume a large part of your daily life. Don't underestimate the importance of social networking and make sure your website does its job! Networking is so important, so use all the tools and contacts available to you. Use your budget wisely and make sure you are paying for expert advice.

You must have a clear vision of what you want and how you are going to get there. Learn from the journey and don't be afraid to let go of something or someone along the way if the feeling isn't right.

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