

(Excerpt from e-book manuscript, "Unlock Your Inner Boss")

CHAPTER 1:

DEFINING YOUR DREAM

*"You see things; and you say, 'Why?'
But I dream things that never were;
and I say, 'Why not?'"*

- George Bernard Shaw

I have one question for you: *What sets your soul on fire?* What is the thing in life that lights you up most when you think about it? Maybe it's the spark of an idea, a secret dream you have, or a vision for your life that you've carried since you were young. Twenty years from now, what will be that thing you wish you would have done, and why aren't you doing it now?

Now let me ask you this: *What would happen if you took fear out of the equation?*

If you had told me when I was a little girl, growing up in a poor family just trying to make ends meet, that one day I would build a sixty-million-dollar global empire from a dream and some fierce determination...I'd never have believed it.

I want to share what I've learned on my journey because I believe there are others like me, just starting out with a dream and the desire to make it happen. I wish I'd had someone back then to help guide me, to share some wisdom from their own life experience that could help me avoid some major disappointments, setbacks, and pitfalls along the way. I learned a lot of things the hard way, and I wouldn't change who I've become or where I am today because of it all.

But I'm ready to give back. If you have a dream in this business, I want to help you see it through. There is nothing sweeter than the success that comes when you've given it your all and you look around and realize you are part of a community of dreamers and doers who made it happen together. I want you to feel that feeling.

If you're ready to take a step into that kind of future, then read on...

The number one most important thing I believe about dreaming is that *we must never limit ourselves*. We need to think with our childlike minds, color outside the lines, forget all the red tape and the rules we've been living by for so long. Remember: your dreams are *yours alone*, and no one on Earth can define them but you.

Here's a simple step you can take to start out: Get a journal. Take a half hour to sit down and just start writing out your dreams. Dream things you have never dreamed. Write fearlessly. At the end of your writing session, review everything you've written and begin to explore. It can be difficult to define a dream with all the static that surrounds us in our lives. We find ourselves either dreaming a million things without clear definition or having our dreams drowned out by people around us who have their own agendas. But the more often you take time to sit down and spell it out, the clearer your purpose will become.

When I lost my mom at a young age, I was forced to grow up quickly. I did whatever I could to take her place – cared for my sister, took a 9-5 job where I felt less than appreciated, rushed home every night to try and keep the house in order. The pressure was on, and I was in survival mode; my true self was drowned out and there was no time to think or dream.

But there's one thing I never stopped doing, and I believe anyone can practice it no matter what situation they find themselves in: I never stopped being aware of what was happening in the world around me. No matter how overwhelmed or discouraged I was, I remained alert to opportunities for change and improvement in my life. I was (and continue to be!) a thinker. I paid attention to everything -- conversations, TV, messages heard in passing. I stayed as open as possible to my surroundings, even birds

flying and cars honking – whatever I could do to keep myself present in the moment and open to possibility.

About a year before I started my company, I was on a JetBlue airplane, and while surfing through their radio stations I heard a man talking about being an entrepreneur. Sad to say, I had no idea what an entrepreneur was at that point, but as I learned more, I realized that I am one by nature.

The man asked, “Are you ambitious?”

I began to answer his questions in my head: “*Yes!*”

“Do you get bored with new jobs just after 6 months?”

“*Yeah.*”

“Do you despise working under someone else?”

“*Most definitely!*”

“Do you wish you could make your own money running your own business?”

That was when I experienced my “aha” moment.

I felt a rush of excitement and had this clear vision of me owning and running a business. In my mind, I went from sitting in coach to sitting behind an executive desk, walking through the halls of my company and running board meetings. I got goosebumps; the feeling was undeniable. This is what I wanted with everything in me!

Now, let me pause to explain something I’ve observed about people: Some of us are dreamers, and others are dreamcatchers. Many have big dreams, but few have the courage and determination it takes to go out there, catch those dreams and make them happen.

I’ve always been a dreamcatcher, and I want to encourage you to do the same. I know those first, real steps toward a dream are the most important, and often the hardest. Many of us experience our “aha” moment, but just can’t figure out how to make it real.

I say...*do it anyway!* Be a thinker *and* a doer -- think about one real step you can take, commit to doing it, and then follow through. Period. Don't let anyone stop you... including yourself. Let go of your "negative I," and send the nay-sayers in your life to time out.

After hearing that radio message, my mind was filled with thoughts of having my own business. I began to put skin on my idea. What could my business be? What are my true passions? What am I good at? What could I see myself investing my time and energy in? I'd had a lifelong interest in fashion and beauty, so I decided to head that direction and see where it took me.

I knew nothing about the business, but that didn't stop me from digging in. I believe you don't ever have to limit yourself to what's familiar. It's okay to have to go back to school. It's okay to have to research and study. And it's okay to sometimes have to start all over. You will likely learn that the long-term benefits far outweigh the temporary discomforts.

I looked for stepping stones to guide my path – anything that would help me find my way in this industry. I researched fashion schools and enrolled in a design program at the Parsons School of Design...but after just three courses, I dropped out. I discovered almost immediately that design was not for me, but I wouldn't have known that if I hadn't tried it first! I counted it as a valuable experience, a part of the process, and just kept exploring and holding tight to my vision.

Meanwhile, I continued to work at my regular 9-5 job as an event planner, which was miserable for me, but I had to pay the bills. I think a lot of people find themselves in this situation. We know what we're hoping for and working toward, but we still have to endure the day-to-day grind of a job that may wear us down and feel quite meaningless – especially when we've had a taste of what we know will bring purpose and satisfaction to our lives. It's tough to live in one world while you're dreaming of another. My advice

is this: *refuse to let your current job define or deter you.* Yes, it's necessary, and yes, it's important to do the work you're committed to at the moment and do it well. But see

the job for what it is: a way of getting to your next step in life. It's a temporary stepping stone, not a permanent home. I saw myself as a future business owner temporarily working as an event planner, and that's what kept me going.

Soon, I learned the truth about manifesting your dreams by living as though they're already happening -- it works! The next events to occur changed my life. I'd met a good friend for lunch, and she was telling me about this great stylist from her home country, Brazil, just raving about a crème treatment he performed that made hair silky, shiny, and straight. (At that time, Japanese straighteners were all the rage.) He was going to be in New York for a while, so she invited me to her appointment with him.

When I got there and witnessed this treatment, I experienced a feeling very much like I'd had on that JetBlue flight. It was the most amazing technique I'd ever witnessed...I *had* to learn more! I didn't just make an appointment to get the treatment; I made an appointment to learn everything I could about it. I wanted to do this, I wanted to produce it, and I wanted to be known for it.

I automatically had a million questions, and the stylist didn't speak any English, so my friend translated for us. Thank God he was patient and willing to teach me as much as he could, offering hands-on experience in blow drying and flat ironing right there on the spot.

I had no idea what I was doing, but that never bothers me. No matter how new we are at something, we can always learn! Don't talk yourself out of an opportunity just because you lack experience. You could be missing the very thing you're meant for!

From that magical day, my dream became clearer. I had an overwhelming sense of assurance; the beauty industry was where I wanted to be! I felt such a passion and thrill in creating beautiful hair; the fog that had clouded my foresight was beginning to clear.