

## **Be Afraid of Your Fear of Failure**

Fail is a verb, adjective and a noun. The word “failure” as a noun is timeless. More recently, the word fail is used as a noun as in ‘Have you seen the YouTube video for 2019’s Biggest Fails?’ Failure is both relative and or absolute. We can fail subjectively compared to what is interpreted as success or we can absolutely fail as simply as getting a ‘true or false’ question wrong on an exam. Failure is a stigma and considered a bad word when we learn it, something that should be avoided and resisted. The phrase “failure is not an option” is taken too literally and may cause us to hide from the realities of defeat and resist the relative benefits of facing loses, overcoming challenges and climbing out of our own holes we dig for ourselves. Fear of failure hurts us when we need to accept that it is happening to us and the embarrassment of failing can prevent us from dealing with life’s random adversities sooner than later. The Basques have a saying etched deep into their rich culture stating the need to die a good death and that “there is no good life without a good death”. They are saying if you are afraid to die, you won’t live. Accordingly, if you are really afraid of failing, you won’t take the risks you’ll need to succeed. Resisting the fail is the same as resisting success.

My life’s work, as I have called it to this point, is an epic fail in both relative and absolute terms when measured by the traditional financial metrics. From almost every outside perspective and by any conventional measure this work has been unsuccessful and financially unsustainable. Surprisingly however, I am not ashamed or embarrassed by what someone else labels defeat. Instead, I have practically resolved to almost bask in the warmth of acceptance for what it is and how this failure helps me identify myself in the mirror. I am the leader of a failed startup but especially comforted that my failure and losses haven’t harmed anyone else. Everyone owed gets paid, all promises are kept and no serious injuries or fatalities have resulted- except for my ego.

To remain optimistic, I add the caveat “to this point” when I label myself a loser and my work a total fail. It’s only *at what point in time we measure* can we determine whether our decisions and actions are true or false, good or bad, correct or mistakes. We don’t know how this story will play out or if it ends well. That makes it interesting and, like a mystery novel or Scooby Doo episode, we have to stay tuned well past this writing to see how it ends. This One Baja Reality is my singular account from one perspective at one given point in time.

## **NAVIGATING YOUR DOUBTS**

*If you bring forth what is within you, it will save you. If you don’t bring forth what is within you it will destroy you.*

These are the words of Krishna to Arjuna from the ancient text The Bhagavad Gita, arguably one of the oldest literary works known to man. In the story, Krishna is a Hindu God and Arjuna a mortal warrior who is on the edge of a battlefield and facing a seemingly unwinnable battle, certain death and imminent defeat. Although a brave and accomplished warrior, Arjuna is paralyzed by the uncertainty of the impending battle and grappling with his fears, his own death, his likely defeat and what it all means to his people. To complicate things, some of his own

family members are on the other side. He has literally rolled himself up into the fetal position and is found lying on the platform of his chariot, in great doubt, when Krishna appears and starts their dialog.

The words above are important to me not just because they are literally applicable- 'if I don't bring forth what is within me it will destroy me'-, but also because they have guided handfuls of history's most notable exemplars and world figures, beginning with Arjuna and passed through to the likes of Thoreau, Emerson, Gandhi and Carl Jung more than 5000 years later. Mostly though, because the Gita has inspired and guided normal people like you and me, perhaps millions of us. What makes my experience intriguing and worth sharing is that we don't know yet what will happen to my people and me, there is still great doubt about my work, my life and how they might affect the people nearest to me or those people far and wide. I find myself, like you perhaps, sometimes, in great doubt, rolled up in the fetal position and paralyzed by uncertainty. This can be a great thing- but only if we let it be.

For six full years and every summer since, I have been bringing forth what calls me, that which is deep inside of me and I have yet to have felt saved by it. I'm unsure of what that is supposed to feel like. The work is my calling and it seems purposeful to me most of the time and, in some ways, temporarily rewarding to handfuls of others. But it is inescapably unsustainable at present and potentially self destructive. It could destroy me beyond my ego and thus may trickle down to harm others near me. Coaches, advisors and confidantes have all questioned the logic of my continuing to follow a vague path with neither a clearly defined destination or sound business plan. From the perspective of a non-interested party, anyone from outside my respective field looking in, the work may seem very silly and unpurposeful in any way. I can also see it like that sometimes and can imagine mocking it and the character that is me. "Face it you have a disease", said a good friend about racing who is also afflicted.

This work of mine, as I have claimed and named it, could be anything to anyone and may be relatable to you whether you are an avid pilot, sailor or you are passionate about stamp collecting, basket weaving or competitive dog shows. I use dog shows as a great example for anyone familiar with the satirical comedy film Best In Show. The characters are devout dog show enthusiasts to tragically take themselves- and their work-way too seriously, so much so that it is comical- and tragic.

Much of the point of my sharing my experience with you has to do with realizing the perils and harm of taking oneself or their work too seriously. If I take myself too seriously, it leads to self-importance, an inflated ego and repulsive energy. You may see, in my work, and for anyone else's, that repulsive energy pushes people away and spells certain failure and doom for any business, project, hobby or purpose. Unchecked, my passion can be repulsive.

Whether we are studying a success story in the making or an imminent and epic fail will yet to be seen by the end of these pages; either outcome may be true but not both. What I intend for you to take away at the end of this reading is the value of humility and recognizing the

harmfulness of self-importance when applied to your own relative field and your “start-up” company, project or passion. We will also see how the word passion can have negative connotations and how one’s passion can be fatally harmful and repulsive in an outright stigma, or more perilously, in subtle and hidden ways. That great idea, awesome innovation or noble cause that you are so passionate about and driven toward, needs to be checked regularly if you need and expect other people to help and follow you.

## **The 2 Ironies Of Baja**

Baja California is a place on the map but to anyone very familiar with her or who lives here, she is so much more. In the most complex way the word “Baja” is a mystical term that speaks directly to the geographic place, and to the peninsula on earth comprised by the Mexican states of Baja California and Baja California Sur.

The complex term “Baja” is nearly impossible to explain because the cultures, history and alluring mystique that emanate from this region are genuinely unique from Mexico’s other 29 states and traced to the dynamic physical environment of this place on earth. A deeper explanation and appreciation of Baja California’s magic is reserved for another dedicated time and place. In the context of this reading and the irony of Baja, we will cautiously refer to the simple term “baja”. Cautiously as to not insult or demean the true value of the complex term as many of us know it.

The first of two ironies of Baja that relate to BAJA RALLY deal with the Baja’s complex history but simplify her essence down to 2 basic rules, or laws of the land. These rules are for any outsiders who come onto Baja and what is required to exist here, to survive to not die, to not fail nor get driven out.

The late matriarch of Baja CA is Doña Anita Grasso de Espinosa (aka Mama Espinosa of El Rosario) summed it up with the two basic rules to succeed here and examples of many groups of people from different origins who failed without them either knowing or using them. Following these rules will not guarantee success but lacking either will guarantee failure. They are simple:

- 1) You must work hard and be strong through the dry and hot periods
- 2) You must be friendly with a respect for the locals and environment

No amount of money, mite or influence will replace these basic principals. Countless groups have failed (and not in the good way) for lack of either or both of these very basic principals. Examples date back to Hernan Cortes employing military force and threat of violence. French and Italians in Santa Rosalia mining failing with trickery and or financial mite and influence. The list goes on of groups

## The Second Irony

The most basic translation of Spanish word "baja" is low, short and/or down, and each of these words can have negative connotations when left alone or, conversely, altered into positive meanings such as low toxicity & short relapse for example.

One Baja Reality basically constitutes "a shitty present outcome for an off road motorcycle and dune buggy rally race in the State of Baja California". In other words, BAJA RALLY is a competitive motorsports event at it's low point, a short-lived downer of race that still remains the vision of one person. That vision, or dream, has spread to include hundreds of others over the course of 6 years while invoking mixed emotions and outcomes across the board. To remain a "vision" or dream is either a tragedy or triumph and yet to be actualized. We can examine this race (or rally) and its characters, learn from these stories and apply the anecdotes and lessons to virtually any start-up business, project or endeavor. It doesn't matter if you understand or appreciate motorcycle racing or Baja-Mexican cultures because this reading transcends both- this is a story of the positive aspects of humiliation, failure and defeat.

## Why Do You Work?

On a winter's afternoon in early 2017 I believed I might die and that day would be my last on this planet. Years later I'm not so sure. But at the time it seemed like the end of me, a lethal blend of exhaustion, dehydration and shock caused by mineral depletion. Left alone, unable to stand or wall, in a remote canyon far enough from help, I made recordings on my smartphone to friends and family essentially composing my final wishes and goodbyes. Laying on a rocky canyon bottom in Mexico, It seemed like a perfect time and place to expire, much better the comparative alternatives like a burning car, underwater or slowly in a hospital bed. Obviously I did not die that day, but a big part of me did. It was my ego, as it existed at the time, and the worst parts of who my ego self had become: competitive, driven and passionate. I've described this day and the ensuing experience as the best worst time in my life. I had killed my Self, not killed myself. There is a difference between killing one's Self and killing one's self. Also note the importance of letting one's self (ego) die. That's what I allowed to happen and it certainly needed to.

On my tearful hike downstream from that canyon after being "rescued" and treated, I had the kind of epiphany one can experience from sleep deprivation or psychedelic hallucinations- at least one light went off for me that evening that will last forever. I indirectly answered the question "Why do I work?"

It's a very good question we should all ask ourselves both in good times and bad. Why do you work so hard? What are you working for? Who are you working for? And "what is the purpose of your work?"

Work can mean many things but for this purpose you might think of “work” as your hobby, pastime or project rather than vocation or job, but any might apply to you for constructive purposes. In my case it was my hobby/project, the BAJA RALLY, a 6-day cross country motorcycle race that is unique to this region, a far fetched dream of sorts and incredibly cumbersome and burdensome project to accomplish, as a night job or weekend gig.

“I haven’t gotten anything out of my work!”, I cursed to the heavens, sobbing with a wet face along my hike back to safety. “I have nothing to show for my work! Others do but I have nothing!”, I continued in my stormy mind. “I’m a fool and a failure!” I was thinking mostly of my financial ruin and the fallout from it as I hiked back toward my world of drama and shit storms.

These are all true statements but only depending on the values or traditions they are measured by. I was taught, neither right or wrong, from a young age by my parents to literally work for myself. They hammered their values to work hard, to make, take and keep. Get good grades, stay in school, climb the ladder and/or build a business- all for myself. The action words (verbs) are work, make, take and keep. My parents are dear people, genuinely good and very well intended- but I see how their logic and lessons are defective. At least I do now. These lessons were true for them when they were taught by their parents and the value lessons were born out of one of the worst emotions at one of the worst times in contemporary history- fear and the Great Depression. From their perspective and weighed against those values, I was a failure and in total financial ruin. Byproducts of this condition are failed relationships, tax-problems and depression.

During my life-march, as I refer to it, the hike down from the canyon, being exhausted, hopeless and despondent triggered the epiphany that helped explain everything and answered the question “Why do I work?” In other words, what is the point of my work, my efforts and my intentions? What good comes from it?

It took weeks passing through a successive meltdown (ie: nervous breakdown) to sort it out clearly and process the meaning of this experience and extract the “good” from the meltdown-

I am not supposed to get anything out of my work. That is not the point of my work. Instead, the point, purpose and cause of my work (aka the reason) is that others get value, benefit and joy. It is for everybody else, anybody else EXCEPT for me. The point of my life is to help and serve others. Many people have (and will) call “bullshit” on me for this

### **Being Alone**

Why does the feeling of being alone during a difficult time seem mostly bad? Just the mere feeling of “alone” can exacerbate our adversity and lead us even further into a figuratively “dark place”. What if we can learn to feel better or even “good” about our adversity and independently embrace it while being alone through the entire shit storm? Then we could appreciate the relative goodness of feeling alone and the value of humility over pride during the best times.

The difference between choosing humility versus pride is what matters to our feeling good when we're struggling alone. During adversity the virtue of humility fosters, sustains and reproduces itself. Conversely, carrying doses of pride with you into a period of struggle will lead to shame and embarrassment when the shit really starts hitting. True or false? Being too prideful right before you get knocked flat on your ass will make you proud? Exactly - Not.

We can "feel" very alone in our work even in a crowded room. Likewise, the humiliation of being singled out, laughed at or unsupported during a challenging moment is something all of us can relate to, whether it's first hand or we witness it happening to others. It's quite embarrassing, shameful and humiliating- the opposites of proud. These experiences can either add to our humility or foster our shame. Let's choose carefully because there is a difference.

How can we achieve humility and ? There may be only two ways.

First work on it through practice and discipline. Meditation, literature and mindful compassion are each a good place start.

The first way to raise humility is to be humiliated

I have felt humiliated by my work many times over and there is a meaningful point to make in this chapter. I have felt humiliated by people mocking me in hushed tones and my detractors undermining my work behind the scenes. I have been humiliated by mother nature and being stuck in a hot desert without fuel and water. But mostly, I have been humiliated by my self, (ego) and my choice to be overly proud of my work instead of genuinely humbled by the opportunity to serve others. These have been hard lessons for me to learn, painful and enduring. And that's what gives them great value and something worth sharing. The people closest to me know it's been a long time coming and see what good can come when a prideful and confident man gets figuratively knocked to ground, face down and flat out.

In your work, that thing you do well, when you are thriving and in also in good company, that is some great fuel to help keep you going. You are energized by the effects of your efforts and can see the value of your actions benefiting and inspiring others. You can allow your Self to be filled up with pride when you are noticeably thriving in the zone and receiving praise for it. Or you can find the whole experience humbling and look for people or places to give credit and share the praise.

You're a nurse in a hospital and you're having a great day. You and everyone who's paying attention can see that your attitude, energy and intentions are contagious and spreading in a very positive way. You're helping patients, giving your best and sharing your skill. You hear the praise of others and accept their gratitude and appreciation for your work. That could humble you. Or, will you fill up with pride?

The next day just happens to be a particularly shitty one for you because (\_\_\_\_\_Insert any reason). You're also tired from kicking ass yesterday, haven't eaten yet and just heard you're short staffed and will be working overtime, late into the night. Now you find yourself in an empty room, tasked with cleaning up poop and blood because no one else will. None of your admirers are watching and you are stuck in a literally shitty moment- and totally alone in it. Where is that fuel you had yesterday to keep you going? What's happening to your attitude and all that positive mojo? To make things worse, you can overhear your colleagues, some other nurses, giggling outside by their station. They are mocking you for being the one stuck with the shit job and they think its funny.

The difference between yesterday and today depend on your ego- whether you are proud or humble. Being to proud of yesterday's work is a self inflicted curse that will haunt you all day and night. Conversely, if yesterday's work and the praise that resulted from it were humbling to you and added to your overall sense of humility, the feeling of being alone in that shitty room-alone with your thoughts- and the sound of people mocking you- will not only livable, it be further humbling. The point is: being proud doesn't sustain itself when you need it to. Being humble instead, with genuine humility will get you through the night and it sustains itself when you "feel" alone.

Imagine the controversial alchemist Elon Musk and his repeated successive rise and falls (the latter being the present case, with harm to others). He's a good and bad example but let's try it out. You can see him well up in sadness during a 60 Minutes interview when he acknowledges how his own heroes have ostracized him publically. He seems humiliated and ego-crushed by the experience yet continues to "bring forth" what is inside of him. Seeing that was enough to place him on my short list of exemplars. But Elon Musk- his ego actually- has really screwed the pooch this time with outlandish comments and an ego that can neither be checked or quieted for the better a large group of people- shareholders, employees and supporters. Musk is a prime example of how many people can be badly hurt and measurably damaged by the effects of an inflated ego- one that can't resist being heard.

I remain physically alone most of the time and have to sort through it at many levels. However, *feeling* alone in my life's work at a broad level is hard to bear. Losing my partner, staff and board scares me a lot and the thought of spending another year with my work completely alone- which I have- is for me to PAY ATTENTION to the mistakes of others and their egos. If I lost everyone in a plane crash would be a horrible thing. But if they all quit over something I tweeted or posted? That's a failure I'll allow myself to be afraid of, enough so that I'll keep Musk's bad fail as a GREAT example.

I published "[You're Never Alone In Baja](#)" in a magazine over a decade ago. The point of this title at the time shed light on the magic of the *people* of Baja, their contagious generosity and friendliness. Later, riding much further into the outback, as far from civilization as possible (difficult on such a narrow peninsula) and in search of solitude, the same point held true. But

this time it was nature keeping me company. You're never alone in nature either. There's more to this point.

Some find it difficult-even unbearable- to be alone in a room for a day or even a few hours. Let's call this voluntary solitary confinement. What -or who- is it that makes it hard to be alone for a while?

For my work which requires riding a motorcycle in the wilderness, mostly alone, I have good days and they entire experience is fulfilling and quite enjoyable. There are bad days that are seem arduous and toilsome. On the worst days there are tearful eyes, snot and sobbing that fill the helmet. These are the best worst days when I realize the cause of my pain and suffering. It's all in my mind.

Like it or not, as long as you have a mind and those thoughts it produces, the you who are can never be alone. Through working with the mind in a deliberate practice of regular meditation, we can arrive at heightened ease with our "Selves", when we are alone and ironically more important, with others.

### **Meditation and Motorcycles**

M&M's. The two seem at odds but perhaps can blend well together, like ying fits with yang, etc. Some of my hippy environmentalist friends may frown on dirt bikes in general and my use for them as instruments in my life's work. There's an air of skepticism whenever this subject comes up in conversation (note to self). A paradox comparing Buddhism with my attachment to motorcycle arises because Buddhist doctrine- and the principal of non-attachment- to avoid the verb cling. Ironically the synonyms are grip, clutch and clamp- all motorcycle verbs and nouns.

Mindfulness is a key to motorcycle riding and riders' need to be keenly aware of everything around them at all times, to be focused and not allow your concentration to wander.

Western Buddhists and my pals may be naive and snobbish about motorcycles and my dirt bikes- maybe not- but the

and its synonyms grip, clutch and clamp.

## **Accountability & Ownership**

All of the bad stuff that happens in BR is ultimately my fault. This is true in 2 ways. The first is owning responsibility as a leader and the second is in defining what is materially "bad". In each way, humility is fostered. The leader gains well needed humility from being able to track fault and responsibility for all mistakes and problems back to the original source- themselves. Instead of finding blame for others and pinning fault on individuals, conditions and situations, I have learned to accept true accountability and ownership for what goes wrong and whenever it does. It's not false acceptance or self scapegoating either. Those around me who are able to pay attention to words, intentions and actions, can see the truth. The leader can also sort things out by weighing what is truly bad. In other words, how bad and how much does that even matter. Understanding the difference between materially bad and "seems bad" helps prioritize what we will talk about and can save energy and capital. 1BR is that BAJA RALLY would have folded without top-down accountability and that provides a clue to the outcome.

The famous mantra of "Its all good" has grown into a cliché or sorts and is getting worn out as the go-to statement to help uplift our friends, and colleagues amongst each other when the shit hits the fan. We might reply with "hey Its all good though" to a friend in relating to them about a struggle or common ailment we share. Because of overuse, "it's all good" has lost some of the value from its original meaning and might actually illicit a "hey fuck-off" when not taken seriously and literally. Such is the case when the usefulness of a helpful phrase dies from overuse.

The leadership teams in BAJA RALLY share inspirational anecdotes, infographics and videos, for various purposes and to help inspire the teams to remember the "why" in our work. One video that sticks out the most is called "Good" by inspirational speaker Jocko Willink. (google it)

Jocko explains that one of his staff regularly came to him with bad news, issues, problems and shortcomings in a panic. To his staff member's surprise, Jocko would simply smile and reply, "Good". This is the new generation version of "its all good" but mostly direct and straight to the point. And the point is two fold:

The first is to remind that there is good to be found in every bad. The second, and more subtle, is to "do something about it" instead of talk.

Leadership training, inspirational speakers and life coaching is reaching a tipping point where supply of coaches has outnumbered the demand of students- there is an oversupply of inspiration and coaching today. The themes are either 'how to succeed' or how to not 'fail'. Where is the training program for learning how to fail epically and with grace, dignity and humility? I have just completed a 6-year masters program in this new specialty area.

1BR breaks the monotony and shows you that not only is failing not bad, it's actually good and a basic requirement of success. At every level of life, failing well is just as important as doing well because both success and failure are ultimately relative to each other.

### **Whiff Of Glory**

We've tasted the smell of glory and enjoyed glimpses of the essence of lasting success. It appears in the eyes and smiles on the faces of our friends throughout the land of Baja. This is the measure of how 1BR lasts forever. There are countless examples that evoke enough emotion and human spirit to bring me instantly to tears. These are tears of humility and gratitude. Here are some examples that speak to the generosity and sincere helpfulness of the people of Baja CA and generally universal throughout classes of society and ranks of government.

After one year, BR had pulled it off, so to speak, without being "shut down" by authorities and, in order to survive and continue, it was time to face to proverbial music and appear before a conference of 23 Delegados (sheriffs) comprising the jurisdictions of the Ensenada Municipalities. In an auditorium with 9 Delegados assembled, 2 of us presented our proposed 2014 routes and plans for crossing through the various jurisdictions. We were nervous and unsuspecting of the resistance and questions we might face and we assumed it would be a high hurdle to gain unanimous consent among these sheriffs. In plain Spanish, we shared the presentation and listed each town and neighborhood the rally proposed crossing, mostly rattling the names correctly off the top of my head. All of the sheriffs were attentive and appeared interested in everything we said. There were only 2 hands raised at the end and my associate answered the first question easily as a mere technicality. The second question was unintelligible to me; I asked the sheriff from Cataviña, Mr Salvador to repeat his question but did not understand what he was asking. I looked to Poncho who explained quietly in English, "He wants us to explain to him directly why we're not coming through his town." With a sigh of relief, I replied yes, we will be there next week to organize it. That moment opened a pathway for BAJA RALLY that remains today, one that is built on respect for protocol and the top-down approach to our diplomacy. We realized that that gaining permissions and access would never be a question of "will they help?" but instead of "how much will they help". Hands went up with offers from several sheriffs staying after the presentation to offer such help as "My cousin has a ranch he will let you go through.", etc. It's important to note with gratitude that these overt offers to help have almost universally been extended unconditionally and without monetary consideration as a requirement. That was an unforgettable day.

Around 2015 we showed up to the police station in San Vicente to take Delgado Federico Arce Green for a ride along in my truck. We packed a cooler with beer cans on ice and set out on a 20 mile route east of town on roads we knew well but without permission. The point of the ride along was to show Arce where we wanted to go and get the info of which authorities or owners we needed to gain permission from. Del. Arce had us take notes along the way and, near the top

of a mountain pass where we wanted to turn right, he stopped us and said, "I own a very big ranch down in that valley you should use. Go straight here." As we drove forward I got up the nerve to ask him as we were all into our second beers, "You mean down here by the sandwash and the gate with the yellow rope, leading the small red ranch house?" I asked. He was both surprised and not angry that I knew the way, that I had essentially trespassed onto his property previously without asking. I noted I had ventured down before but turned around for fear of being uninvited. The truth becomes starkly obvious at the right time. Lico as he is known remains a dear friend to this day.

Just 5-days prior to the second BAJA RALLY in 2014, we received an unprecedented email from PROFEPA, the enforcement agency of SEMARNAT the federal environmental regulator equivalent to the US's EPA. It was a summons to appear before a board of enforcement officers requiring us to bring a federal permit and endorsed MIA (environmental impact study) to the hearing. Our contacts at the state secretary of tourism ministry said it was unheard of and decided to send their best diplomatic officer, Lic. Carlos Valenzuela represent BAJA RALLY from the state's point of view. We had no permits nor study but we did have proof, actual evidence, of our emailed attempts to work with SEMARNAT officials dating back 8 months. Our initial attempts to reach out and inquire about regulations and compliance were not responded to. Having this documentation helped us to clear the first hurdle but we were still facing a shutdown, complete stoppage of our event. The next stage was same day, accompanying Valenzuela into SEMARNAT, where we faced the delegate, Lic Alfonso Blancaforte's staff. It cleared with a one-time exemption with a 2-step condition: I had to personally certify in writing that the routes did not create any new roads and only used existing roads and tracks. Second, I had to give a phone interview and attestation to the same effect directly to Blancaforte, essentially swearing to not violate the agreement. It was serious business that I am proud to have kept those promises, despite temptations to the contrary.

### **Who Nico Is**

On planet Earth, there is only one Godfather of our sport credited for literally crissening off road racing and put the original race on the map half a century ago. Noticeably humble and low key around his hometown of Ensenada, Nico can't escape his nickname "The Big Shot" or that he is the Don of the tourism community. Well beyond his dignitary status, Nico's true story is woven so deeply throughout Ensenada's history and includes political controversy, that is reserved, like Baja Magic, for a separate and dedicated uncensored biographical account. My biographical account of his iconic life is a work in progress and will be seen only after his passing because of the politics, power plays involved and some feelings will inevitably be hurt. We know each other on an intimate level; He's had his doubts about my accepting any type "failure" for my work, financial or otherwise, because of the stigma of the word. I've cried on his

lap and he's confided in me- the struggles I'm sorting through happen to every one of us who's ever forged a new path.

On a summer afternoon in 2013 two months before the Inaugural BAJA RALLY, we met for the first time at the poolside bar of his San Nicolas Hotel & Casino. Very simply, I went to ask Nico for his advice and blessing,, figuratively speaking, I knelt to kiss his hand. On the advice of a good friend, I took my team to meet Nico, in part because it was the diplomatic thing to do but also because of what had transpired 6 months earlier. The original owner of the BAJA 1000, the famous off road race, sold the company to another American in December 2017. In one fell swoop soon after, the new boss had snubbed the Godfather and his hotel, among others and quite disgracefully. Although this unforgivable sin was very subtle at the time and not well known still to this day, the ramifications are lasting and a precursor to other difficulties to follow. Pivotal to my work, this made space in Nico's realm to take on a new pet project and become the official Godfather of BAJA RALLY and later a symbolic foster dad for me as a person.

Nico's advice comes in two dialects: spoken and demonstrated. He's been my cultural coach and, as a father figure, can effectively save BAJA RALLY from myself, the things I might do and the things I might say. But there is a subtle art to being a foreigner coming into Mexico and a so-called dance step one needs to observe and play along to as they adapt to the host culture. This is the unspoken part, the very delicate and nuanced aspect of learning the way. This only comes from being observant and paying close attention by watching and listening. It takes years to begin and is a never ending study. He would stop me before I did something stupid if I asked him first. But neither Nico nor his advice are failsafe because he can't prevent me from being an idiot or the fatal effects of insulting another dignitary, in the same ways others have before me. I have to learn these lessons of those who have come before me and they can't be taught unless I am trusted as a good student.

One big difference between US and Mexican culture is that we don't speak our minds freely in Mexico the same way we do in the USA. It is considered rude to be very direct with each other here. We don't raise our voices or yell at each other in Mexico the same way men can do among each other on the other side. Up north, when two men are friends or business associates and things get heated, we may raise our voices and yell or even scream and say the "F" word. Later, after things cool down a bit, 2 men can come back to the conversation, shake hands on it, apologize and forgive the yelling, over a cold beer, as often is the case. In the States, most can be quite easily forgiven with sincere remorse. In Mexico, that is simply not the case. Some things- many things- aren't forgivable between men the way they are up north.

Another subtle difference is correcting someone's speech or calling them out on being rude. If a Mexican pulls you aside to gently let you know you are being rude and possibly offending someone, you know two things: First, that you should listen because it's true and second that the Mexican likes you enough and going out on a limb, breaking from cultural protocol to correct you or they have an extraordinary interest in protecting you from yourself. In a group setting with

gringos mixed in with locals, when an American missteps, is rude or talks shit about any local- even a local who is widely ostracized- no Mexican in the group will call it out and all will see the gringo for what he is: a pendejo or jackass. One of BAJA RALLY's original local associates used to kick my leg under the table and pinched me during meetings when I interrupted or was otherwise being rude. After I raised my voice to him one time, things were never the same. A hard lesson to learn but very well worth learning earlier than later.

All of this falls under Nico's chapter because most of what he teaches me is unspoken. I am actively learning more than him actively teaching. I'm learning by paying close attention and sometimes listening to the same stories repeatedly, similarly to the sage business wisdom hammered into me by my own father. Like a broken record, but in Nico's case, the same stories reveal more clues each time they are listened to more careful. There's something very important going on there.

their lessons by continually telling the stories of what happened 50 years ago and

### **Sharing**

Accepting the financial burden and acknowledging my failure helps me calibrate the bullshit detector to see if I can truly be selfless in my work- to help, give and share. It works like this.

In the darkest times, alone and doubtful when there's some shame and embarrassment for dragging people into this failed work, I've tried to rationalize the path of quitting. If I "lose my shit" so to speak and go off the rails it could force the collapse of BAJA RALLY. Then what?

Quickly, I move away from that thought and ask another question: How do people get hurt by this work? And would would push people away?

First, there are the insiders. These are the biggest contributors and the ones in the trenches with me, those who have also taken hits with wounds and scars. Loyalty, sacrifice and commitment are reciprocal and there are a handful of humans with some skin in the game, in some cases literally. Letting the project die, throwing in the towel or otherwise imploding BAJA RALLY is harmful to some people because they have paid some dues and suffered for it in differing ways. It would be selfish for me to crash this plane just to save some skin on my side. There may be some collateral damage as well. "Failure is not an option, right?"

That's total bullshit. We have already failed to do one thing right- To not lose money. When I say "we" I mean "I".

These insiders are genuinely bright people who should be able to see, fairly clearly, that we are involved in an activity that is not lucrative in any sense of term other than gratifying and enjoyable to create joy (satisfaction) for our customers who compete in the BAJA RALLY race.

Likewise I trust these insiders on three critical areas, among others:

- 1) I trust they know I'm human, fallible as a leader and that I bring my own baggage and drama
- 2) I trust they see the pressure and burden I carry with me to keep it going
- 3) I trust they will be honest and challenge me when they need to protect the cause (ie: that they will speak up when needed to stop me from harming their work.

If I do something very stupid, create drama, sow division or lash out publicly and make enemies out of potential customers, sponsors hosts and rivals, it simply makes the insiders job harder and less likely they will see their vision of the future unfold. In other words, my ego can cause problems for the entire organization and the insiders work will be in vein, neutralized by stupidity and selfishness.

#### Test 1

We were struggling with an influential customer in Mexico and it was time to put everyone in check. I really needed to give this customer a piece of my mind! So I made a brutally harsh video filled with emotion and sent it to my partner for his approval before sending it out to the customer. Partner simply said "NO" and that was the end of the story.

\*The potential damage was unknown and a great reason for partner to abandon ship

#### Test 2

I wanted to make sweeping cuts to certain departments and also force a director to walk the plank, not for the mistakes that he made (which where my fault ultimately) but for the a lingering negative attitude which I deemed unacceptable, untrainable and something to make an example of. I sent out the orders to dismiss with the reason "why" and asked for unanimous consent among the board. No one replied and days passed. I cooled down over these days, weighed everything again, and resolved that it was a trainable moment.

\*Losing anyone unnecessarily is a liability, especially a dedicated director. Attitude training deployed is better than having a new detractor on the outside. Compassion and patience overcomes forceful reaction.

Trusting the insider team and letting them have a say on what happens not only helps protect their relative investment of time effort and sacrifice but incentivizes them reach deeper next time. Not just anyone can be an insider and it's not a common right among contributors. These directorship spots are reserved for those who earn the privilege through loyalty, effort and actions that align with the mission.

The Truth Saves Me and the Work

Your trustworthiness has more to do with me than it does with you. The question of "Can I trust you?" becomes "Can I trust my confidence in your basic goodness?" Even more important than the selfish thought of "will you burn me?" is giving you the opportunity to show me your good, and expecting you will do the right thing.

Trust is the ultimate tool and its power is unlimited.

Used as a shield, it's a barrier and used as a weapon, trust is a force. Power is goodness. Force is bad.

If we are generally skeptical or cynical about others and tend to question their intentions, that's on us. If you've been burned too many times and have learned to not trust easily, you're in the habit of cynicism and you're reproducing it at every level.

What is the truth? The Earth is flat, correct? When does the truth become true?

What is the secret truth behind your work and when will your true intentions be shown for what they are?

Those negative things people are saying about you. Are they true?

Did the Russians really do it? And did they catch the real El Chapo?

When do we get to know the truth? What is the secret to exposing the truth?

The truth of intentions are found with attention and time. Namely, paying undivided attention over time.

It's seems pretty basic and straightforward but consider how attention has become a scarce commodity these days with limited attention spans and attention deficit disorder.

We pay for products food and services with money. True

We pay for our experience with time. True

We pay for the truth with attention over time. Maybe

If we don't pay attention to anything for more than one click or swipe and we accept truths as delivered, at face value everytime, quickly and without question, what is that and where does that lead us?

That's doubt and leads to confusion and uncertainty; the cycle repeats and speeds up.

Contempt and cynicism ensue and we continue to stumble- as a couple, as a business and a community and as a society.

Where can i possibly go with all the questions!!!

The truth of my intentions sets me free and empowers my work. It's the most important thing in the world right now, better than a blank check payable to BAJA RALLY. Let me explain (but please pay attention)

If I tell you to jump off a bridge you should resist. If I tell you to consider trying to rally, you should investigate.

If I tell you I'm working for free and contributing to a higher cause, don't call bullshit so fast.

Are you a bad person who is selfish and takes advantage of anyone and everyone?

If I heard that true and it should be a concern. I'm scared of you now.

The problem is that's a spoonful of crap and should be questioned seriously.

Why do I have to be warned of your selfish intentions and who is saving me from you and your evil motives?

That is a better question than whether I can really trust you.

### Basic Premises

Some people who don't know me have questioned my intentions with cynicism and contempt. It's nothing new.

Skepticism breeds itself. Hence we tend to be skeptical of people who are skeptical of us.

I tend to trust people on their word the first time. Most often it works out fine and the trust breeds trust.

When people tend to trust me on my word the first time, it's an opportunity to make good and earn trust.

Good outweighs bad in every measure.

There's more good than bad.

It all sounds great until we get to the Yelp reviews.

They say that a single negative review carries more weight than handfuls of positive reviews.

I've done some intentionally shitty things in my life, made some consciously bad decisions, character errors, judgement and mistakes. Karma does a lot of good to explain and account for intentional wrongs. Experience and wisdom helps also. Dwelling on past mistakes and prolonged reflection is wasteful however- and I reject this activity outright. Practicing "rights" as a habit in the presents is more useful.

I accept that I tend to send mixed signals to strangers, new contacts and acquaintances.

Perhaps I have this barrier around me, an aura, frequency or uncommon energy that breeds caution, if not confusion. People have often said "I can't read you, man. You're unpredictable."

People have also called me sketchy and shady. I can identify with the friendly shark in the animated film Finding Nemo, very much so. I am friendly and basically good like he is. I'm also stigmatized and live with it-just like he has. I really accept this as unshakable and a part of who I am.

When I think of this aura, my bubble of trustworthiness, there's an inside and outside. I can picture all of the people in my life who have been close enough to me but just on the outside of my bubble. They've gotten close enough to see me inside but have bounced off the bubble and moving away, repelled if not repulsed. They have seen enough of me in action to say, "No way

buddy, I'm out of here." The question I ask in accounting for these people from the shark's perspective is whether they were ever bitten or attacked. Almost always the answer is no and I sleep well with it.

My capacity to accept the reality of my "scary" shark facade and bubble is enabled by my paying attention to the beauty of its reciprocal. Namely, the people on the inside of the bubble and what separates them from the outsiders. It all comes down to attention to intention and the opportunity to see me in action, when it has really counted. How we act when we know there is no one is looking- or in my practical case, when I'm working alone- needs to be in congruence with our actions on the stage or in the spotlight. The people who believe most in me and confidently follow and work with me never doubt the difference between by words and my intentions- because they have been tested.

Alas, my being seeing as a shark is inescapable and I accept that. Whether a friendly shark or scary shark depends on how closely the others have watched me when it mattered- as though no one was looking.

Those people on the inside, a small handful only,

### **When Failure Leads to Good**

We can see that the BAJA RALLY hasn't failed yet on an absolute basis and there is a chance for it to continue and sustain itself. Through recognizing and accepting its shortcomings and relative failures, we see where the great potential is- The good parts are really good and the bad parts are more exposed and can be addressed.

We also see how fragile and vulnerable something like can be and what gives a work like this its value- it comes down to intention and purpose. What is the intention and does it serve any purpose? If it's just for some guy and his investors to make a profit- the fundamental purpose of a commercial enterprise- for all intents and purposes. Well that isn't enough and we should shut it down immediately. If that's what it for-traditional purpose- it failed.

The great news is, in this case, this entity called BAJA RALLY is purposeful to people beyond measure and has continued for 6 full years-without fulfilling the fundamental purpose of commercial enterprise. That alone is something to behold and gives us some energy and justification for further effort-and for strict fiscal prudence. That's what I am getting out of this work: some rejuvenated inspiration and a call to be more responsible. Most all of this awakening has to do with my ego, and the visions or images it created illustrating what it "should" look like and that we "must" bring and host media people to document that work. Something has to give and the first thing to get cut is my ego, likely the most costly liability to my original vision of BAJA RALLY. It doesn't have to be a bright and shiny object with bells and whistles. It just needs to be sustainable and something that does not drive anyone insane or put me them on the street.