

Lessons from Building Praxis – Part 1

“Can’t change the world unless we change ourselves” – Notorious B.I.G. (probably not)

My colleague TK Coleman and I like to joke about this quote from the trailer of what looks like a badly made movie about one of the greatest rappers of all time. It doesn’t seem like Biggy would’ve uttered such an empty cliché, so we use it in situations that get too close to cheesy inspiration as a way to playfully mock self-seriousness and pretension. Never fails.

But like all fluffy clichés, it’s true. That’s the first lesson for getting a company from idea to reality.

You can’t build a company unless you build yourself

TK was busy building a career in Hollywood, hustling to act, produce, write, and launch an entertainment tech startup. He decided to do something that had nothing to do with his career goals and was not required for any job. He started blogging every single day.

TK prioritizes personal growth over everything. He’s a voracious reader, and he decided he needed to push himself to do more than consuming ideas. He needed to create, and ship them out to the world. I watched him transform from an irresponsibly curious guy to a disciplined, creative machine. Then he turned it on me.

He challenged me to blog every day for 6 months. I committed, and that was the first step in the launch of Praxis.

The blogging had nothing to do with startups or Praxis. It had to do with pushing myself to become a better version every day, even if I didn’t have to. I had a great job and daily blogging added nothing to it. But it worked wonders for my personal growth. I became a creative machine.

More ideas came, more energy, more confidence, and more clarity. Finally, an idea a decade in the making came into focus. An alternative to college. It seemed so simple, and I’d been sniffing around the edges of something like it since my own underwhelming university experience. Praxis was born because TK continued to build himself when he didn’t have to and pushed me to do the same.

We built the company around this culture. Every member of the team is inspiring. They are each committed to relentless personal growth. That’s why it works. A person who knows how to grow themselves and add value to their own life can grow an idea and add value to a company.

I had a lot of entrepreneurial ideas prior to Praxis. Most were pretty weak, some were good. But it didn't matter. I didn't have what it takes to execute on any of them until I pushed myself much, much harder on personal growth. Monthly challenges, daily blogging, and a commitment to doing one thing each day to add value to myself were prerequisites to launching a company.

The idea matters. But ideas come and go and are unpredictable. You can't wait around for a great idea. Get busy building yourself so that if and when a great idea comes, you'll be ready and able to act.