

# 12 Things Young Entrepreneurs Should Know After Graduation

by Sunny Bonnell, a branding consultant and Co-Founder and Creative Director at Motto

Published online 7/7/14 at *Upstart Business Journal* ([www.upstart.bizjournals.com](http://www.upstart.bizjournals.com))

**The UpTake:** Cofounding her business in her twenties, Sunny Bonnell took a huge leap into the startup world with only \$250 to her name. Here are some things Sunny wish she had known after graduating college, now advice for the next young entrepreneur.

---

Eight years ago, my partner and I started our branding firm, Motto. We were both in our twenties and we had a desire to make a mark on the world and help our clients do the same. As young guns with no prior agency experience and \$250 to our names, all we had was ambition and heart.

Everyone warned us business was difficult, but you don't realize how little you know until you actually take the leap. If I were 22 all over again, here's the note I would've left pinned to my door:

**Never eat your soul to fill your belly.** It's one thing to be hungry. It's another to give up your values for impetuous gain.

**You can never walk out on your own story.** It's a simple truth, but you can't abandon who you are. We all have aspirations to shed parts of ourselves or hide what we don't want people to see. You need to embrace your special gifts and even your faults and learn how to work with them. After all, they make up the story of who you are and let's face it, everyone else is already taken.

**The greatest glory isn't in never failing, but in how we rise when we do.** If you chase your dreams, you're bound to get bruised a few times. Or as my dad used to say, "I haven't just been hit by the bus, I've been under it." The difference between those who go onto greatness is simple — they get up quicker when they've been knocked down.

**Everything you want is on the other side of fear.** Fear prevents us from going after what we truly desire. As Jim Carrey said in his inspiring [2014 MUM graduation speech](#), "Fear is going to be a player in life, but you get to decide how much. You can spend your whole life imagining ghosts, worrying about the pathway to the future, but all it will ever be is what's happening here, the decisions that we make in this moment, which are based in either love or fear." He goes on to say, "Choose love and don't ever let fear turn you against your playful heart."

**Endure with a smile.** At my 2008 Savannah College of Art and Design graduation, André Leon Talley, former Vogue editor and famed fashionista from shows like “America’s Next Top Model,” gave our commencement speech. His entire speech was soul-stirring, but one piece of advice struck a chord in me. He said that if someone above you asks you to run to Starbucks or mop the floors, do it with a smile and jaunty gait. People look for endurance and appreciate those who work their way up.

**You’re going to be told you’re not good enough, maybe even not worth it.** You’ll hear this more times than you can imagine. You’ll be told your ideas aren’t good, that you’re not good enough for the jobs you want; for the accolades you desire, and that you’re not worth someone’s time or mentorship. Maybe it’s true, but mostly it’s not. Do not be discouraged. It’s just an opinion.

**If you can’t get the little things right, you won’t get the big things right.** Some people say good is better than not done. It’s not. For example, if people pay for your ebook and it’s filled with spelling mistakes, it’s a reflection on your attention to detail. Some things require iterations. But carelessness shouldn’t be a substitute for speed.

**Always do a little more.** Extra effort is not a quality to be overlooked. Most of us are grateful to those who help us achieve great things. We’re even more grateful to those who genuinely give a little more of themselves to help others.

**Everyone is hungry. Just get to the table earlier than everyone else.** We are all hungry for something. But some of us are a little hungrier than others. Which one will you be?

**Break the rules before they break you.** Sometimes rules need to be broken in order to have creative breakthroughs. Don’t stay within the grid, break outside of it.

**Give what you get.** If someone asks you for personal or business advice, give it away and expect nothing in return. Help others reach success and grow their business. Share your ideas and inspire others on their journey to greatness.

**Your legacy is yours to make.** Start now. Don’t wait.

Sunny Bonnell is a branding consultant and serves as the co-founder and creative director at Motto. Motto is a comprehensive branding firm that helps visionary entrepreneurs and companies build inspiring brands using their most powerful asset: their purpose. She was named one of GDUSA’s “25 Creatives to Watch in 2014” and has been featured on Forbes, Inc., MSN Business, CBS News, AMEX, and various print and online design publications.

Published online 7/7/14 at *Upstart Business Journal* ([www.upstart.bizjournals.com](http://www.upstart.bizjournals.com))