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ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPISODE  
**217**

**Lex Gillette**

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/217>



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We are thrilled that you have joined us here at AES Nation, where we're dedicated to accelerating entrepreneurial success—your success.

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Best of success,



John Bowen  
Co-founder, AES Nation

**John Bowen:** As entrepreneurs, we all want to make a difference. Well, I've got a fellow entrepreneur who is really out there making a difference. And one of the things that I find so much that's interesting about entrepreneurs is we all get knocked down. Many of us have been hit by two by fours, sometimes literally, but more often than not, life. Nobody gets out of life unscarred and most of us don't know really what the other people's scars are. What we've gone through and I'm a big believer, as I've gotten older, particularly that we should be kind to everyone 'cause we're all going through our own private challenges.

Well, my next guest is a remarkable athlete and professional motivational speaker, but he's been hit down along the way and rose up to heights that most of us can only imagine. And I was introduced to him with a pretty high-level athlete as well, John Naber, who won a couple gold medals in swimming and I think, a silver too, maybe three gold medals. I forget the number, but a lot. And he said this is one of the most inspiring entrepreneurs, athletes out there. And when we first met, I immediately hired him to speak at our round table mastermind group of top financial advisors, some of the top in the world.

And, I said, "Hey, would you do also a podcast with me, 'because I want to share you with the world." Because there's so many of the life lessons and it's so inspirational. It makes such a big difference. All of us as entrepreneurs, as we're creating value, we get beaten up. And it's not ... we don't get judged by how we get beaten up, we get judged by how we get back up. And I've got someone, a fellow entrepreneur, that's going to help you really accelerate your success even more.

I'm John Bowen. We are at [aesnation.com](http://aesnation.com) and it is all about accelerating that success and making a huge difference. Stay tuned. You don't want to miss any of this.

I am so excited to have you here. First of all, thank you for joining us.

**Lex Gillette:** Thank you John, I appreciate you having me on.

**John Bowen:** Well, I was so excited to bring you out in October to our mastermind group round table to have you share. And I really felt good that you agreed to come on the podcast as well, I know how busy you are and had a chance ... and we'll put some of the links on YouTube in the show notes, so people can see. We're kind of both just hanging out together but seeing you in action as that athlete is just so amazing. But I want to just kind of ... one of the things I like to do is get the backstory before we kind of go into the life lessons that you can share with entrepreneurs, your fellow entrepreneurs, and really how they can be even more successful with learning the lessons that you've had.

Tell us kind of how ... I know you weren't born blind, you weren't born a super-athlete-

**Lex Gillette:** Right.

**John Bowen:** And certainly, you weren't born an entrepreneur.

**Lex Gillette:** No.

**John Bowen:** How did all those things come together?

**Lex Gillette:** I grew up in North Carolina. I grew up in Raleigh. Fast forward to when I was eight years old, I had come home from school, went through my normal routine, had eaten dinner with my mom. That evening, as I was sitting inside of the bathtub getting bathed for bed, I noticed something different. I looked up at the lights and noticed that what would normally look like a light fixture now was blurred. So, I hop out of the tub and immediately I look into the mirror and notice that my reflection is disfigured, like unfamiliar to me.

So, I call my mom and she comes into the bathroom. We take water and clean my eyes out, thinking that maybe I had gotten something in my eyes from playing outside earlier that day. It made it feel better, but it didn't clear my sight any. The next thought was to go to sleep, maybe everything would be okay in the morning.

When I woke up, nothing had really changed, but I did think that I would be okay to go to school. I get dressed and get to school. Halfway through the day, she called my mom and told her, "Hey, we need you to come get Lex, because he's not acting himself. He's bumping into things. We just don't know what's going on." My mom picks me up from school, takes me immediately to the doctor, and after an examination, they said that I needed to have an emergency operation because I was suffering from retina detachments.

That led to a string of ... I've had a total of 13 operations, of which 10 occurred in that one year that I was eight years old. After the last one, doctors said that there was nothing else they could do to help my sight and I would become blind. Definitely a tough time-

**John Bowen:** That is not the message any of us want. And I know that had to knock you down at that age. At any age. How did you ... I mean, there's more ... there's some time in between, but how did you go from there to all of a sudden kind of on the world scene now as one of the top athletes?

**Lex Gillette:** I think the biggest thing was, my mom, she was not going to allow me to fall and ... well, to your point, yes, I hit the bottom, but I don't think that my mom, she was not going to allow me to stay there. So, she went on a rampage trying to find different resources for me, different tools that would help me be successful in the world. I learned how to read braille. I

learned how to use a cane. Eventually, I learned how to ... I had to get through school. I learned how to communicate with others and just learned to really be myself.

But once I got into high school, that was when everything broke open for me athletically. And through a physical fitness test, we discovered that I had some jumping ability. And it was kind of awkward-

**John Bowen:** Well, I think you had ... some jumping ability may not be the correct term. But, that must have been a great surprise, 'because you probably didn't think you had it, 'because you hadn't done it before.

**Lex Gillette:** I ... you know what, no. That was something that I did not do. I was in public school still, at the time, so I was jumping against other classmates and other people who could see, and so it was very ... they marveled at what I was doing. My teacher, he developed a strategy for us so that I would be able to compete in running long jump and that set the framework for me as an athlete. And just to give you an idea of how it happens is, I have a guide who stands at the point where I need to take off from. And he's clapping and yelling as loud as he can, because I'm about 110, 115 feet away from that mark and it's my responsibility to remember how many strides I take to run as straight as possible, as fast as possible to the sound of his voice and on the appropriate stride I leap and I pray to God I'm going to land in that sand.

**John Bowen:** You know, one of the things, it is amazing seeing how you do it and how it comes together. I just encourage everybody to go to ... Google your name, we'll have you in the show notes as well. But, I mean, I just, when John recommended you I went and watched the videos and it's just ... it is amazing. And then, to get together, hang out together today, at least virtually, I did it again and I have a hard enough time, the few times I did that when I was younger, it's just ... it's intimidating anyways, when you can see the box and then I was reading, I didn't know this, you did some of the triple jumps and it's like ... okay, having your bearings.

I mean, most people, if they ... simply standing up and they start walking ... staying in the same spot, but what happens is, with their eyes closed, within a few minutes, you're totally disoriented and they've kind of spun around in circles. We just ... you don't have that ... how important eye sight is on this. So, I mean, it's really impressive what you've accomplished.

**Lex Gillette:** You know what, thank you so much. It's definitely hard and to your point, triple jump is much harder, because where you're supposed to take off from is further from the sand and you have to ... you take those three jumps, so I have to stay straight and trust that entire time that I'm going to get from that board to the sand, which is ... it's tough, but I thoroughly enjoy it. It's something that I absolutely love doing. Not only for myself, but for my country.

**John Bowen:** Well, and that's great. And definitely appreciate for that. I want to just put up ... I'm going to put up your website and we'll have all the links for it, but I love the quote, you've trademarked a quote, "No need for sight when you have vision." And I mean, that just resonates with me, because as entrepreneurs, as you know, we really have to have a vision for our business, but really all of us need a vision for our life, of what we want to accomplish and the no need for sight when you have a vision, how did that come to you? And why is that so important to you, Lex?

**Lex Gillette:** It's really important because that set the foundation for my life. And as I ... I came up with that around 2007, 2008 and just thought about all of the experiences that I had gone through and came to the conclusion that it wasn't the sight that was the determining factor in my success, it was having that vision, seeing something before it's in existence, doing everything possible to transform that into reality. And then I just started thinking, when I had lost my sight, I felt isolated and secluded and it was all because I didn't have that vision, I didn't have a dream and aspirations initially. And I felt disconnected from the rest of the world because sight is important, and we rely on our sight so much.

And once I realized that everything that has ever been created, everything that will ever be created always starts with a vision. You see it within yourself. You gain that ability to see beyond the horizon and once you get that clear image of success and where you want to go and that direction, then everything else ... sight doesn't matter. Vision ... I also believe that vision is going to benefit many people and so, if your vision is that clear and it's that concise and people understand it, they're going to gravitate towards that. And so, people are going to ... the things that I may not be able to achieve, others who are part of that vision, they're going to be able ... they're going to have my back and they're going to be able to make up for what I lack.

So, the sight piece, you know I'm blind, but I have a guide. He helps me get out there and compete. We have so many people who are a part of my team and they help me, they elevate me. I think that's the same way in business, in family, in whatever environment.

**John Bowen:** Well I'm going to say, what I like so much is you get clarity of what ... that vision, what you're looking to accomplish and then, I call it enrolling other people in your vision, so you've got a whole team, including the guide that's without somebody giving you that sense of direction by being at the end, I don't know if you call it ... the sand pit, I guess, and clapping their hands, you wouldn't know which way to go. Just the reality of life.

So, this is what so many of us as fellow entrepreneurs, we don't take the time to get clear on the vision that we want to accomplish, and once we have that, then we want to enroll other people in our vision. And it's a little bit like magic. They want to help you. I mean, the first person, your mom, and she helped you create that vision and I mean, where would the world



be without moms? But you got to have more team than that, and you do, and it's made a big difference.

What I want to go to next though, Lex, is the goals. Really setting ... successful people do things that unsuccessful people aren't willing to do, and they typically set goals that they're realistic, they're achievable, but they're pretty uncomfortable along the way. How did you come ... it's one thing to go from high school and do the long jump, like me, only 'cause you had to do it in the PE class, to then do it on the world stage? You've got YouTube videos all over the place of people seeing how great you are. How did you get to that point?

**Lex Gillette:** When I first started, my coach, Brian Whitmer, he was the one who introduced me to long jumping and honestly, I didn't want to do it in the beginning. It was scary. It was ... I didn't know my surroundings. I was afraid that I might get hurt, run into something. And we finally had a sit down one day and he just explained to me that hey, I see this for you. I believe that you can be very successful in this event. And he was the one who kind of ... he was the one who painted that image for me potentially competing in the Paralympics, potentially winning Gold, Silver, Bronze medals, breaking records, representing the United States. And that became so vivid in my mind that I said, I want to that. I want to do this.

So, all of that uncomfot, or discomfort, all of the fear, it started to subside a bit. But more than anything, it really encouraged me to step across that threshold and to put it on the line, to try it out. And yes, in the beginning, it wasn't ... I wasn't that great. I made some mistakes, but at the end of the day, I was out there trying, I was moving. I was doing something. I wasn't stagnant. I wasn't sitting still. And as long as you are moving and as long as you're trying, then you're already a step ahead of those who are just sitting down, just sitting on the side-line.

**John Bowen:** I mean, it's so amazing, once you ... when you commit yourself to action. I always call it deliberate focus action, the world changes. It doesn't mean that you're going to be successful in the beginning, 'cause most of us aren't. It's just ... you're not going to be. But as you ... that persistence in working toward the goal is just so powerful and you really did it. But, I want to go ... and this, as entrepreneurs, we have to do that as well. Let's go to kind of this whole concept of teamwork, 'because you have to bring a team together as well. How did that happen Lex?

**Lex Gillette:** The team. Once I really had a clear image of what I wanted from the sport and what I wanted out of life, I reached out to different people. I said, hey this is what I want to achieve. First of all, I want to win gold. I want to win gold, so how am I going to achieve that? I need my guide. I need a coach. I need a coach who understands the sport, who understands me. Someone who'll take the time to really dive into who I am as an athlete, because some of my needs are a little different than the average athlete. So, I have a phenomenal coach,

Jeremy Fisher. Not only does ... he's trained me and other Paralympians, but he has Olympic Gold Medals, Olympic Silver Medals, so he has a great idea of what I need from that Track & Field perspective.

I have a nutritionist who's able to outline what I need from a nutrition standpoint. I have a sports psych who helps me develop plans and gets me prepared mentally when I step into the stadium or when I'm dealing with light. I have a person who outlines what I do from a weight room perspective. So, I reached out to all of these people and wanted to create this machine that would help get me from point A to point B, to help me get on top of the podium. And they are ... although, when I'm on the podium, I'm getting the spotlight, the stadium stops, everything, all events, there's nothing going on, but that's a moment for not only me, but for my team to really revel in that light in that moment, because we train four years for this small moment of time. But it's worth it and I sit there, stand there and just think about all of those members who have helped engineer that and get me to that point. The teamwork point is huge.

**John Bowen:** It is amazing. None of us get there alone. I mean, nothing great ever happened as an individual and we all need a team. And sometimes, entrepreneurs make the real kind of fatal mistake of trying to be the only one to do it. And I don't care if you're the star athlete, you're the entrepreneur, you're ... really any of us. We're kind of muddling through the fog of life together and we need some help.

One of the things, though, that amazed me, and this is something as entrepreneurs we have to do, is that whole concept of trust and trust in our team. You've got to ... your guide, your coach, the people around you for as you're building your business now too. It's a challenge, Lex. How do you and would you recommend to your fellow entrepreneurs, how do they build trust like that?

**Lex Gillette:** The one thing that really catapulted me was not only trust in myself and trust in my abilities, but truly just letting my guide know that I trust him. Let me coach know that I trust him, because when you appear to be reserved and protected, it kind of, it sends off this energy that makes them do the same, I believe. And when I truly became transparent and told them ... back up a little bit, there was a certain time when I lost my sight, I still ... I was in denial basically. I didn't want to use a cane. I didn't want to use the tools that were available to me, because I didn't want people to know that I was blind. I wanted to still appear as if I could see, but the problem that I ran into was I'm very good at learning environments, learning different places and I can walk based off of the image that I have in my head, so I could play the part very well, but the problem I was running into was that people would ... yeah, they would think that I would be able to see things.



And so, I would get into these environments where they were very new and very unfamiliar, and I wasn't able to get that help that I needed. Eventually I had to come clean and let people, this is what I need, this is the type of help that I need in order to get where I want to go, and so, going back to my guide and my coach, you just really have to let people know, this is what I'm trying to achieve. This is what I want. This is what I expect. And I think when you put it all out on the table and really, for lack of a better term, you undress yourself, now it allows that person on the opposite side of the table to really ... they can relate. And when you can be yourself and be transparent, I think that really helps people become more comfortable and now you can begin to tackle that goal collectively.

I tell my coach all the time, I don't understand what you're saying. Can you let me know? I can't see that. How can we change this to where I can run straighter? How can we change something in my weight room so that I can run faster, I can feel a lot more confident? When I'm talking to my guide, how can we manipulate your voice so that I can hear you and in the midst of 40, 50 thousand people? I can't hear you. I feel afraid. I feel a little ... I just don't know where I am right now.

And so, when we have all of those things on the table, and I let them know that, this is what I'm feeling, but I still trust you. And now, they're able to step into that role and develop ways from their end, that they can help change it, make it better, get the results that we want.

**John Bowen:** Well, I think this is so much, so many fellow entrepreneurs struggle with this too, is that somehow, we're supposed to be strong and able to do everything if we're in a leadership role-

**Lex Gillette:** Right.

**John Bowen:** And one of the challenges is that we can't do everything-

**Lex Gillette:** Right.

**John Bowen:** Nobody can. And being authentic and saying, hey this is not something that I'm good at, I need your help to do this. That makes such a difference in the world. I mean, it's so powerful. But without being authentic, without sharing that, we kind of set ourselves up for failure-

**Lex Gillette:** Yes.

**John Bowen:** I mean, over and over again. And this is one big part, and I know we were talking about communication, I mean this is a big part of being successful is communicating successfully with other people.

**Lex Gillette:** That's ... yes, and that's one thing that I was not ... I was terrible at that in the beginning. I think that was a big reason why when I first began to speak, that's what terrified me the most. Really communicating and articulating. Explaining what I needed. Explaining just everything that would help me succeed and not only myself, again helping my guide do his job effectively, helping my coach do his job effectively. We always have a conversation before training, before competition, just to get an idea of what the scene is like, what the environment is like. And it really sets that tone for us to go out there and tackle that goal.

**John Bowen:** Well, Lex, help me out with ... so many of us as business we have a challenge of going ahead and really ... I always call it the, you're in bed and you've got the covers over you and getting up. And we've got to face life and we've got to ... we've set that vision, we've got these goals, we've built the team and some days we either ... we can achieve, like you've had some really big wins, some gold medals. And what keeps you getting up and inspiring yourself and then everyone around you?

**Lex Gillette:** There's a lot of people who depend on me. There are ... I've had so many great influences for me in my life and they set that foundation for me, and although they're not on the track with me per se, they invested time in me and I owe them going out there and training three, four hours a day. I owe them stepping into that stadium and doing my absolute best. My coach works with me on a daily basis. I have so many people who currently, they invest so much into my life as an athlete, as an entrepreneur, as an individual. I owe them that.

So, I always feel like, when it's time to get up, when my feet hit the ground. I have things that I want to do individually. I want to be successful. I want to win that gold, but even further than that, I know that my energy, what I do, what I don't do, that's going to impact somebody, and I would much rather have a positive impact and do what I can to enhance the lives of those around me. My guide, my coach, my mom, all of the teachers who helped me, counselors, business leaders, business mentors, speaking mentors, all of these people, I owe that to them.

**John Bowen:** Well, and I think, really, the most successful entrepreneurs do that as well. We've kind of ... using your running analogy, we've got a whole bunch of people running right alongside us-

**Lex Gillette:** Yes.

**John Bowen:** And they're in it. And it does take a team, and it's amazing. And if you're the leader, you get the accolades, you get the gold medal and all that, but it's really that whole group and being accountable to that group, enrolling them in the vision and then you've got to do your part to make that vision real. So that's been great.

Where do you see, as you look forward, your goals going forward, Lex?

**Lex Gillette:** I am ... so I'm currently training for Tokyo 2020. We're two years out now, so everything will ramp up here pretty soon. We have World Championships and some other big competitions next year. But off of the track, I'm continuing to speak. That's a large part of what I do as an entrepreneur. And really just trying to continue those conversations like we're having today. Pulling those life lessons from my experiences, from the things that I go through and continuing to motivate people to be the best that they can absolutely be, to help them transform their visions into reality, 'cause there's a lot of people out there who, figuratively speaking, have blind spots and may not see certain parts of their life and may not be able to see their success, but it's totally possible to really shift their focus and shift their view so that they can see further than what they've ever been able to see. And that's what I'm able to do for companies and individuals around the country and around the world.

And then there's other things that I want to do. I want to write a book. I'm very big into music, so I want to record an album as well, but competing right now and speaking right now take up the majority of my life and even past athletics, speaking, that's what I'm going to do.

**John Bowen:** This is great, and Lex, I have your website, and we'll put the link in, but just the number of major companies and different groups like TEDx in San Diego, the CEO groups, and so on. And shortly, you'll have my group there too-

**Lex Gillette:** Yes.

**John Bowen:** And it's ... one of the things, it's a really inspiring story and I love the line, the blind spots, because it's so true. Most of us as individuals, business owners, we have so many blind spots and if we take the lessons that you've had and put 'em in. And matter of fact, let me do kind of a what I call a key takeaway here, and what I'm walking away with-

**Lex Gillette:** Yes.

**John Bowen:** And I look at it, this is just kind of a lot of confirmation that all of us know, but don't always do, which there's a difference-

**Lex Gillette:** Yes.

**John Bowen:** Starting with a vision, get really clear, that vivid vision, if you will, of what you want to achieve. And then quantify it, what are the specific goals that you need to do. And then, build the team around you. I mean, there's so many talented individuals, and I like the ... both the guide and the coach, I love having people that have done it before me that can help along the way. And then build that trust, working together and have that genuine

communication. You don't need to be the super star of everything. You need to ... you don't really ... you only have to be good at one thing in life, and a lot of times that can carry you.

And then really, to inspire yourself, day-in and day-out, is it's all about making sure that you're holding yourself accountable to the team and the vision. And that's what we all do as entrepreneurs and most successful entrepreneurs will work on that.

And then above all, we all have blind spots and it's so easy to not accomplish what we want because we don't really get clear on the vision. Every of us can. So, Lex, I want to thank you again for this interview, it's been great. I'm looking forward to hanging out with you and making a difference. So, super job at continued success. Above me is the website, [aesnation.com](http://www.aesnation.com). You can go there and get the transcript, the show notes, all the links. You definitely want to check out Lex, not only delivering great presentations, but also that long jump, it's a killer. Well done. Thank you, Lex.

**Lex Gillette:** Thank you, 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 Bowen  
Founder and CEO  
Financial Advisor Select