

ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST EPISODE Aditya Jagannathan

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Best of success,

John J. Bowen JE.

John Bowen Co-founder, AES Nation

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John Bowen: Wow. As entrepreneurs, we want to make a huge difference. It's challenging out there. There's a lot of noise. I have a remarkable entrepreneur that's going to join us today. He's going to share with us a roadmap of how you can take wherever you are today, whether you're kind of in a new start-up phase all the way up to an extremely mature business, how you can take it through maximizing value as well as accelerating that.

He's the CEO of a digital agency. He's got a concierge influential service, a really fractional CMO, chief marketing officer and he's got a very much educational bend on him and I met him at Joe Polish's genius network. It's someone who I wanted to get to know better because he's working with some of the top people in the world and in this market. I wanted you to meet him as well.

I'm John Bowen. I'm the co-founder of AESnation.com and we are here all to help you accelerate your success. Make sure you stay tuned because you do not want to miss this.

I'm so excited to be with you today. We met at Joe Polish's office. You're helping a bunch of the top guys there. You told me what you were doing, I go I've got to know what this is because you're making a big difference so thank you first of all for joining us with our audience here.

Aditya Jagannathan: Thanks John. Thank you for having me on the show. I'm really excited to connect with you.

John Bowen: It's great. We had a chance ... Before we turned our cameras, we were visiting and so much alignment. One of the things I love is big data and all the different things you can do. When you have a roadmap and data and an influencer, life's easy. Well maybe not easy but it's certainly there's a clear path to success. You're really good at working with all those. What I want to do before we do that is give me a little bit of background. How did you get to where you are, helping fellow entrepreneurs like this?

Aditya Jagannathan: Yes, no problem. I'm from Chennai, India. That's where I grew up and that's where I got my undergraduate education. I come from a computer science/information technology background. My first job out of college was in the telecom industry doing back data analysis for the customer emotions. I've always been inclined at the marketing, I just didn't know it.

I came to the US to get my master's a little while after that. Here I met a venture capitalist/professor who had a roadmap and then I fell in love with the roadmap. I wanted to monetize and commercialize the roadmap just like a company called Strategizer, I don't know if any of you have heard of them. They created a tool called Business Model Canvas. Soon after I had no idea how to do anything, so I had to actually follow the map and go from a hard

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to exit, hence I started SEI Creations. This is three years ago and now SEI Creations does marketing for different influencers and different sub-sectors.

Like John said in the introduction, we give a concierge CMO service. We help people work both in and on the business and grow them and get new audience digitally. It's been a long road but it's interesting.

John Bowen: It really is. One of the things I thought to kind of start out, it's a little bit different than I would normally do podcasts and particularly for those of you who are listening in the car or in a gym, don't stop to try to get on the video part. We're going to go ahead and put up the roadmap and we're going to kind of walk through it together. You can always go, and I'll point to it if you're with me AESnation.com. Anything Adi and I go ahead and talk about you'll be able to download or have the links to and so on. It'll be there for you.

This is something ... To me, this is really important for all of us as entrepreneurs to take a step back a bit and really think through kind of the step by step process. At each of these junctures, I always call them the wobble points because many of us wobble and fall off. You can create tremendous value. We're really privileged to have this opportunity. I've been able to go full cycle on a few businesses; a couple that were fairly significant and what learning lessons. As I was looking at this map, I was going I wish I had gotten this map when I started. Why don't you set the stage for the map and then I'll put it up on screen?

Aditya Jagannathan: Yes, no problem at all. Our hard to exit is a start-up roadmap. A professor from ASU who's also a venture capitalist. His name is Aaron Chavez. He came up with the map about seven or eight years ago. Basically, the idea behind the creation of the map is that there's a process for everything. There's a process to go to the moon. There's a process to make your waffles. There's a process behind everything. Start-ups, even though it's the hardest thing you can do in life, it doesn't mean it has to be insanely complicated. That was the origin of the map really.

The map really outlines the steps that you have to take if you were to be sequential ongoing from that moment that you either say this is the best idea I've had in my life or say to yourself I'm going to be independent and create a company on my own or whatever that moment is for you. What's the next thing you have to do and the thing you have to do after that? The biggest problem with innovators becoming entrepreneurs is that you don't know where to start. People always start with probably thinking about the mission and mission statement, right? It's very common but there has to be a process. The start-up map gives you that process to go all the way from just an idea to creating a business around it because as most people don't realize there's a significant difference in creating a product versus creating a business. This map teaches you both.





John Bowen: This is I think important for everyone. One of the things that happens ... Even if you've got a mature business that's going well, I have one business that's pretty mature and at the same time you start new opportunities. Bringing them out, it's really easy to do them foolishly and waste an awful lot of money. This is a roadmap to do it. We can always focus on one or two things but if we really ... As we were getting ready for it, we talked about Stephen Covey begin with the end in mind.

If we're clear, one of the clear things as entrepreneurs we all should be thinking is designing the business for sale. Even if you don't want to sell the business, someday you're not going to be here so somebody's going to sell the business. Let's design it to be successful on purpose and have that option because you never know. I've had a couple of businesses where I really didn't want to sell and then I got offered ridiculous amounts of money and I still didn't want to sell but I had partners that did, and I didn't have a controlling interest. That's a different discussion.

Adi let's dive into the map and let me pull it up on the screen for those of you who are on video. Let's take a look at this chart. There's a lot going on here and start with the aha moment. When I start businesses, I want them to go straight up. I don't care how left to right they go up. I'm looking here. There's a lot of flat lines going on.

Aditya Jagannathan: Yes, it definitely is. The map is shaped the way it is because you're actually not, I don't mean to sound harsh but you're not actually worth anything until you get to step six; until you get the validation from what we call the cult. The cult refers to the influential experts, the people who reject mediocrity and only accept superiority in your niche. Until those people give you the seal of approval and say you're something real, you're not really worth anything.

John Bowen: Well I like the term validated learning. Tell me how that's kind of bringing ... You're right at that point between four and five and you're going ahead and you're seeing this opportunity. You're getting all the kind of standard stuff. I always look at this as kind of proof of concept. I'm in Silicon Valley and I used to be in venture capital as well. If you're doing a start-up and you don't have a million dollars of revenue, to me that's validated learning, proof of concept. You've been able to figure out the market however you got that. It's different in every business and why don't you just touch on that if you would.

Aditya Jagannathan: No problem. As you can see we're also big fans of the Lean methodology and the Lean start-up; hence the loop over there. It signifies that people get stuck between step four and five. As you can see there's a loop between four and five and that's the validated learning loop. You create your prototype as quickly as possible, get it out there to the influencers, test it. If it doesn't work, you go back to your MVP. That's the stage of your business measure learn and the faster you are and the faster you eliminate what

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doesn't work, you can get to what works quicker. That's when you truly pass the beta and go to the next step.

John Bowen: Let's pass the beta. We're going to assume that we did that really quickly, effortlessly, which both you and I know that's not the case usually.

Aditya Jagannathan: Not at all.

John Bowen: As a matter of fact, I'm just going to bring in ... I recently started a membership program about a year ago. The business plan, I've got to tell you it was really beautiful. It had all the classic stuff you would think and everything else. I'm a big believer in performance financial guide. We had it all modeled out how it was going to work and guess what? It didn't work that way. Matter of fact, we got a really different part of the market and it took us about a year to get proof of concept for a million of revenue. Now we're scaling it up and it's a phenomenal business.

This is one of the reasons why it's flat line in the beginning. You want to take the time. You don't want to have a lot of capital. You don't want to dilute yourself during this period. It's a great way of getting it together. Let's say we got it working, we've got the pricing, the validation, it's starting to come together. Now we're moving out and looking at some of the intellectual property, getting the right people around us maybe with some capital depending on how much we need and we're ready to shoot up. How do we kind of make that turn and really make it happen?

Aditya Jagannathan: These days it's not having a digital presence for your business is definitely something that can hurt your business in terms of growth for most businesses I would say, not for all businesses. Scaling and finding your customers digitally I would say is one of the fastest ways to grow. With all the different mediums out there and all the different marketing tactics that you can use, I would say leveraging information marketing and diffusing in social media platforms is the best way to grow in this day.

John Bowen: What do you mean by diffusion? What is that?

Aditya Jagannathan: Diffusion is basically in the customer adoption first. You first have the innovators and then the bell curve and then right after ...

John Bowen: OK, innovation of diffusion from ... OK, very much. Well finish that because I think this is one of the biggest points and I make it all the time. I didn't see the context when you said social media. One of the biggest challenges we all have is getting the kind of very ... Jeffrey Moore did a really good book. I'm forgetting the name of it and I forgot, I think it's

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Edwards wrote the big thick book on diffusion of innovation. Jeffrey Moore was crossing the chasm.

I talk about this all the time with my corporate clients that the big firms that want to get something out and change the big ship moving; well you don't need to get 100% adoption. You've got to get 5% which is kind of usually the number for the innovators and then the early adopters. If you can get that 20%, I mean that should be our goal. Once we've got that and Jeffrey Moore calls it crossing the chasm, the rest, you've got a commanding presence. That's really powerful.

How do you use that? As I'm looking at the chart here, you're kind of accelerating out, getting those early adapters, using some of the tools of gorilla marketing to make it through to the hard launch and that big party you're going to have here.

Aditya Jagannathan: Yes. Just a quick story. Our mascot's actually a pug because our logo.

John Bowen: Is this him here?

Aditya Jagannathan: Yes, that's our pug. If you notice our logo, it's a unicorn. As someone from Silicon Valley you should know what that means, the billion-dollar start-up. What we say is that everyone wants to be a unicorn but, in all reality, you're just a pug and pug is abrogation for personal and unicorn greatness. That's our little story over there because it's when you start up everyone wants to be a billion-dollar company but you're just an ugly little pug trying to make it out.

John Bowen: Some uglier than not. Let's continue the journey here. As we go up and we make it through the hard launch and all of a sudden, we're starting to pull some things together here that can accelerate the growth, what are we talking about here?

Aditya Jagannathan: Basically, when it comes to your business and on the business operational efficiencies that you need to have to scale, reality only kicks in after you are getting your early adopters. There's no need to go into six sigma and high levels of operational efficiencies when you're still in your validation stage. PQM signifies the operational quality assurance and the best lean six sigma practices that you need to deploy in order to grow from that. All this time it's OK if there were operational inefficiencies. Still getting early adopters but now, there comes a time where you need to capture those inefficiencies in order to grow. That's what step seven signifies.

John Bowen: One of the things where it comes to me and this is something that's been very important, I'm a big believer in collaboration, strategic partnerships and so on. Trying to form a partnership before you know what the market's going to do is just wasted. It's hard. Normally

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I'm working with big corporate partners, Fortune 50 type financial service firms and trying to put a partnership together and worst case, you actually do it before you know what you're doing. You have to come back and really change it. This can be a dangerous spot if you're not careful. Actually, all of them can be I guess.

Aditya Jagannathan: It can fall off anywhere.

John Bowen: Let's continue the journey. We're now as I'm looking up, we're really starting to leverage and scale. I love ... You're feeling like we're really getting there. How is that coming together?

Aditya Jagannathan: Leverage and scale is where like you said, you need to start thinking about partnerships because growing a company just by yourself without any partnerships is not the smartest way. Successful entrepreneurs definitely know that by creating more winwins it's faster to leverage those and get another win-win and grow. This is that place where yes you have all the operational efficiencies now, but how are you getting ready to exit and harvest? This is where you start preparing. By having the right partnerships and making sure that they are being leveraged to get UPR, exit, and harvest.

John Bowen: This is going back to begin with the end in mind because one of the things even if we're not going to sell is having that exit and harvest. So often the strategic partners that we bring in, that help us accelerate the success are the likely candidates to buy us along the way too. You want to look halfway decent. It's OK some of the sausage being made but you don't want it all over the floor and everything else. As we look at this and we've now got this unleashing the stored value, the enterprise and racing up through if we need mezzanine financing to take off, how are we doing that?

Aditya Jagannathan: When it comes to that step you don't have to sell right? Selling is just like one exit because you can decide that you're going to grow this company and start eating other companies. You can reinvest through scale. You can reinvest through innovate. You can reinvest to merge with another company and that could be part of your strategy or if you are going to exit, let's say and harvest it, it can be a place where you can find your succession plan. Maybe you want to find another CEO and take a backseat and harvest out of that company. That's a very crucial stage where you get to decide really what type of a business person you're going to be.

Either this company can go under a parent company and you go into mergers and acquisitions like what me and a lot of people are trying to do, or you can reinvest and grow the same company. Maybe you want to launch a SAS that can help you grow. That's a really crucial point and I would say that's the point which defines the type of business person you are and the choices you make that can be very critical.

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John Bowen: I think one of the big things from my perspective is I've done this along the way is when you get to this ... To me, what's so often ... You want to be able to do a ... If you can get the organic systems growing and you're really having some success, then the opportunities go up like crazy because as we look at the chart, we can scale to exit, if you're a fast-growing company and particularly if you're digital here largely the margins are phenomenal. You've got a lot of choices and you can continue to scale. The other is if you're an attractive date, meaning that you've got, you're a really good business, you can control your own destiny by potentially acquiring other companies and you've got a good currency because you've got a fast-growing business or certainly on the other side be acquired. Having all this flexibility is great.

Adi you're building your own businesses doing this and you're helping other entrepreneurs. Where are you seeing the biggest challenges as you bring in the digital agency part? The fractional CMO, the concierge influencing services, where are people, your fellow entrepreneurs, not really seeing the big picture or the big opportunity?

Aditya Jagannathan: In a few different areas. I think that a lot of fellow entrepreneurs they've fallen into this trap of getting quick money by launching shit online and you're doing a quick cash grab and they don't focus too much on building the team. I think that's one place where a lot of my fellow entrepreneurs fall short is focusing a lot on building the team because if you have a performance center, if you have a team, if you have a bunch of knowledge workers who are ready to follow you, you have the ability to pivot. If the idea goes bad, you have the people that will help you with another idea. That's number one. I see a lot of entrepreneurs not building the team.

Number two is I feel a lot of entrepreneurs don't understand the difference between in the business and on the business. It's really critical to know the difference and want to go into detail and talk for hours and hours about the difference but that's critical and I see a lot of people not learning that.

Number three, I think that a lot of my fellow entrepreneurs are not educating themselves with digital marketing. Without knowing digital marketing, it's going to be hard. Life is going to be hard and you're going to rely on someone else to take you out there and get diffusion. If you're a smart entrepreneur, build yourself a marketing company and then you can be launching a number of ideas online and you can do it yourself. It's very important to do it first and know how it works.

I would say these are the top three that people fall short on.

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John Bowen: These are great. I want to go one at a time on each of them. We've got a business, we're really making it work and you see it, I see it. I'm in I think four mastermind groups now. I spend well over \$100,000 a year to be in mastermind groups with CEOs. We've studied tens of thousands of entrepreneurs in our research company AESnation.com and what we see over and over again is they don't build the team right. Either they don't have the right team members, or they wait too long and they miss an opportunity.

What are you seeing the most successful ones do from your perspective?

Aditya Jagannathan: You know the most successful ones are definitely the ones who can help you grow the value of your business. Not just doing things right inside your company. Those are the ones that you really want to keep. It's not about a person in your company having the best abilities and Facebook marketing. You need leaders who will help with you because you can't do it alone, you won't be. It's important that you keep the people who have those leadership skills that can bring other people up and bring the value of your company up most importantly. That's the difference between just another employee in your company, getting a leader.

John Bowen: To me it's so important because if you want to have, our fellow entrepreneurs, if you want to have a high-quality life, you need a great team. Nothing great is ever accomplished by one individual, as talented as you are. Having a great team gives you all kinds of flexibility.

When we're talking about ... The first time I heard it in the business or on the business was Michael Gerber, e-Myth and so I'll give him credit. I think Michael is just a phenomenal powerhouse in this. We look at this, all of this here on the chart is on the business. It's thinking through that process and beginning with the end in mind. So often we get caught up, all of us. I don't know what your experience is but it's so easy the day-to-day stuff that we're in the business, we're in the trenches. We're trying to keep our head above water and all the different demands from the different sides and we miss that on the business side.

Aditya Jagannathan: 100%. It's important to realize that building a great product is one thing but building a great business is a completely different thing. Building a great business is something that would scale in multiple ways without you. Making sure that we keep that, just the differentiation of in the business and on the business. I feel when fellow entrepreneurs know that and remind themselves because first step is just to become self-aware. It's a big win if you can just classify in your head when you're doing stuff every day am I working in the business or on the business? The more self-aware you get, the more you'll start working on the business and thinking rather than just solving this today, why don't I solve this problem and think of how to not have that in the upcoming days, month, year. Do we have to put a person in place? A system in place? You need to think how do you solve the bigger issue.

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That's thinking on the business and where you're going to go with your business, that's on the business.

I think just starting with that self-awareness and if you can classify in your every day in the business and on the business and be self-aware on how much time you're spending on what, great start.

John Bowen: It really is. I want to finish on digital marketing because this is something that's near and dear to my heart. I grew up in relationship marketing in the financial services industry. I didn't do anything really significantly digital. We built some software companies and all that, but they were on the financial side and really didn't do digital until probably started turning the early 2000's and didn't get really serious until 2008, 2009. As the downturn, I had to reach out to different people that I no longer could do through the relationship side and I was blown away with the power of digital marketing. Particularly the ability to test ideas and concepts for almost no money.

What are seeing that fellow entrepreneurs who have a proven concept, they're ready to accelerate their success, how are they creating that big win using digital marketing?

Aditya Jagannathan: Absolutely. By leveraging information marketing techniques that all these influences out there like Russell Bronson, Ryan Deiss, Ryan Le-vac, Frank Gunn, Alex Mandossian. All of these experts and gurus, the techniques that they teach is just a story-telling technique. It's about how you get people to make decisions online. When you understand the core and information marketers who are really leveraging this power to get their products out there seem to understand that it's just creating the funnel to help people make the decision just to go to the next step and to go to the next step. When people understand this and when they understand the beginning, the top, the funnel to nurture stage, always there's only awareness, engagement, conversion, and nurture.

When fellow entrepreneurs, the second they realize this and when they know that now they can take information and wrap it around their product or service and splinter them and sell them in multiple ways, life becomes easy if you start doing it right. Russell Bronson says you're one funnel away and that's true, it really is. You're only one funnel away.

John Bowen: This is where I think so many as entrepreneurs, I've made this mistake where we get first into digital marketing we think OK, let's just send out our offer and we forget about all the classic marketing that we need to do of making sure it's a qualified market, nurturing them, bringing them along. You can probably use a dating analogy but the power of digital marketing that has been so amazing to me is the ability at the statistics every step of the way. Whether you're using as you're advertising paid traffic, organic, whatever you're doing, you can see exactly.

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We do probably a hundred webinars a year. I know exactly at every step of the way every data point, every kind of conversion at each step and that adds so much value to making sure we're making good decisions.

Is there a commonality among the entrepreneurs you're working with on the digital marketing where they're getting their first success and then later or is it pretty much custom to each group?

Aditya Jagannathan: You know with a lot it is custom but then there are few people who have higher probabilities of success. You'll have a higher probability of success when you actually have a good product. A lot of people think that just because you know information marketing you don't have to focus on building a good product. Those people don't win. That's something that I see happen repeatedly.

Another thing which is important is these entrepreneurs win when they know that it's about testing and it's about testing fast. It's not about tracking for seven months straight, launch one funnel. It's about relaunching and relaunching and testing different little points and AB testing so understand AB testing and understand validated learning and how fast you need, and they win.

The time it takes might differ amongst them but those are the people who are actually winning.

John Bowen: I want to kind of go into resources and your firm. What do you do for your entrepreneurs that you have the privilege of working with?

Aditya Jagannathan: Most of the time it's building funnel stacks. Funnel stacks consist of running ads in different platforms and channeling the traffic through funnels and these funnels can be landing pages, it can be Facebook messenger bots, whatever it might be, and then creating return parts for people to come back. Those are retargeting ads and e-mails and such. This is the majority of what we do. We take products, we take information products like membership academy or it can be subscription boxes or whatever that might be and create these funnel stacks to sell them.

If someone comes in and let's say they don't have a brand and they have something important to sell, we first help them build a brand. When someone comes in with a really good brand but don't have a product to sell, we help them create the product to sell. A majority of it is creating these funnel stacks and selling products online and creating passive income. I should say that word is overused.

John Bowen: I found that it's not as passive as I'd like it to be.

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Aditya Jagannathan: It's not. It's going to cost you. You're going to be paying some guys and girls to manage the whole thing and you need a daytime too. Yes, that's what we do.

John Bowen: OK. Tell me a little bit about your website. I've got it up on the screen now. Somebody wanting to work with you because this is to take the business full cycle and use a digital agency and use it well. A lot of times we think well if we just write a check that works. Unfortunately, you and I know it doesn't. Tell us a little bit about the website and contacting you.

Aditya Jagannathan: No problem. Anyone who wants to work with us there is a contact form in this webpage that you fill out and you'll hear back from us. What's important now is that like John just mentioned, it's not like you're going to give a check and magically something just starts working. There's a process we go through to qualify if this actually will be a right fit because there's some qualities in a business you just need to have to win in digital and information marketing and if you don't have the qualities of creating content, it's going to take longer and harder.

You can contact us through our website and you'll go through a qualification process. We'll let you know where you are in your business in terms of the start-up map. This is also where it comes in handy. We can point put and say where you are, and we can also point out and say the things that you've missed. We can ask you to tell us what you've missed in the map. Then we'll strategize on what you need as a business and how long it's going to take to start seeing some results because as John might now, results won't just come if you hire a marketing agency. It's going to take investing.

John Bowen: I've written some of those checks along the way and I have learned really clearly, it's a partnership and you've got to find the right partners. I know many of my peers have hired you and that's why I wanted to get together with you.

Let me do a wrap up on the key takeaways and one of the things that I want to just put back up on the screen is the roadmap. The start-up map from aha to exit. This is something ... If you're in the car or you're at the gym, come back to AES nation. Again, AESnation.com and you can do the download. One of the things, it goes back to what Stephen Covey says and we all know but we don't do is begin with the end in mind. Have a roadmap. One of the things we know is this doesn't show enough bumps along the way. There's going to be plenty of challenges along the way we've got to be ready for. Really spend some time thinking about where you are now and where you want to go. What's that ultimate outcome that you're moving toward? It's OK to change it along the way.

Really three big lessons that were shared that I think are so important is building a team. Jim Collins talks about getting the right people on the bus. You've got to check the bus every once

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in a while. First make sure you've got the roadmap that you're pointed in the right direction and then do you have the right team at that time both internally your employees as well as externally, your contractors, your vendors, your strategic partners to get you there.

Again, make time. I even put it in my calendar every day to make that difference between in the business and on the business. I've got an hour and a half that I just do nothing but on the business. It's really paid huge dividends for me and bringing the team together. I have very strategic ways of doing it. Then digital marketing. There's so much, I know we all get frustrated that as we do it we try new initiatives and we want it to work, want it to work, it doesn't work. That persistency testing particularly in low dollar amounts and really making it all come together.

Great lessons make it happen. Adi, I want to thank you again and encourage everybody to go AESnation.com. Get all the show notes, the transcript, the download as well as the link so that you can get all the information we talked about. Remember your clients, your future clients, and that exit, it's waiting for you. Don't let it down. Wish you the best of success.

Aditya Jagannathan: Awesome, thanks John.



A Second Opinion on Your Finances

A Complimentary Service from Financial Advisor Select for the Members of AES Nation

Dear Fellow Entrepreneur,

Like many members of AESNation, I'm a serial entrepreneur. In addition to co-founding AESNation, I'm the founder and CEO of Financial Advisor Select, a firm dedicated to helping successful people make informed financial decisions by introducing them to top financial advisors.

If you're like many successful entrepreneurs, you and your family already have a relationship with a financial advisor. You may even work with several financial advisors. If you are completely satisfied with these relationships and confident that your finances are on track toward helping you achieve all that is most important to you, we congratulate you.

However, you may not be entirely satisfied. You may be wondering if there's a financial advisor who is better-suited to address your family's very specific financial challenges. If so, you are not alone. In today's uncertain economic climate, many successful entrepreneurs are wondering if they have the right financial advisor.

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We look forward to assisting you.

Best of success,

John J. Bowen JE.

John Bowen Founder and CEO Financial Advisor Select

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