

**Just In Time MBA**

*The FASTER, CHEAPER, BETTER Way to Get the Business Education YOU Need*

**Laurie Pickard**

* “Laurie Pickard’s gamble to earn an MBA entirely out of MOOCs is paying off—and not just because she saved six figures by forgoing a traditional degree. As the blogger behind The No-Pay MBA, which chronicles her journey through the B-school curriculum, Pickard has become a household name in the MOOC (massive open online course) world.”
* - *Fortune*
* **AGENT**
* Michael Snell
* Michael Snell Literary Agency
* P.O. Box 1206, Truro, MA 02666-1206
* Phone: (508) 349-371

Email: [Michael@michaelsnellagency.com](mailto:Michael@michaelsnellagency.com)

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## HOW I GOT MY BUSINESS EDUCATION, JUST IN TIME

Back in 2013 I had just finished a three-year assignment as a Peace Corps volunteer in the rural countryside of Nicaragua. I was living in Nicaragua’s capital, Managua, barely scraping by as a part-time consultant for the local branch of the World Bank. Having worked for nearly four years for low and sometimes no wages, I was eager to get a job in international development and make some decent money. Searching online through endless job postings, I grew more and more depressed. Nothing seemed to match my resume: a B.A. in Politics, an M.A. in Geography, my years of volunteer service, and a brief stint as a project manager.

Every international development job, it seemed, called for some sort of degree in business, finance, or economics. I began to wonder if, rather than looking for a job, I should cut to the chase and start researching MBA programs. Newly married, I was excited to join my husband as he pursued his career in foreign aid. That meant a lot of globe trotting, as new assignments took us to far-flung corners of the world. To land jobs myself, I needed a first-class business education. But how on earth could I pay for it? I couldn’t saddle my new marriage and my early career with huge student debt.

Then one balmy evening the answer to my dilemma struck like a bolt of lightning. My husband and I were enjoying a chat with our friend Juan on the patio of our hacienda, tossing around ideas about our future prospects. Juan became quite excited as he told us about his recent experience with MOOCs. “*Mooks*?” I asked. He laughed, “That’s what they’re called. M-O-O-C. It stands for Massive Open Online Course. I’m taking one to brush up on finance. You wouldn’t believe it. The professor teaches at NYU, and he’s famous for his work on corporate valuation. It’s truly world-class. And it doesn’t cost a dime! I’ve also seen courses from Wharton, MIT, Stanford. I could practically do a refresher of my entire MBA with the courses that are out there!”

I felt a little electric charge when I heard that. Imagine studying with the world’s top professors for the price of an Internet connection! I could picture myself earning the equivalent of an Ivy League MBA while sitting under a palm tree or on a beach in Southern France.

The next morning I did what I always did. I popped open my laptop and began searching. But this time I typed in “Free online business courses.” Wow! The options were limitless. I could study management, marketing, finance, accounting, human resources, operations, innovation, and entrepreneurship from the world’s best business schools. Could someone like me stitch together enough of these courses to fashion their own tailor-made degree in business? She could. And she did! That thunderbolt knocked me into a brave new world where, before long, I became rather famous as the author of groundbreaking blog, “No-Pay MBA”.

Fast-forward three years. I now live with my husband in the small East African nation of Rwanda, applying my self-made, just in time business education as a private sector development advisor in the offices of the United States Agency for International Development. I make a good income and spend a lot of time on the side advising thousands of people worldwide with my “No-Pay MBA” blog. It has attracted a lot of media attention, with write-ups in ***Fortune*** and ***Entrepreneur***. I have written about the subject of self-directed business education for the ***Financial******Times,*** and been quoted in the ***Wall******Street******Journal***and ***Bloomberg******Business.***

What better way to pay forward the tremendous education I have received, than to write a book that can guide people toward their own ***Just In Time MBA?***  Nothing would make me happier than to know that tens of thousands of people have been able to launch their careers with a self-tailored, world-class business education at a fraction of the cost of enrolling in a traditional MBA program.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

* “Laurie Pickard’s gamble to earn an MBA entirely out of MOOCs is paying off—and not just because she saved six figures by forgoing a traditional degree. As the blogger behind The No-Pay MBA, which chronicles her journey through the B-school curriculum, Pickard has become a household name in the MOOC (massive open online course) world.”
* -“[How to get an MBA education for less than $1000](http://fortune.com/2015/03/16/how-to-get-an-mba-education-for-less-than-1000/)”
* *Fortune*

"Laurie's blog and the community she has created are excellent resources for MOOC students and learners committed to lifelong education. Both by example and in her writing Laurie demonstrates how aspiring learners can use online tools and platforms, like edX, to reach their career goals. She has inspired many people to think expansively about education and has furthered edX's mission of offering opportunity to anyone who wants to achieve, thrive, and grow."

* Anant Agarwal

CEO, edX

* “The number and quality of free online courses kept improving in 2014, offering everything from guitar lessons to ‘no-pay MBAs.’”
* -“[The 3 Best New Breaks for College Students in 2014](http://time.com/money/3603798/best-new-college-ideas-2014/),”
* *TIME.com*
* “Laurie Pickard wanted an education from a world-class business school. She didn’t want to pay the $168,000 for a degree from Wharton. So she found a way to get the education — though minus the sheepskin — for next to nothing.”
* “[A world-class business education for free? Here’s how.](http://www.philly.com/philly/business/homepage/A_world-class_business_education_for_free_No_Pay_MBA.html)”
* *Philly.com*
* “Laurie Pickard, a development worker in Kigali, Rwanda, is cobbling together what she calls a “no-pay M.B.A.” with a variety of online courses, and calls Wharton’s accounting and operations management MOOCs “a gold standard.” They were well-organized and engaging, she says.”
* -“[With Free Web Courses, Wharton Seeks Edge in Traditional Programs](http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303948104579533810102989536),”
* *Wall Street Journal*
* “[Pickard] became the poster child for a growing trend in education called MOOCs – or massive open online courses - free or lost-cost university-level classes taught on the internet. Wrapping up her second semester of a program she designed to earn an MBA-equivalent for around $1,000, Pickard created a path for others to follow suit, a path which she details on her blog, The No Pay MBA.”
* -“[A $1000 MBA? MOOCs making education more accessible to learners](http://www.wtvm.com/story/25244434/a-1000-mba-moocs-making-education-more-accessible),”
* *WTMV.com*

* “Laurie Pickard, a development specialist living in Kigali, Rwanda, has been documenting her attempt to complete a full MBA curriculum through MOOCs on her blog, The No-Pay MBA. The free online courses do a good job teaching content, Pickard says, and she already has a professional network.”
* -“[Online programs could erase half of U.S. business schools by 2020](http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-03-14/online-programs-could-erase-half-of-u-dot-s-dot-business-schools-by-2020),”
* *Bloomberg Business*
* “Thanks to the Internet, you can do a complete MBA, using (mostly) free online resources. If you’re looking to up your business skills, that should be music to your ears…Laurie Pickard […]stands to be the first person to structure an MBA program comprised entirely of free or low-cost online courses accessible to anyone with Internet access. She’s documenting her journey in her blog, The No-Pay MBA.”
* -“[An MBA for Free?](http://www.entrepreneurmag.co.za/popular/an-mba-for-less-than-a-grand/)”
* *Entrepreneur*
* “The first round of students attempting these new online courses, including Laurie Pickard, are yet to finish working their way through what is currently available, so the full impact of self-motivated, free internet learning is yet to be felt.  Nonetheless, along with executive education, MOOCs are increasingly widening the choices available in business education.”
* “[MBAs the alternative way](http://www.managementtoday.co.uk/news/1287525/mbas-alternative-way/)”
* *Management Today*
* “In about three years, when Ms. Pickard has completed all of the courses she’s chosen, she will have spent no more than $1,000. That does not buy her an MBA degree, but the certifications do offer evidence that she mastered the course material.”
* “[Here’s how to make MOOCs work for you](http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20140215/ISSUE02/302159996/heres-how-to-make-moocs-work-for-you)”
* *Crain’s Chicago Business*
* “If everything goes according to plan, Laurie Pickard, 32, will earn her MBA in three years for less than $1,000. She’ll take classes from Harvard, Wharton, and Yale, among other top-tier schools. And she’ll tackle it with $0 opportunity cost by keeping her full-time job as a rural enterprise development and entrepreneurship specialist at USAID. She’ll accomplish all of this from Kigali, Rwanda. It’s a premise that sounds too good to be true. But Pickard is determined to pull it off. If successful, she’ll arguably be the first person in the world to cobble together an MBA program from Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), free or low-cost classes accessible to anyone with Internet access.”
* “[An MBA For Under a Grand? Seriously!](http://poetsandquants.com/2014/01/13/an-mba-for-under-a-grand/)”
* *Poets and Quants*

“No-Pay MBA unwraps education and ties learners' outcomes to their grit, persistence, hard work, tenacity, and resourcefulness -- not their wallets or the amount of time they spend in a classroom. This, I believe, reflects the true spirit of seeking knowledge and putting it to use to improve one's quality of life. As the program evolves, it has the capacity to scale and reach countless individuals around all parts of the globe -- and ultimately help these individuals gain access to new and meaningful career opportunities that previously may have seemed out of reach.”

-Nabeel Giliani

Cofounder, Coursolve.org

“The possibility of doing a no or low cost MBA will open up doors for many to either a new career, or a step towards lifting themselves out of unemployment or poverty. The No-Pay MBA concept helps to deliver on one of the initial promises that MOOC enthusiasts like myself were so fond of, but which hadn’t yet come to fruition: giving access to higher education for those who didn't have that before. This could be people without experience in education, or people who simply do not have physical access to top-level institutions, because they live in places where these are non-existent, or out of reach.”

-Arjan Tupan

Founder, Impactioneers

“No-Pay MBA is becoming a catalyst for people who now recognize that skills are actually more important than a piece of paper. Just as Google and Facebook are happy to hire developers who may not have a formal degree, but stand out on sites such as Stackoverflow and Github, the No-Pay MBA is in a position to make this career path open to business professionals.”

-Gordon Rogers

President, Edevate

“Though her No-Pay MBA, Laurie is showing us what the future of Education could become: a true meritocracy where what you learn matters more than where you learned it.”

- Danny King

Co-founder & CEO, Accredible

## THE BOOK

Nick Switzer has worked as a medical device engineer for several years. After graduating from college with a degree in electrical engineering, he landed a job with Stryker Corporation, a Fortune 500 medical technology company. Since Stryker employs thousands of employees, it’s easy to get lost in the crowd, but Nick did well, and his supervisors noticed him. He has already won two promotions on the engineering track, but now his immediate supervisor wants to promote him to Advanced Sourcing Engineer, joining the senior management team.

A highly capable engineer, Nick lacks any formal business education. His boss wants him to fill that gap on his resume by taking some business courses, perhaps even pursuing an MBA at night. “This move up the ladder depends on it, Nick. You can study part-time, and the company will help pay for your degree.”

Nick takes a deep breath. Even with help, a formal MBA will cost him tens of thousands of dollars and many precious hours he’d rather spend his young children. Fortunately, a few months earlier, while researching affordable options for business education, Nick had stumbled upon No-Pay MBA blog. He has already MOOCed his way through MBA level courses on Supply Chain Management, Data Analysis, and Marketing, and is just starting one on Entrepreneurship, all at night, all at home, and all for no cost to him.

These days you cannot easily scale the corporate ladder or start a successful business without some business education. However, the stratospheric cost ($100,000 on average) and time commitment (2 years) demanded by formal MBA programs rule out that option for people who do not want to saddle themselves with a mountain of student debt or who simply cannot go to school full-time.

Had Nick gone to a school like Wharton for an MBA, the combination of tuition, living expenses, and lost salary could have ran up to a whopping $240,000! He would have fared little better with a typical part-time or online program that would have cost in the neighborhood of $75,000.

Furthermore, an MBA curriculum would have included courses Nick does not need right now. He wants to learn just what he needs to know to win that big promotion and to succeed in a managerial role. Brand Management and Advanced Accounting can come later, if at all. As Professor George Seidel, who teaches negotiation at the University of Michigan, once observed, most of the business school curriculum includes topics you study “just in case” you might need them one day.

Enter ***Just In Time MBA: The FASTER, CHEAPER, BETTER Way to Get the Business Education YOU Need.*** This bookteaches you how to tap MOOCs and other free and low-cost resources to get a top-tier business education.It puts YOU in the driver’s seat, focusing your time and attention on concrete skills development and measurable achievement, rather than on a set of predetermined, one-size-fits-all requirements set by an institution.

But what about all the contacts you develop at B school? Isn’t that network worth its weight in gold? Nick can rest easy. He can easily connect with to the mushrooming community of online student around the world.

Here’s a great example. Michael Goldberg teaches entrepreneurship at the Weatherhead School of Business at Case Western Reserve University. After he created his first MOOC, Beyond *Silicon Valley: Growing Entrepreneurship in Transitioning Economies*, he could not believe the response. The course, which follows the efforts of the city of Cleveland, Ohio to boost its startup economy, has become a model and an inspiration for other cities whose economies sorely need renewed vitality. And to date the course has attracted over 40,000 students, from virtually every country in the world.

At Goldberg’s urging, many of those students have formed or joined local meet-up groups, that convene in Greece, Germany, Belize, and the Czech Republic, to name a few. The one in Düsseldorf, Germany, attracted several local institutional partners, including a university, two local co-working spaces, and a non-governmental organization working to support local entrepreneurship. The group even spawned a “pitch clinic” for local entrepreneurs to workshop their business ideas. Students could not gain access to a more useful network of like-minded people and potential investors.

The just in time business education you can achieve through MOOCs, boot camps, and other alternative, self-directed, on-demand forums offers students many compelling advantages. Imagine a business education that is:

* **Accessible,** open to anyone, anywhere.
* **Affordable,** at little or nocost.
* **Rigorous**, accumulating of state-of-the-art knowledge.
* **Competency-based**, stressing skills over credit hours.
* **Achievement-oriented,** identifying the talented and motivated.
* **Personalized,** offering content tailor-made to the needs of the learner.
* **On-demand,** providing content just in time for students to apply new skills.
* **Networked,** connecting with students and professionals around the world.
* **Experiential,** facilitating the immediate application of skills.
* **Iterative,** allowing learners to cycle between theoretical education and practical application in real time.

***Just In Time MBA*** guides readers step-by-step through the brave new world of alternative business education, offering abundant examples of how to:

* Access the global, virtual classroom and study with the brightest minds.
* Plan an education, budgeting the time and money needed to succeed.
* Structure courses to meet or exceed the requirements of a traditional MBA.
* Personalize an education and choose the right field of specialization.
* Build on existing talents, abilities, and experiences, to attain career goals.
* Construct a network that rivals that of any business school graduate.
* Create an educational portfolio to impress future employers.
* Ensure that the investment of time and energy pay off in terms of achievement and career development.
* Seize opportunities for internships, employment, volunteer work and international travel.
* Present new credential on resumes and in job interviews.

Bottom line? ***Just In Time MBA*** provides a complete, practical guide to getting a world-class, career launching-and-enhancing business education at less than 1/100th of the cost and a quarter of the time required by most business schools today.

## THE AUDIENCE

Each year over 250,000 people take the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). Less than half of those will actually go on to graduate with an MBA. Hundreds of thousands more would like to get more business education but do not even take the exam because they cannot afford the time and cost of a traditional MBA program. The Graduate Management Admissions Council Even those reports that 48% of those who do take the exam say they can’t afford to attend an MBA program full time.

That’s why massive open online courses (MOOCs) and other non-traditional resources have been attracting such a large and growing global audience. Over 35 million people worldwide have registered for at least one MOOC. In 2014, more than 875,000 people signed up to study business in the MOOCs from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business. Research has shown that the typical MOOC student looks like the typical business school applicant – young (30s), employed – and already holds at least one degree.

Add to those numbers all of the people who want to further their careers with more business education by taking only the courses they need to get ahead, and you have a huge potential audience for ***Just In Time MBA:***  ***The FASTER, CHEAPER, BETTER Way to Get the Business Education YOU Need****.*

The audience for ***Just In Time MBA*** includes:

* Recent high school or college graduates who want a business education tailored to their specific needs.
* People who would love to obtain a formal MBA but lack the time and funds to attend a traditional MBA program.
* Working women and men who want or needs specific knowledge in order to advance their careers.
* Mid-career professionals who pursued undergraduate or graduate studies in non-business subjects who decide that they want to get onto a more lucrative career path.
* Would-be and even established entrepreneurs who believe that more business education in certain business subjects will help them thrive in a tough economy.
* Retirees who want to keep working after they leave the fulltime workforce but wish to acquire credentials, such as a real estate license, that will enable them to supplement their retirement income
* University administrators, human resources professionals, career counselors, and MOOC enthusiasts, who wish to keep abreast of the latest developments in higher education.
* Lifelong learners wishing to understand one of the most popular and widely studied subjects in colleges and universities today.

## THE COMPETITION

Think of ***Just In Time MBA*** not just as an “MBA in a book” but as a career development guide. The majority of the titles in the “MBA in a book” category distill the MBA education itself into bite-sized lessons on each of the major topics in the business curriculum. They’re little more than superficial Cliff’s Notes on the core MBA curriculum. In sharp contract, ***Just In Time MBA*** functions like a Lonely Planet Guide to those subjects. It guides readers on the journey through the MBA curriculum, showing exactly where and how to find the resources to orchestrate a comprehensive MBA-style experience, outside a university’s ivy-covered walls.

In addition, ***Just In Time MBA*** explores elements of the MBA experience its competitors neglect, such as networking, obtaining just in time knowledge specific to one’s unique needs, immediately applying new knowledge and skills on-the-job, and seizing global opportunities.

Competitors include:

* ***The Personal MBA: Master the Art of Business*** by Josh Kaufman (Penguin Publishing 2012). *The Personal MBA* started as one person’s quest to replicate the MBA education at a fraction of the cost. The book grew out of Kaufman’s popular website, PersonalMBA.com, and distills the lessons the author learned by reading tons of business books.

***Just In Time MBA*** updates Kaufman’s approach, replacing a library card with an internet connection, with which readers can access the latest educational technologies and obtain the business education they need.

* ***The Portable MBA, 5th Edition*** by Kenneth M. Eades, Editor (John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2010). *The Portable MBA* includes 18 chapters, each covering a different business school topic. Written in collaboration with faculty from the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business, the book offers an approachable and comprehensive look at business education. Since publication of the first edition in 2003, *The Portable MBA* series has sold over 750,000 copies.

***Just In Time MBA*** also unpacks the MBA curriculum, offering an alternative to traditional business programs but goes into much greater detail about the extracurricular components of an MBA, such as building a network and putting skills immediately to work in real-world settings.

* ***Hacking Your Education: Ditch The Lectures, Save Tens of Thousands, and Learn More Than Your Peers Ever Will*** by Dale J. Stephens (Penguin Group, 2013). The founder of UnCollege lays out his educational philosophy, making a compelling case for a self-administered, hands-on education as an alternative to a traditional university degree.

Like ***The Personal MBA***, ***Hacking your Education*** was written before the MOOC phenomenon exploded onto the scene and advises readers to haunt libraries for their education. ***Just In Time MBA*** details the brave new world on online resources, drawing on the latest advances in educational technology*.*

* ***Reinventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future*** by Dorie Clark (Harvard Business School Publishing 2013). Based on the premise that the contemporary world of work requires nimble, adaptable, and imaginative reinvention, this highly readable book relies on marketing insights to teach readers how to manage and, if necessary, modify their personal brands.

***Just In Time MBA*** shows readers precisely how to perform needed career pivots and transitions just in time and at little or no cost. It enables readers to design a personal program tailored to their own unique and specific needs.

* ***Disrupt Yourself: Putting the Power of Disruptive Innovation to Work*** by Whitney Johnson (Bibliomotion, Inc. 2015). This book applies the theory of disruptive innovation to personal transformation. It argues that readers can stage successful transitions by adopting the book’s seven key insights.

Relying on the theory that anyone can obtain a low-cost, top-notch the business education ***Just In Time MBA*** propels readers toward successful transitions by selecting just what they need, just when they need it.

## THE AUTHOR



When some of the most prestigious business schools in the world began providing free versions of their courses online, Laurie Pickard seized the opportunity to get the business education she had long desired, at a fraction of the typical MBA price tag. For Laurie, an international development worker, this course of study enabled her to obtain a first-class education without leaving her home in Kigali, Rwanda. The blog site she launched to document her journey quickly became an international phenomenon, hosting visitors from nearly every country in the world. News about the “No-Pay MBA” has appeared in ***Fortune***, the ***Financial******Times***, ***Bloomberg******Business***, ***Entrepreneur***, and ***CNN****/****Money***.

***Fortune*** dubbed Laurie Pickard “a household name in the world of MOOCs”, and ***Time*** included “No-Pay MBA” in an article on the best educational breakthroughs of 2014. Laurie has written for the ***Financial******Times*** and has published reviews of MOOCs on Poets and Quants, the leading business school admissions website. A story about her published in Poets and Quants and offered on **LinkedIn’s** **Pulse** attracted 500,000 viewers and appeared at the top of **LinkedIn’s** worldwide news feed for 3 days.

Laurie runs a networking and consulting business, helping MOOC business students to connect with one another, find hands-on learning opportunities, and leverage self-administered study for career advancement.

She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Politics from Oberlin College, with a concentration in International Studies. She holds a master’s degree in Geography from **Temple** **University**, where she was admitted as one of a small group of **University** **Scholars** with a full-tuition merit scholarship. Laurie taught science and reading, in both Spanish and English, as one of the first **Philadelphia** **Teaching** **Fellows**, a group of achievement-oriented people selected to fill gaps in high-need public schools. She also worked as a **Peace** **Corps** volunteer in Nicaragua and has managed public-private partnerships at both the **International** **Finance** **Corporation** (part of the **World** **Bank** **Group**) and the **United** **States** **Agency** **for** **International** **Development**.

## THE WRITING COLLABORATOR

**Michael Snell**

<http://www.michaelsnellagency.com>

**Literary Agent, book developer and writer Michael Snell has authored, co-authored, and collaborated on 46 books, including *The New York Times* best sellers *Creating Excellence*with Craig Hickman (New American Library), *The Oz Principle*with Roger Connors and Tom Smith (Random House /Portfolio), *How Did That Happen*with Roger Connors and Tom Smith (Random House/Portfolio), *Change the Culture, Change the Game* with Roger Connors and Tom Smith (Random House/Portfolio), *Fix It!* By Roger Connors and Tom Smith (forthcoming from Random House/ Portfolio) and *Leadership IQ*(Wiley)with Emmett Murphy. Other recent collaborations include *Business at the Speed of Now* and *Government That Works*with John Bernard (Wiley), *Talent IQ*with Emmett Murphy (Adams Media), *Your Inner CEO*with Allan Cox (Career Press), *Iron Butterflies*with Birute Regine (Prometheus), *What Keeps Leaders Awake at Night*with Nicole Lipkin (forthcoming, AMACOM),*The New Corporate Facts of Life*with Diana Rivenburgh (AMACOM), and *Career Courage* with Katie Kelley(AMACOM).

Specializing in business books, he has agented over 1200 titles since founding his agency in 1978. Successful titles include *Journey To The Emerald City*by Roger Connors and Tom Smith (Prentice-Hall/Portfolio), which appeared from Portfolio in 2011 as *Change the Culture/Change the Game*,*Bargaining for Advantage*and *The Art of Woo*by Richard Shell (Penguin), *The Ultimate Sales Letter*by Dan Kennedy (Adams Media), *Topgrading*by Brad Smart (Prentice-Hall/Portfolio), *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to MBA Basics*by Tom Gorman (alpha), *Why Didn’t I Think of That?*by Charles McCoy (Prentice-Hall/Portfolio), and *Leading Self-Directed Work Teams*by Kim Fisher (McGraw-Hill).

He collaborated on three of Sally Edwards’ books: *Heart Zone Training* and *Fit or Fat*(Adams Media), and *The Equilibrium Diet* (Morrow/Arbor House). He also developed and collaborated on many pet books, including Myrna Milani’s *Body Language and Emotion in Dogs*and *Body Language and Emotion in Cats,* (Morrow/ HarperCollins). His Prima/Crown book *From Book Idea to Bestseller*has helped thousands of aspiring writers get their work successfully published. A frequent speaker at writers’ conferences and workshops, Michael constantly promotes both his titles and those on which he has collaborated. His media contacts create feature articles in local and national newspapers and magazines as well as appearances on radio and television.

“We wish to thank our collaborator and agent Michael Snell for his thoughtful suggestions, editorial expertise and encouragement throughout this process.”

–Roger Connors and Tom Smith, founders of Partners In Leadership and authors of New York Times bestsellers *How Did That Happen*,*The Oz Principle*and *Change the Culture/Change the Game*(previously *Journey to the Emerald City*) (all from Random House, Portfolio).

“Thanks go to our literary agent, Michael Snell. Michael guided us from book idea to published product—brainstorming with us over the proposal, the book‘s title (the words ‘the art of woo’ were spoken by him first), the contract, chapter titles, and other matters large and small. Mike is more than an agent; he is a true friend and partner.”

–Richard Shell, director of the Wharton School’s executive Negotiation Workshop and author of *Bargaining for Advantage 2nd Edition,**The Art of Woo*, and *Springboard* (all from Random House)

## THE AUTHOR’S PROMOTIONAL PLATFORM

**Platform Summary**

Laurie’s web presence will enable her to promote ***Just In Time MBA*** worldwide. The book’s global appeal and its focus on distance education using online tools, lends itself to an internet-driven promotion strategy.

* The No-Pay MBA website has experienced steady, organic growth over the past three years. The No-Pay MBA website receives 12,000 unique visitors and 40,000 page views each month, primarily driven by organic web searches.
* Laurie’s mailing list grows by approximately 100 subscribers every week. Currently, over 10,000 people have subscribed to receive blog posts and updates. Laurie expects to grow that list to over 15,000 by the time her book becomes available for sale.
* Over 11,000 users have downloaded he free eBook “Is a No-Pay MBA for you?”
* 1,600 people completed a survey to express their interest using the methods described on the No-Pay MBA website
* 600 customers have purchased downloadable materials, as well as advising, coaching, and networking services through No-Pay MBA.
* The No-Pay MBA has won the allegiance of a small but highly engaged audience on social media: 1,000 followers on Twitter (many of them industry leaders and influencers in the fast-changing world of higher education); 2,000 likes on Facebook; 2,000 connections on LinkedIn. Thousands more read have articles and posts shared to social media. Through Facebook, 2,000 people viewed a request for a Question & Answer video.
* Laurie will continually expand her existing social media platform prior to publication. From a small and engaged base of followers on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, Laurie plans to grow her social media following at least tenfold, offering contests and giveaways of downloadable materials, webinars, Facebook Live sessions, Twitter chats, and online events. By 2017, Laurie expects her campaign to attract 15,000 Twitter followers, over 5,000 Facebook Likes, and between 4,000 and 5,000 LinkedIn connections.

**Sparking A Viral Conversation**

Laurie plans to leverage her web presence, a large and growing mailing list, and her position as a thought leader and expert, to spark a viral conversation about how people can use non-traditional tools to get a career-launching business education. Laurie will write articles for business and career publications, both online and in print, and she will seek interviews with local and international news outlets.

* The concept of a MOOC-based MBA equivalent has ignited global interest. In January 2014, an article about Laurie on *Poets & Quants,* the most popular business school admissions website, was viewed so many times it crashed the *Poets & Quants’s* servers. The same article, syndicated to LinkedIn, was viewed over 500,000 times and was featured at the top of LinkedIn’s global news feed for three days.
* Feature articles about Laurie and her No-Pay MBA project have appeared in a variety of online and print publications including *Fortune, CNN/Money, Entrepreneur, Management Today,* and *Philly.com* (part of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).
* Laurie has written for the *Financial Times* in a special edition on business education.
* *Bloomberg Business*, the *Wall Street Journal,* the *BBC,* and the local NBC news affiliate in Cleveland, Ohio have interviewed Laurie as an expert on MOOC business education. Laurie will continue to position herself as an expert on the changing landscape of business education opportunities and will continue to grant interviews with journalists around the world. Surrounding the release of the book, Laurie will seek out journalists who cover education and employment, such as Nick Anderson and Jenna Johnson at the *Washington Post*, Tamar Lewin at the *New York Times,* and Mary Beth Marklein at *USA Today.*
* Laurie has also written for a variety of publications with wide readership among people interested in career advancement, as well as for publications focused on the large and growing MOOC movement. Laurie has published several articles on *Poets and Quants,* which reaches over 70% of the market for MBAs and Executive MBAs.
* Laurie writes career advice articles for *The Daily Muse,* with a readership of over 4 million people.
* Laurie has written about her business education on edX’s Tumblr site, which has a regular viewership of over 100,000 people. Laurie recently contributed to edX’s #SummerofedX series of articles on career advancement using MOOCs.
* *BusinessBecause*, an online publication focused on developments in business education, has covered Laurie’s No-Pay MBA project.
* Surrounding the release of the book, Laurie will publish articles in many of the media outlets in which her work has previously appeared (including *Poets and Quants,* edX’s blog, *The Daily Muse,* and *Fortune)*. Prior to the release of the book, she will continue to cultivate opportunities to write for publications that reach an educated, business-savvy, global audience, including *Forbes, The Huffington Post, Entrepreneur, and Fortune.*
* Laurie has done interviews and has been the subject of articles in many smaller media outlets, including dozens of blogs (e.g. ProjectManagement.com, BuzzBack, Cashville Skyline, OpenIDEO, Hustle or Bust, and others) some with large readership, such as Abhijit Bhaduri’s blog on *The Times of India*, Springboard.com, Womanthology.com, and Money After Graduation. Surrounding the release of the book, Laurie will reach out to local media outlets, radio programs, podcast hosts, and bloggers.
* Publications and organizations with global reach have recognized Laurie’s work and voiced support for her pioneering approach to business education. The No-Pay MBA project has received coverage and praise on the blog sites of both the World Economic Forum and *Inside Higher Ed*.
* Laurie has been invited to write an article on disruptive changes in business education for the November 2016 issue of *BizEd,* the magazine of the AACSB, the major accrediting body for business education.
* The Economist Group selected Laurie to produce a course for its new online learning platform, Learning.ly. The course has received special promotion by The Economist Group.
* Laurie has cultivated a network of influencers in the area of higher education, including Anant Agarwal, edX’s CEO, who has endorsed Laurie’s work. Other writers and influencers in Laurie’s network include John Byrne, former editor at Fast Company and BusinessWeek and LinkedIn Influencer; Abhijit Bhaduri, an Indian author and management consultant with a large following; Michael Arena, Chief Talent Officer at General Motors; Dan LeClair, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business; Ryan Craig, Managing Director at University Ventures; David Blake, CEO of Degreed; and Winnie J. Kao, Director of Seth Godin’s altMBA.
* Laurie will seek a number of high-visibility speaking engagements, including slots at the South by Southwest Education conference, EdTechX Global events in Europe and Asia, the Education Innovation Summit, and a local TEDX event with a global webcast.
* Laurie actively participates in the alumni networks of Oberlin College and Temple University. She will seek feature articles in both alumni publications. As a member of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer and Foreign Service networks, Laurie will request that her work be highlighted in Peace Corps newsletters and will write an article for the Foreign Service Journal.

**Managing An Online Product Launch**

Laurie will initiate and support a sophisticated online product launch. Having conducted similar launches in the past (including an e-book, a coaching and networking service available through the No-Pay MBA website, and an online course through The Economist Group’s Learning.ly platform), Laurie knows how to use the tools of social media and email marketing to ensure success after publication of ***Just In Time MBA.***

* Laurie plans to grow her email list to 20,000 subscribers by late 2017. She will conduct an email campaign using the tools of digital marketing, including giveaways and time-sensitive offers.
* Laurie works with a communications assistant, Andrea Longcrier, who holds a degree in Public Relations and has assisted Laurie with previous product launches.
* Surrounding the release of the book, Laurie will conduct Twitter chats and Facebook parties, video Q&A sessions, and live online events.
* Laurie will also run ad campaigns using Facebook ads, Twitter ads, and Google AdWords.

**Exploiting International Appeal**

An American business education, delivered online at a tiny fraction of the cost of a traditional MBA, has generated huge interest around the world. Laurie will leverage her international network and global readership to reach that eager audience.

Given the global appeal of the subject*,* ***Just In Time MBA*** lends itself to translation into multiple languages.

* Outside of the US, the No-Pay MBA blog has won many readers in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, with more than 25,000 visits from readers in these countries during 2015.
* Laurie’s blog enjoys a wide readership in India. The No-Pay MBA project has been covered by both the *Times of India* (in the blog section) and by many smaller Indian blog sites. In 2015, the No-Pay MBA website received 15,000 visits from users in India.
* Laurie’s blog also enjoys popularity in Germany, France, Egypt, Russia, and Italy, in that order.
* Laurie’s work has attracted coverage by publications in France, Mexico, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Italy, China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Belgium, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Czech Republic.
* Laurie’s networks in the field of international development and her work experience in Latin America and Africa (including Rwanda, where she currently lives) will add to her international appeal.
* Laurie speaks fluent Spanish and French, which will also help her promote the book internationally.

## BOOK CONTENTS AND SPECIFICATIONS

**Introduction – MOOC Your MBA**

**Chapter 1 – Know Your Options:**

***Understanding The Changing World Of Business Education***

**Chapter 2 – Make Your Plan:**

***Succeeding In Your Future Education***

**Chapter 3 – Build Your Foundation:**

***Learning To Speak The Language of Business***

**Chapter 4 - Sharpen Your Skills:**

***Adding To Your Business Toolkit***

**Chapter 5 – Chart Your Career Path:**

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**Conclusion – Think Like an Entrepreneurial Learner**

**Appendix - Recommended MOOCs and Suggested Course Progression**

* **Approximate Manuscript Length:** 55,000 – 60,000 words
* **Anticipated Delivery Date:** 6 months from contract signing

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

**INTRODUCTION**

**MOOC Your MBA**

*“Should I get an MBA?”* This question vexed me every time I made a career transition, from the time I finished my master’s degree in Geography, throughout my service in the Peace Corps, and when I prepared to move overseas with my husband and needed to find a rewarding job. The answer finally came, not as a lightning bolt, but in the form of four simple letters: MOOC (massive open online courses).

This option for getting a first-class business education solved so many problems: the huge student debt I’d take on if I enrolled in a traditional MBA program, my remote location in Africa, and so little time during the day to pursue the knowledge I needed to advance my career.

Welcome to the brave new world of technology-enabled business education. Whether you want put yourself on a path toward your dream job, to climb up the next big rung on the corporate ladder, or to make a major career pivot into a new field, you can get just what you need, just in time, just where you live.

The Introduction tells the story of my own personal journey and invites you to begin designing your own tailor-made MBA program, regardless of your specific needs, your residence or citizenship, and your current financial situation

You will learn:

* How new technologies are revolutionizing higher education.
* Why today’s job market demands self-directed learners.
* The importance of taking control of your own professional development.

**Chapter 1**

**Know Your Options:**

***Understanding The Changing World Of Business Education***

In 2011, two of the world’s best-known artificial intelligence experts, Stanford University professors of computer science Peter Norvig, a former NASA scientist, and Sebastian Thrun, renowned for his work on self-driving cars, created a free online course on artificial intelligence that anyone, anywhere could access from the comfort of their own home. That event marked the birth of the MOOC and the beginning of a major revolution in higher education.

The first “massive open online course” attracted tens of thousands of registrants, many of whom lived outside the U.S. Imagine a student in Outer Mongolia viewing a live streaming video lecture, puzzling over problem sets, and discussing concepts with fellow students thousands of miles away. In the end, a whopping 160,000 people participated in the experiment.

Today, eager, frugal students, hungry for a world-class business education can take MOOCs on every subject taught in a traditional MBA program. Log in from your basement bedroom in Philadelphia, register for a free account, and within minutes you can find yourself attending lectures, taking quizzes, submitting assignments, and engaging in spirited discussion with far-flung classmates.

This chapter explores the fast changing value proposition of the MBA and the ways anyone can add value to their resume by obtaining a top-notch education outside the ivied brick-and-mortal halls of the university.

You will learn:

* The structure of traditional MBA programs.
* The value of an MBA program and how to access it on the Internet
* How to determine if a MOOC MBA will suit your unique needs

**Chapter 2**

**Make Your Plan:**

***Succeeding In Your Future Education***

Kristof felt stuck. He had started his career in banking with a sense of possibility and adventure, excited to see the practical application of the economics concepts he had spent the past five years studying. Just as he had hoped, his first few years in the industry felt like a continuation of his education. He cycled through different departments, finding an unexpected fit in the trading room. Then the 2008 financial crisis struck. Shock waves rippled through the banking sector. When a bigger bank bought Kristof’s employer, the new owners did not lay him off, but he found himself working long hours that began to feel like pure drudgery.

Kristof thought about going back to school to pursue an MBA. That would give him time to take stock of his life and his dreams while adding to his arsenal of skills. But with two young daughters at home, he simply couldn’t afford the time, the expense, or the life disruption a traditional business degree program required. When Kristof’s web searches led him to a young woman in Africa pursuing an MBA-style education all on her own, Kristof saw the answer to his dilemma.

Chapter 2 walks you through the planning stage of your business education, helping you define your goals and map out a strategy for success. It shows how you can carve out time for the courses your need to get ahead in your career education, select just the right courses, and stay motivated throughout your education.

You will learn:

* How to conduct your own special “admissions” process.
* The secret to budgeting the right amount of time and money for your studies.
* Steps you can take to maintain your motivation on a non-traditional track.

**Chapter 3**

**Build Your Foundation:**

***Learning To Speak The Language Of Business***

Louisa loves her job. For ten months she has been working at Listener, a tech startup in Cincinnati. She relishes the fast pace and the fact that new challenges come across her desk practically every day. Perhaps most of all, she loves the feeling of possibility. If the company continues to grow at its current clip, she could end up in senior management before long. In order to shine, she needs to speak intelligently in a lot of venues, from sales meetings to strategy sessions, employing concepts drawn from the full spectrum of the business curriculum. Although Louisa didn’t study business in college, she embraces the opportunity to learn as much as she can as quickly as she can.

“Business” includes many disciplines, all of which make up the core curriculum of any MBA program. Not every student, like Louisa, decides to study them all. Nevertheless, you do want to become fluent in common language spoken by business professionals, who toss around terms like ROI, MVP, market segmentation, cost of capital, “lean”, Six Sigma, and JIT. The more articulate you become with “business as a second language,” , and the more fully you understand the concepts behind the words, the more confident you will feel engaging with the business world.

Chapter 3 teaches you how to structure your own core curriculum, gaining fluency in certain foundational topics every business professional should know. You may not choose to incorporate a full curriculum like those offered by such top MBA programs as UPenn Wharton, Chicago Booth, and MIT Sloan, but armed with knowledge of the full landscape of business education you can better select those courses that will help you achieve your own specific goals.

You will learn:

* Why you need to become fluent in the language of business.
* The components of a typical MBA program.
* How to select the fundamental elements that best suit your needs.

**Chapter 4**

**Sharpen Your Skills:**

***Adding To Your Business Toolkit***

Rachel Roberts knew the answer to the question, “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” Practice, practice, practice. To earn her first degree in flute performance, she spent hours and hours every day with her instrument, repeating each measure again and again. And again. Sadly, all of that practice never made Rachel perfect, and she could not snag one of those coveted but extremely scarce seats with a major orchestra. Unwilling to abandon her passion for music, she decided to plunge into the world orchestra management.

Within a year, she had discovered a new passion and a surprising talent for arts administration. She went on to earn a master’s degree in organizational leadership and rose in her profession to a position as head of the entrepreneurial musicianship program at the Northeast Conservatory of Music. Always eager to gain more and more business savvy, Rachel embraced the MOOC movement with gusto, seeking out business courses that offered an opportunity to learn something new. With a performance career beyond her skill level, she knew she needed to add new tools to her skill set.

Chapter 4 reveals the power of putting new tools to work. Whether you spend the day building rockets, performing brain surgery, landscaping gardens, or running a clam shack, continued success requires that you keep expanding your capabilities. And you must use them or lose them. That means maintaining an active, rather than passive, approach to learning.

You will learn:

* Why you should focus on applying what you learn.
* Which specific new skills will propel your forward.
* How to create an active learning laboratory.

**Chapter 5**

**Chart Your Career Path**

***Pursuing Work You Love***

Justin always took the less-traveled road. After high school, he chose to find a job rather than immediately go to college. As friends and classmates shipped off to universities, Justin took an internship with the Yellow Pages Group, known for its investment in employee training. A mentor there encouraged Justin to rely on his confident decision-making and eagerness for new and challenging experiences to get ahead in the world. Justin took the advice to heart.

Ten years later, he has not returned to formal education, but the lack of a bachelor’s degree hasn’t stalled his progress up the ladder. He has worked for a number of companies, including Apple and Deloitte, in client relations, process improvement, and marketing. Throughout all of these assignments, he has striven to develop and apply his greatest strengths, most recently taking online courses in digital marketing and business strategy.

Like Justin, you will follow your own path to success. Chapter 5 shows you how to match your MOOC-based business education to your unique needs and talents, whether you decide to work in a corporate environment or start as business of your own.

You will learn:

* To look at your career from a satellite’s-eye perspective.
* The importance of matching your MOOC curriculum to your innate strengths.
* When and how to reassess your progress and direction.

**Chapter 6**

**Meet Your People:**

***Building A Business Network***

Most business school grads will tell you that they value the network they built during their studies as much or even more than what they learned in the classroom. But you don’t have to sit in a room full of people to build a network. Arjan Tupan did it the MOOC way. When his wife’s career took them to Dusseldorf, Germany Arjan felt somewhat lost. But no job and no connections didn’t hold him back. Having always dreamed of starting a tech company, he registered for a MOOC that had captured his imagination: *Beyond Silicon Valley: Growing Entrepreneurship in Transitioning Economies.*

*Beyond Silicon Valley* encouraged its students to connect with like-minded people in their cities and towns. Arjan went a step further, assembling a group of folks who could share ideas and give each other encouragement and support. His initiative caught the attention of the professor who was teaching the *Beyond Silicon Valley* course and ended up serving as a model for similar networks around the world.

Chapter 5 teaches you how to build your network both locally and globally. Your keyboard becomes your handshake, introducing you to people in your area and in far-flung corners of the world who can help you progress along your path to success.

You will learn:

* How to find the right connections at the right time.
* The value of both local and international connections.
* Ways to turn online connections into face-to-face meetings.

**Chapter 7**

**Deepen Your Expertise:**

***Applying Your Skills In The Real World***

Nick is buzzing with excitement. His presentation to a group of thought leaders and managers at Stryker, the Fortune 500 medical technology company where he works, had wowed the audience. As he looks at his reflection in the mirror, a big smile on his face, he can’t help but shake his head in amazement at how far his MOOC education has taken him.

Trained as an engineer, he had never considered the value of adding business education to his resume, until the promotions he saw up the ladder required that he add business analytics to his technical skill set. MOOCS to the rescue. One course in particular, a state-of-the-art examination of data analysis, really opened his eyes. Once he began looking at his company’s operations through that lens, Nick could see so many opportunities to improve Stryker’s marketing and product development systems. His boss was so impressed, he had asked Nick to share his thoughts with the top brass. The result? Nick has been asked to take the lead on a product development project, overseeing a substantial budget and working with some extremely talented people.

Chapter 7 focuses on the depth of your business education, teaching you how to gain deep expertise in a functional area. You will learn to identify opportunities to put your skills into practice in every type of real-world setting, whether you work for a global giant or have struck out on your own. It also reveals the power of the small-team work experiences that can help you see how your work fits into the overall scheme of things.

You will learn:

* How to choose courses that help you dive deep into a functional area.
* Where to access advanced content on a subject.
* The keys to arranging short-term projects, consultancies, and internships.

**Chapter 8**

**Explore Your World:**

***Studying Business From Wherever You Are And Wherever You Go***

Three years ago Majiga left London and a career in hotel management and returned to his native Zimbabwe to help his father start a business. Thinking an MBA might come in handy, he explored the offerings at local universities. Good news, bad news. Yes, he could afford the programs, but he did not think they offered the quality he wanted. While MBA programs in the US and Europe promised quality, they cost a fortune. Then Majiga found a solution that would allow him to stay home in Zimbabwe and not deplete his bank account: just the right mix of MOOCs. The next day he was happily studying what an entrepreneur needs to know with the world’s top professors, starting with *How to Build a Startup,* taught by legendary Silicon Valley entrepreneur Steve Blank.

While American students struggle with high costs and crushing debt, those who live in developing countries worry about quality. MOOCs solve all of those problems.

Wherever you live, wherever you travel, MOOCs offer a portal to a global business education. You can take courses in every major language on the planet, including Spanish, French, Arabic, and Chinese. Many more classes include closed captioning in dozens of languages, even Kinyarwanda, the local language of Rwanda. Whether you can’t relocate or pay a lot for your education, or just want to add an international perspective to your studies, Chapter 8 will show you how to use new educational technologies to accomplish your goals.

You will learn:

* How to study from the comfort of in your home and in your native language.
* The value of gaining an international perspective and connecting to a global community.
* The trick to developing contacts in places where you would like to work.

**Chapter 9**

**Tell Your Story:**

***Going Public With Your Business Education***

Okay, you’ve completed a number of MOOCs. Now What? Will people take your online education seriously? Ask Rachel Roberts, who founded and heads up a music education program. At her website a customer or potential employer can click on her profile and read all about her, including her handful of MOOC certificates and a link to an educational portfolio that details her past, present, and future business studies.

Rachel’s online presence impressively displays her intellectual passions and entrepreneurial drive, her many accomplishments, her professional strengths, and concrete evidence that she knows what she’s doing and where she’s going.

In the digital age, you can tell your own compelling story the way I did in the Introduction to this book. Storytelling provides the easiest, most powerful and affordable marketing tool in the world, especially for ambitious business students who are acquiring their education the unconventional way. Mention your MOOC-based MBA in casual conversation, and you’re bound to both pique people’s curiosity and rouse their skepticism. Your well crafted story and satisfy that curiosity and quell that skepticism.

In Chapter 9, you will learn how to unfold the story of your self-directed business education in a clear, concise, and compelling way. Just the act of crafting that story will give you more confidence as you strive to succeed in the business world.

You will learn:

* How to talk about convincingly about your education to anyone, anywhere, anytime.
* The art of using your story to forge connections with colleagues, customers, and employers.
* Low-cost, highly effective approaches to establishing a strong online presence.

**Chapter 10**

**Get to Work:**

***Putting Your Show on the Road***

Fayaz, a psychiatrist, didn’t begin his MOOC adventure with a career transition in mind. He just wanted to learn a bit about business. However, from his very first MOOC class on entrepreneurship, Steve Blank’s *How to Build a Startup*, the vague dissatisfaction that had been brewing in him began to coalesce. It has always bothered him that the practice of psychiatry too often relied on one-size-fits-all pharmaceutical solutions. As he explored the world of entrepreneurship, he fell in love with the idea of customer-centered design. “What would mental health care look like,” he wondered, “If we delivered it from the perspective of the *patient*, not the pharmaceutical company?”

He soon discovered several new companies hard at work answering just that question. Before long he was considering a career move. But how could he make sure that these companies would take him and his business education seriously when he applied for a job?

Chapter 10 will help you present your just in time business education to prospective employers or investors. You will learn how to communicate the value you bring as a self-directed learner. By framing your business studies within the context of your broader work experience, you can turn your education into an asset even more valuable than a traditional degree.

In this chapter, you will learn:

* The art of self-marketing.
* How to craft a clear, concise, compelling Story of My Business Education.
* The best way to showcase your story in your resume and cover letter.
* How to share your story during live interviews.

**Conclusion**

**Think Like An Entrepreneurial Learner**

Steve Blank, host of the radio show *Entrepreneurs Are Everywhere* knows a thing or two about entrepreneurship. Not only has the “Godfather of Silicon Valley” founded and worked in eight different startup companies, he also helped birth the Lean Startup methodology, the subject of his immensely popular MOOC *How to Build a Startup*.

To succeed in today’s challenging economy, you need to develop the sort of entrepreneurial spirit Steve has always championed. Whether you want to land a job on a sales team at a Fortune 100 company, win a major promotion, change careers, or dream of running your own run a French bakery, success will always depend on your ability to think like an entrepreneurial learner

The book concludes on an inspirational note, wishing you great success with your Just in Time MBA.

## SAMPLE CHAPTER

## Take The Next Step: Leveraging Your Education For A Career Transition

**Chapter 10**

**Get to Work:**

***Putting Your Show on the Road***

Fayaz, a psychiatrist, didn’t begin his MOOC adventure with a career transition in mind. He just wanted to learn a bit about business. However, from his very first MOOC class on entrepreneurship, Steve Blank’s *How to Build a Startup*, the vague dissatisfaction that had been brewing in him began to coalesce. It has always bothered him that the practice of psychiatry too often relied on one-size-fits-all pharmaceutical solutions. As he explored the world of entrepreneurship, he fell in love with the idea of customer-centered design. “What would mental health care look like,” he wondered, “If we delivered it from the perspective of the *patient*, not the pharmaceutical company or even the doctor?”

He soon discovered several new companies hard at work answering just that question. Two in particular attracted his attention. Both were developing smart phone apps capable of gathering data, making customized care recommendations, and connecting patients to on-demand attention from experts. “Aha”, Fayaz thought, “This can make a huge difference in people’s lives.” What next? With this new perspective on his industry, he decided to put out few feelers. Slightly tweaking his LinkedIn profile and using his network of connections to obtain some important introductions, he soon found himself interviewing with two of the hottest startups in the emerging field of personalized mental health care. I spoke with Fayaz when he was preparing for second-round interviews with both companies.

Having practiced psychiatry for 10 years, Fayaz felt completely comfortable with the medical side of the job, but he knew that his interviewers would also ask him tough questions about the business side of his profession. Fortunately, the MOOC on entrepreneurship he had just completed had taught him some of the concepts and language he needed to field those questions with confidence. “Yes, I know we need to develop the right product-market fit and create a compelling value proposition for customers.” His combination of professional and business savvy surprised and impressed the interviewers at both companies, who invited him to come back for more in-depth discussions. Whether he ends up working for these companies or decides to launch his own business, Fayez has position himself to make a life-changing transition, thanks to his online business education.

In previous chapters we discussed the content of typical MBA programs and where to find equivalent MOOC courses online. We also looked at how you can put your new business skills into practice. You’ve learned such skills as balancing T-accounts, analyzing throughput, and applying five forces analysis. Perhaps you have created value in short-term consultancies and internships, or have taken on new responsibilities in your present position. You may have secured interviews for that a dream job, moved closer to that prized promotion, or taken initial steps toward starting your own enterprise. Your education may have led you in a new and perhaps surprising direction, as it did Fayez. Whatever your particular situation, your MOOC-based education has put you in a position to advance your career. Now what?

Now you put on your marketing hat, presenting your self-directed studies in a way that will help you achieve your goal. It all boils down to effectively showcasing your knack for self-direction and creative problem solving.

**Think Like a Marketer**

When I graduated from college, I mistakenly assumed I could land a great job with a snap of my fingers. Boy, was I wrong! Oh, I had held jobs before, shelving books in a bookstore during high school, taking on a summer jobs, first at an arts camp then at a national park, and helping out in the campus career center during college. But I was totally unprepared to move from those little ponds into the big wide pool of degree-holding job seekers, all vying for a limited number of entry-level positions. Imagine my shock when I didn’t make it past the first interview for my dream job at a non-profit organization that served the Spanish-speaking immigrant community. How could they possibly pass up a wonderful applicant like me, who had studied abroad in Ecuador?

In hindsight, I can now see that I had approached the job search completely backwards. Up to this point, all my searches began with me. What college was best for me? What course of study would suit me best? When I wrote my first job application, I approached it the same way, arguing that the job fit me like a glove, that it would move me on the career trajectory I imagined for myself, and that I would learn so much working for this outfit. It was all about me. I didn’t stop for one second to think about *them,* about how the organization would benefit from hiring me. That seemed implicit to me.

My husband recalls a similar obliviousness to the realities of the job search. He remembers hearing, along with the rest of his graduating class, that he was one of the future leaders of America. Imagine his disappointment when none of the organizations he was pursuing even granted him a face-to-face interview. It finally dawned on him that he was one of over 1 million people who graduated that year, each and every one a future leader of America.

Looking back, I see that my husband and I failed to grasp two fundamental facts about landing a job. Number one: It’s not about *you*; it’s about *them*. Number two: The fact that you can DO the job does not automatically mean that you will GET the job. I may have been a great student and an all-around wonderful person who could do a thousand jobs quite well, but I had never considered that I needed to sell myself to an employer. A buyer does not spring for a new car because it will make the dealer happy, she buys it because it will get her from point A to point B.

Like me, you have been wearing your student hat while MOOC-ing your MBA. Before you take the next step, you need to swap it for your marketing hat. It’s time to stop thinking of your resume as the *Story of Me* and start thinking of it as your most important marketing tool. The same applies to your LinkedIn profile, your personal website (yes, you need one), and everything you say and do during an interview with a prospective employer or investor.

**Create a Market Positioning Statement**

A market is a place where an exchange of value takes place. Barbara Kahn, one of three Wharton School of Business professors who teach the popular MOOC Introduction to Marketing, defines her field as the study of those places and the exchanges that occur in them. The American Marketing Association makes it more specific, describing it as the activity of creating, communicating and exchanging an offering of value. A farmer grows an apple and finds someone to buy it. Her ability to sell it at a good price depends on offering a high-quality apple. You acquire an education, formal or informal, and look for someone to buy your services. The value you have created will determine what an employer will pay you for what you know and what you can do.

Over the years people who follow my No-Pay MBA blog have asked one question more than any other: “Will an employer value my self-directed business education?” The answer is simple:“You’re asking the wrong question!” Rather than wondering how an employer will weigh your education, you should be asking yourself, “How will I demonstrate to an employer the exceptional value I will bring to the company as a result of my education?” You can do one of two things. You can fret over a potentially negative reaction to your unconventional business education, or you can package your Just in Time MBA in a way that will dazzle them. Basically, you say, “This perfect apple will benefit you in so many ways.” I repeat. It’s not about you; it’s about them.

Let’s pretend we’re back in Marketing 101. Here are a few key concepts you should borrow from the discipline. First, focus on **customer value**. Profitability (i.e. success) in any market comes from delivering value to the customer. In order to that, you must first understand what the customer wants. Your potential customers (employers) are looking for people who can produce high-quality work with minimal supervision. They want to hire employees who will get along with the rest of the team, who won’t cause a lot of drama, who will contribute good ideas and help the enterprise achieve its goals. My literary agent, Michael Snell, puts it this way. “Don’t worry that people might not buy your book. Create such a valuable product people can’t resist buying it. Money chases value, not vice versa.”

Next, you should learn the art of **targeting**. Most markets contain a variety of segments, meaning that different customers with different preferences are willing to pay different prices to get what they want. The market for apples, for example, contains both customers seeking nutrition, those who want to keep the doctor at bay, and those who may want them for an attractive centerpiece on the Thanksgiving table. A plump Red Delicious will command a different price, depending on the specific customer. Why pay a premium for a perfect apple if it’s just going to sit in a pile at the center of the table? But what wouldn’t you pay for that apple if you were on the brink of starvation? In your case, you don’t want to try to be everything to everyone. You’ll only end up being nothing to no one. What customer do you wish to serve? Target a particular segment. Suppose, for example, that you have focused your MOOC studies on accounting and finance. Do you want to target a large financial services firm, a small local accounting firm, or an investor who will help you start your own consulting practice?.

So far, so good. But now you come up against the **competition**, the one million people who graduated the same time my husband did. Who else will most likely apply for the same niche you have targeted? What educational and professional background will they bring to the party? Will you find yourself competing with folks with conventional MBAs, or will you be competing with people with training and experience in a functional area that does not demand an MBA? What can you offer that rivals or beats your competitors? Or, to put it a better way, “What value can I deliver to an employer that will look more attractive than what my competitors are offering?” You need to distinguish yourself from the competition. Marketers call this **differentiation**. Often, differentiation involves combining elements not typically found together. For example, one of my clients, Claudia, holds a PhD in Microbiology. Not wanting to stay in academia, she took a position with a company that manufactures skin products. Now she is studying business in order to better meet the needs of her employer, not just in the lab but also in the boardroom. When Claudia goes to look for her next position, the unique combination of her specialized science background and her business savvy will make her an attractive and differentiated candidate.

Fayaz played the same game. The startup interviewers who wanted to see him again valued his unique combination of his medical background and his newly acquired business savvy. One of the recruiters also told Fayaz she admired the drive he displayed when he took an unconventional path to get the business education he needed. Her company prized that sort of entrepreneurialism. As Fayaz discovered, you want to present your unconventional approach to your education as a positive point of differentiation. Never apologize for taking the less travelled path. On that path you learned a few things they don’t necessarily teach in business school: an entrepreneurial spirit, motivation, creativity, discipline, intelligence, drive, practicality, frugality, critical thinking, resourcefulness, follow-through, and independence.

Finally, you can tackle **positioning**, where you assemble everything you’ve done up to this point. A positioning statement identifies the target segment, describes in just a few words how you will give the customers what they want, and explains how you will deliver a product or service better than the competition’s. In the language of business, you want to create a unique selling proposition, or USP. A good positioning statement includes a frame of reference, the category into which the product falls. If you’re selling a special shampoo that makes hair soft and shiny, then shampoos are the frame of reference. If you’re a student of accounting, then, your frame of reference will be other professionals with a background in accounting. Along with the frame of reference, you will want to establish what marketers call “points of parity “. What makes you similar to the competition? How will you deliver as much value as the competition? You also need to cite points of difference. How will you deliver greater value than the competition?

This worksheet will come in handy as you complete this exercise in marketing:

**Market Positioning Statement Worksheet**

I am looking for a position as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [role/frame of reference].

I am targeting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [type of firms] in

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[industry].

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Points of Parity** | **Points of difference** |
| **Qualities, skills, characteristics, experience I possess that are important in my industry and COMMON among applicants** | **Qualities, skills, characteristics, experience I possess that will benefit an employer and are UNCOMMON among applicants** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Here’s how Fayaz might have completed this exercise:

*I am looking for a position as a medical advisor on a product development team.*

*I am targeting innovative mental health-care start-ups with a mission to develop a more patient-centered, customized experience.*

*My points of parity: I am entrepreneurial, team-oriented, and good at solving problems. I communicate well with people. I have a deep understanding of the mental health care industry, and a strong desire to create a system that better serves patients.*

*My points of difference: I am a trained physician with over ten years of experience in clinical care. From firsthand experience, I have come to believe that my profession relies too heavily on prescription drugs dispensed by doctors with very little time to get to know their patients. My expanding education in entrepreneurship, in combination with my clinical experience, gives me insight into how a technology-based system can be designed to deliver a higher standard of care.*

Note that Fayaz’s prior experience in clinical care differentiates him from most other candidates. Other candidates applying for a product development role will most likely know all about entrepreneurship and customer value, but Fayaz also brings a wealth of experience and medical training to the party, something most general product developers lack. When you fill out your own positioning statement, keep it as clear and concise as possible. That way you can internalize it and carry it with you as you move forward toward that coveted job or new enterprise. A strong one will help you stay focused as you search for the perfect match.

**Show, Don’t Sell**

As a teenager Justin Strohschein sought advice from a career coach. His mentor encouraged him to take a time-out after high school so he could “find himself” before pursuing a college degree. “Look for something that matches your strengths, your ability to get along with people and your problem solving skills.” Thinking that an interesting job might buy him time to figure out what he wanted to do with his life, Justin took a sales position with the Yellow Pages Group. He liked the company’s reputation for investing in its recently hired employees, and he thought it would give him a chance to apply his skills. As his interpersonal and problem-solving abilities grew, so did his role within the company. Justin began working directly with corporate clients, then moved into client development, and ultimately became responsible for streamlining and improving the company’s internal processes. Whenever he needed to learn new business skills, he would look for books, magazine articles, or YouTube videos on that subject. “I may not be in college, but I’m in the classroom every day.” Although he lacked a formal college degree, Justin always kept learning as he earned, constantly moving up the corporate ladder as he proved himself an ever more capable and effective problem solver and manager. Ultimately, he reached a career plateau at Yellow Pages and began looking for a new opportunity. Quite quickly he pivoted into sales and marketing positions, first at Deloitte and then at Apple. To this day Justin maintains a strong commitment to continual learning and improvement. Most recently he has jumped into the MOOC pool, where he has been studying digital marketing. As he puts it, “Because there will always be new and different ways to do things, I find it absolutely necessary to always continue to learn.” If you were an employer looking to hire a client manager for your online marketing team, would you hire Justin, with his wealth of real-world experience and solid MOOC business education, or would you prefer Marco, a bright, young man with a brand new MBA from the University of Illinois, who gained a little marketing experience during one brief internship?

The old marketing adage “Tell, don’t sell” emphasizes the power of telling a good story over aggressively selling a product. If you want to convince people that you possess a valuable business education won the non-traditional way, make sure you can tell a compelling story. As Daniel Pink explains in *To Sell Is Human,*  “The purpose of a pitch isn’t necessarily to move others immediately to adopt your idea. The purpose is to offer something so compelling that it begins a conversation, brings the other person in as a participant, and eventually arrives at an outcome that appeals to both of you.”

Successful creative writers put it another way: “Show, don’t tell.” A good storyteller doesn’t say, “I am a good problem solver.” She says, “When my team needed a way to stay organized for a big project, I created a calendar with key deadlines to help us stay on track.” A compelling story follows the rule of good journalism: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. Communicate the value of your MOOC-based education in a way that will satisfy your audience’s curiosity.

Let’s follow a composite character I’ve built from my years observing people use the MOOC business education to get ahead. We’ll call her Sonya. She’s searching for a great job in marketing. What value does she offer prospective employers? First off, she graduated four years ago from Colorado College with a B.A. in communications. Although she loved art and art history, she had heeded her parents advice to pursue a more “practical” degree. After college, Sonya accepted a sales job with a medical supply company. She made a decent salary, but the constant hustle and bustle selling on the road was turning her into a perpetually exhausted drudge. And who can keep excited about the latest developments in syringes and surgical packs? Frustrated and unsatisfied, Sonya considered other industries. Oh, if she could only get into something more creative, something with at least a tiny bit of artistic flair, something that would put her college education to work. However, when she scanned job listings at creative ad agencies, branding companies, and marketing firms, many of them required an MBA in marketing.

“MBA? Sure, just what I need,” she thought, “a mountain of student debt to weigh me down for the next ten years.” Enter the wonderful world of MOOCS and online courses. Hanging onto her day job, she studied at night and on weekends, taking classes on marketing and entrepreneurship. She also mastered the basics of the graphic design software that had been sitting unused on her laptop. Following the recommendations in this book, she grew her network by conducting informational interviews with people whose job titles sounded interesting. One woman she invited for coffee, a Creative Director at a marketing company for small businesses, mentioned that she also volunteered for Women Rise, a women’s leadership organization in town. “We’re actually looking for a volunteer with some design talent, who can help us redesign our logo and some of our digital materials. Is that something you might be interested in?” Sonya jumped at the chance. Even though the work didn’t pay, it did offer a chance to sharpen her design skills and to add some experience to her resume. While volunteering, Sonya noticed that the organization had established zero presence in social media. She took on that responsibility as well. To learn more about social media strategy, she started reading a few blogs and listening to some marketing podcasts. She put to use many of the suggestions she heard on the very same day she learned them. Best of all, Sonya could see the value she was contributing to the organization. And so could her co-workers. “You’ve done such great work, Sonya!” the volunteer coordinator told her. “Our website traffic has given us such visibility. And our last community event was packed. Thank you for that..”

All of this experience and continuing education gave Sonya the confidence she needed to apply for those marketing positions that had captured her attention. When her target employer asks for specifics about her MOOC-based education, she can rattle it off without skipping a beat.. The Story of My Education Worksheet will help you do the same.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The Story of My Business Education** | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  | |  |
|  | What did you learn? | How did you learn it? | How did you put it into practice? | What work products can you share? | What was the outcome or result? | |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  | |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  | |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  | |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  | |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |  | |

For example, Sonya might fill in the first lines of the worksheet like this:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What did you learn? | How did you learn it? | How did you put it into practice? | What work products can you share? | What was the outcome or result? |
| *Photoshop* | *Courses on Lynda, YouTube tutorials* | *Created new outreach materials for Women Rise* | *Trifold brochure, postcard* | *Doubled turnout at Women Rise events, increased web traffic* |
| *Marketing basics, including the 4 Ps – product, price, place, and promotion* | *Coursera course from Wharton Business School* | *Used marketing basics to determine where to place brochures and postcards for max exposure* | *N/A* |
| *Social media marketing* | *Short course on Udemy, reading marketing blog sites* | *Created and implemented a new social media strategy for Women Rise* | *Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest pages of Women Rise* | *200% increase in social shares* |

You should commit your story to paper. Don’t worry about making it read like Hemingway. Just make sure you answer the important questions and add details that might pique an interviewer’s interest. If you were interviewing Sonya for a job that demanded not only self-direction but managerial skills, you would love to hear more about what she learned about leadership from the women she met at Women Rise.

**Use Your Resume And Cover Letter to Tell Your Story**

Bolstered by a strong positioning statement and a collection of stories that showcase your drive and advanced business education, you can create the usual marketing documents (a.k.a. your resume and cover letter). In most cases, your resume and cover letter make that all-important first impression. And most people take just a split second to form an opinion. A 2012 study using eye-tracking technology found that recruiters looking at a resume make an initial fit/no-fit decision after only 5-7 seconds. Make sure your unique education and the way it will help you create value in the workplace grabs your target’s attention in that first glance.

Highlight your education in the education section of your resume, in the list of bullet points presenting your previous positions (paid or volunteer), and in one of the paragraphs of your cover letter. A word of caution: even if you have taken twice as many business courses as someone with a conventional MBA, you cannot use that acronym the way we have used it in this book. However, you can make it crystal clear that your education has been thorough and rigorous, and targeted toward creating value for an employer.

In the education section of your resume label your accomplishments under **Advanced Business Education (20XX-20XX).** Include relevant details you listed in Stories of My Business Education. Remember to add the Portfolio you created at [www.nopaymba.com/yourname](http://www.nopaymba.com/yourname).

Every time you submit your resume, you should tweak it to match the position you’re seeking. Sonya will place her marketing courses first if she is applying for a job that calls for marketing expertise, but she would list her graphic design courses first if the job calls for the software that she learned. Warning: don’t make your reader wade through a lot of verbiage to grasp your suitability for the job in question. Always keep the three C’s in mind: Clear, Concise, and Compelling. A note of caution: while recruiters generally view MOOCs and online learning as a positive accomplishment, listing a lot of introductory courses can make you look like a novice. While you certainly should take those courses make sure your resume shows how they fit within the bigger picture of your non-traditional business education.

In the bullet section where you highlight your previous positions, draw from your story bank to show how you put your education into practice and with what result.

For example, Sonya might do it like this:

*Women Rise Colorado Spring, CO*

Communications Intern  *2016 – present*

* *Developed and implemented a marketing strategy, including design of digital and print marketing materials.*
* *Drafted and implemented social media marketing strategy, resulting in 200% increase in social “likes” and shares.*

Tell your story! In the cover letter, dedicate an early paragraph to your self-directed advanced business education. Sonya might place this paragraph immediately after an opening introductory paragraph:

*Since graduating with a degree in Communications, I have focused on building my marketing and design skills through independent study. I was able to use my skills to develop and implement a marketing strategy for Women Rise, where I have worked as a Communications Intern for the past year. I created a trifold brochure describing the organization’s services and a postcard listing our upcoming events. I placed these materials at restaurants, cafes, and shops frequented by our target demographic. I launched a social media strategy using techniques I learned by studying the work of digital marketing leaders. As a result of these efforts, web and social media traffic to Women Rise has grown threefold, our mailing list has grown by 2,000 names, and our last speaker event was sold out.*

You can consult any number of resume books to learn about the art of crafting knock-their-socks-off marketing documents. However, I have found these tips quite useful:

**1. A resume is not the Library of Congress.**  You don’t need to include everything you’ve ever done in a single, definitive library of achievements that goes to every prospective employer or investor. Rather, think of it as a new book you write for a particular audience. Constantly tailor and tweak it for different targets. Emphasize your most relevant experience and accomplishments. Maintain a master resume that includes everything you’ve ever done, with bullets for every component of your job description and every accomplishment. You can easily pull what you need from that master document to create a tailored resume. The same applies to the cover letter. Match it to your target reader.

**2. Create your unique brand.** Even if you can’t list a degree from a prestigious university, your story can make you stand out from the crowd. That means placing your advanced business education within the context of who you are, where you’ve been, and where you’re going. You may not have acquired an MBA from Stanford, but perhaps you have worked for an industry leader in your field, or taken a short course from a top program. Think Big Picture: what’s important, not just whether you possess the “right” credential from the “right” institution.

**3. Link, link, link.** Whenever you send a resume and cover letter electronically, provide live links to your No Pay MBA Portfolio, your website, and your social media, making sure that you use your business-related accounts, not the personal ones where you post pictures of your cat and your brother’s wedding.

**4. Seek help.**  MBA students in traditional programs work with career counselors to make sure they have written the best possible resumes and cover letters. Never feel shy about obtaining the services of a career coach or counselor.

**Wow Them in Face-to-Face Interviews**

On a recent Tuesday, Rachel logged into an online videoconference to interview for a position as the executive director of a symphony in a mid-sized American city. On her screen she saw ten interviewers sitting one conference room, two in another location. One other person called in by phone. Uh-oh. Rachel was going to be grilled by thirteen people. She struggled to calm the butterflies in her stomach and gave what she hoped was a warm smile. Fortunately, if she did not survive this ordeal, she could move on to two other good prospects.

The interview began. One panelist asked about her current position running the Entrepreneurial Musicianship department at a well-known conservatory. Another asked about her work in strategic planning at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Rachel felt herself loosen up as she spoke about the management positions she had held, confident that her achievements would impress the interviewers.

Then one interviewer asked, “What can you tell me about the unusual business education you are pursuing?” Rachel had listed her MOOC-based business studies in the Education section of her resume, so she had expected questions about that unconventional approach. She explained that she was passionate about music but realized she needed to move beyond performance. She thought studying business would help her move into high-level non-profit management. She said she loved learning new skills as much as she loved music, and business skills would enable her to contribute to the growth and profitability of in the music industry. But she could not afford the time and money it would cost to obtain a conventional MBA. “I did, however, get a top-notch education at some of the best business schools in the country. In fact, the accounting course I took from Wharton Business School has already helped with the budgeting process I’m leading in my current position.”

She could see her interviewers nodding their approval. Several scribbled notes on the papers in front of them. Welcome to the most nerve-wracking part of the job search: the live (or online) interview. Congratulations! You’ve reached a major milestone. Your marketing campaign is working. Now you need to leap over one final, albeit challenging, hurdle. Fortunately, you have written a compelling story that will impress even the most skeptical interviewer.

You know you will need to field questions about your Just in Time MBA. Even if the interviewer does not focus on that aspect of your job application, you want to establish those credentials. You can best do this by preparing for the most dreaded job interview question of all, the seemingly innocuous, “Tell me about yourself.” Walk into an interview with your adrenaline pumping, and this innocent-enough conversation opener may leave you struggling to remember your own name! Counteract your nerves by debuting your self-directed business education early in the conversation. *(Note: This tactic works equally well with the second-most dreaded interview question, “Why are you interested in this position?”).*

*Interviewer: Tell me about yourself.*

*You: I’ve spent the past few years working for an after school program for at-risk youth. Because I believe strongly that learning, whether in school or online, can solve a lot of a young person’s problem, I share my own experiences with business-related MOOCs. I’ve found a really satisfying tie-in between that message and what I myself have learned from taking leadership and management courses…*

You get the point. I am not suggesting that you redirect every interview question toward your business education, but you want to make sure that you give the interviewer a solid initial impression of you as a self-directed and devout learner.

Are you ready to put your own show on the road?

**Points To Remember**

1. **Practice the three most important rules of a successful job search: marketing, marketing, marketing.**
2. **Market yourself effectively by crafting a clear, concise, compelling Story of My Business Education.**
3. **Showcase your story in your resume and cover letter.**
4. **Share your story during live interviews.**