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[Rana Florida](#)

CEO, The Creative Class Group

Your Start-Up Life: Mark Cuban on Business as "the Ultimate Sport"

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Thursdays at the Huffington Post, Rana Florida, CEO of [The Creative Class Group](#), will answer readers' questions about how they can optimize their lives. She will feature conversations with successful entrepreneurs and thought leaders about how they manage their businesses, relationships, their careers, and more. Send Rana your questions about work, life, or relationships at rana@creativeclass.com.

A conversation with [Mark Cuban](#), business mogul/entrepreneur/investor



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This week's conversation is with media and sports pioneer [Mark Cuban](#). Mark started as stock clerk making \$1.60 an hour and went on to be founder of HDNet and Broadcast.com. An investor in a number of startups, Mark's leadership skills helped position them for acquisition. Mark is most well known for his purchase of the Dallas Mavericks and as an investor on ABC's "Shark Tank."

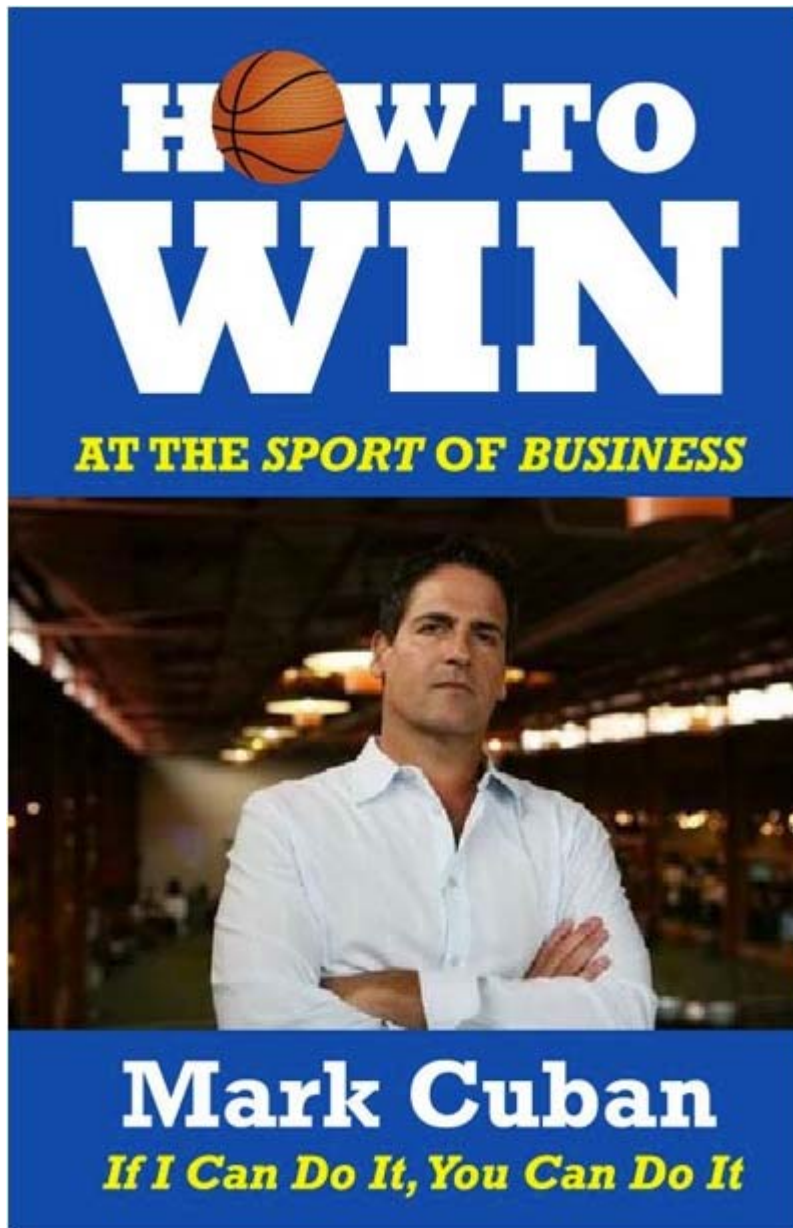
Mark offers hard-hitting advice to anyone looking to venture out and start a business. As in sports, a successful business requires a lot of effort and no excuses; so toughen up!

Q. What was your first job and how did you like working for someone else?

A. My first real job was working for Ralphs Discount Warehouse as a stock clerk. It was a job that paid me \$1.60 per hour and I loved it ! My first post college real job was working for a bank. That didn't go so well. I lasted about nine months and realized I was not ever going to be a good employee.

Q. Is entrepreneurship a gift that you're born with like musicians or artists, or is it something you can learn to be?

A. I don't know. I know I have always been driven to start businesses. I'm just wired to love to compete and to me business is the ultimate sport. I think being wired this way is an advantage, but I don't think it's a necessity. If you want to put in the time, anyone can be a successful entrepreneur. Which is exactly why I wrote my book, [How to Win at the Sport of Business](#). If I can do it, you can do it too!



Q. What traits do you need in business to be a successful entrepreneur?

A. You need to be brutally honest with yourself. You can't be a dreamer. You have to be able to focus on doing the work to prepare and execute on your ideas rather than dreaming about what might happen. And you can't be afraid of failing. It's amazing to me that some people who have

no problem jumping out of an airplane cover at the idea of starting a business because they might fail.

Q. What lessons in sports can be carried into business?

A. The one thing that any athlete or entrepreneur can control is their effort. That business, like sports, is a true competition. There is always someone out there trying to kick your ass and you have to be ready to compete. The big difference between the two is that sporting events come to an end. In business, the competition is 24x7x365xforever

Q. You've dominated several domains including tech, business, sports, and media. How do you expand into new mediums? Do you dive right in based on a gut feeling or do a tremendous amount of research?

A. I do research. I try to learn as much as I possibly can about what the current technology is, what the current business environment is, and where I think things could go. I want to know if someone else has beaten me there. If not, that's when I go for it. I try to never guess.

Q. How many of every 100 startups will be profitable? And why?

A. No idea. But the problem that most entrepreneurs run into is that they come up with excuses why they will fail rather than putting in the effort to make sure they don't fail. I can't tell you how many times people tell me how they don't have enough money, connections, whatever. The reality is they usually don't have enough brains, effort, or both.

Q. Is there a simple recipe or template for a startup to breakthrough?

Yes. Sales cures all. No company ever succeeded without sales. If you have enough sales to be profitable, you can breakthrough. If you don't, you still might eventually get there, but its more more difficult

Q. Would you rather invest in a great idea with a weak management team or a mediocre idea with a fantastic team?

A. Neither. I want my cake and to eat it too. I try to invest in companies with both.

Q. How important is creativity in business?

A. Very. You have to always be looking for ways to make your customers happy and to improve your business. I'm a believer that you have to re-earn your customers business every day and creativity is a big part of that.

Q. What lessons do you take away from failed businesses?

A. They usually lack an emphasis on sales and profits and over emphasize what they don't have. In other words, there is always an excuse. I hate excuses.