

Life & Lawyers. Bananas & Business.



This week we feature an interview with Simon Tupman. Once a successful but nevertheless disillusioned criminal defence litigator in England, Simon did what many lawyers dream about: he followed his instinct and got out of law! But not completely. Now based in Australia, he has become a leading authority on lawyer and law firm development. He is also an entertaining conference speaker and addresses organisations and facilitates events worldwide.

He is the author of **Why Lawyers Should Eat Bananas**, the best-selling practice and professional development guide for lawyers looking to achieve more in life. His new book, **Why Entrepreneurs Should Eat Bananas (Marshall Cavendish)** has just been launched and adapts the themes of his first book for all entrepreneurial employers and employees.



We caught up with Simon on his recent trip to Singapore for a chat about his latest exploits and his thoughts on some of the opportunities and challenges facing professionals and entrepreneurs.

Hi Simon.

I understand that since your last book "Why Lawyers Should Eat Bananas" which was well received by Singapore lawyers, you have authored another book. What is it about? Why did you write it? What do you hope to achieve through it?

The book contains 101 inspirational ideas for growing yourself and your business and I hope it will be an inspiring read for business owners and employees alike. It also includes interviews with five entrepreneurs from around the globe, each of whom has an amazing story to tell.

I wrote it, having been encouraged by the success of my first book which was well received by lawyers worldwide. Patrick Forsyth, himself a prominent author and no stranger to Singapore urged me to adapt my first book. With his help, I did! I hope this book inspires readers around the globe to make improvements to their business and their personal lives.

Most people I speak to cannot fathom why I gave up a legal career to be involved in learning & development. What were your motivators for your switch and how has your background as a lawyer contributed (whether positively or negatively) to your current vocation as a consultant, author and speaker?

I was a London-based criminal defence lawyer. After 5 years of practice, I was professionally disillusioned and unfulfilled. I had to do something about it. Making the transition to doing what I do now took time and involved studying for an MBA, emigrating twice (New Zealand followed by Australia), and following my heart. Without question, my legal background has helped to establish my consulting and speaking business. Legal training is a great springboard into other businesses.

What do you see as the 3 key challenges facing professionals generally in the coming decade that you think? Why?

A major challenge is the competition for people. With fewer young people entering the workforce, professional organisations will feel the effect and this will have implications for how they recruit and retain talent and how they plan for succession. A second challenge is the need to invest heavily in training in order to develop the interpersonal skills needed to survive in the new workplace. Traditionally, professional bodies focus on the technical aspects of a profession not the business or interpersonal skills needed to become successful. A third challenge will be to master technology so that firms control it rather than the other way round and so that they and their clients benefit accordingly. Clients will want their professional advisors to be quick to use technology in order to gain efficiencies that can be passed onto them. Perhaps overall, the major challenge for professional service firms is to become more business-like without losing sight of their professional roots.

Conversely, where do you see the greatest opportunities for professionals in the coming decade? Why?

Right under their noses! Too many professional firms think growth is about getting bigger when in fact it is about getting better. If they spent time figuring out what their clients are staff really wanted (by asking them) and then providing it, they would be much better off. They will develop loyalty and improve profitability. As an example let's take clients. I am not just referring to the standards of service that are offered (although that is an area where improvement would be beneficial); I am also referring to the need for firms to identify the full range of client's needs and provide it either themselves or via a third party. So many lawyers I deal with fail to identify the full scope of a client's needs and so miss out on opportunities.

What words of advice would you give young professionals about to embark or just embarking on their careers? Would this be any different from your advice to budding entrepreneurs?

My advice would be no different for young professionals or budding entrepreneurs: read my books! Seriously, be yourself. Choose work that interest you and you genuinely enjoy. Don't do it for the money, to please your parents or for status. Have a good attitude, support charities, get involved in your community, be interested in other people, continually work on your skills and have fun!

Thanks Simon! Good luck on your new book.

June Tan, Intellitrain Pte Ltd

For more information on Simon, visit www.simontupman.com.