



Get Big Fast and Do More Good: Start Your Business, Make It Huge, and Change the World

By Ido Leffler, Lance Kalish

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Get Big Fast and Do More Good is a guide to modern entrepreneurship and accelerated brand-building from the founders of Yes To Inc, the company behind the breakthrough natural beauty brand Yes to Carrots.

Ido Leffler and Lance Kalish, two 29-year-old Australians with very different backgrounds and skills, cofounded their company in 2006 with little more than a dream—and made it big. Yes to Carrots has become one of the biggest natural beauty brands in the world and is one of the fastest-growing skincare brands. Leffler and Kalish have accomplished it all while maintaining solid principles, investing in meaningful business relationships, giving back to the community, and still making it home in time for dinner.

The authors started their business with nothing but chutzpah and great instincts for products with potential. They've since made lots of great decisions and some really, really bad ones, and are ready to share their hard-won secret to success: a strong, resilient, trusting partnership coupled with a great sense of humor.

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Editorial Review

Review

"For the freshly minted entrepreneur, [the] authors of this irreverent book—successful self-starters Leffler and Kalish—are brutally honest about the goofs and gaffes they made on the way up. Since more than 90% of startups fail in their first three years, it might be more useful to know what not to do when you start a business." —**Time Magazine**

"When Walgreens was founded, over 100 years ago in a one thousand square foot pharmacy, no one expected we would become a brand recognized around the world. And, that's a point that is captured so well in this insightful and masterfully written book. The "Yes To" products we carry in our stores reflect what we mean by "Doing Good while Doing Good Business." Ido Leffler and Lance Kalish have certainly set a high bar, and this book is a prime example of what hard work, vision, and a "yes" attitude can do for you and your company." —**Gregory D. Wasson**, President and CEO, Walgreens Co.

"Two crazy (and whip-smart) guys got you (and me!) to put carrots and tomatoes on our face. Their product works, their company works, their charity works and they've worked their way into our stores and homes—Yes To reading this book and learning from their story!" —**Ellen Gustafson**, Social Entrepreneur and Food Activist, Co-Founder of Food Tank, Co-Founder of FEED

"Whether you're a corporate executive dying to make a career change or a stay-at-home mom with an awesome business idea, *Get Big Fast And Do More Good* will give you the tools, tips, and kick-in-the-pants inspiration you need to make great things happen." —**Michele Promaulayko**, VP/Editor-in-Chief of Women's Health

"This book teaches how to do well by doing good, and also how to have a bit of fun along the way!" —**TONY HSIEH**, author of *Delivering Happiness* and CEO of Zappos.com, Inc

"*Get Big Fast and Do More Good* is jam-packed with great insights and hilarious stories about all the little things it takes to build a successful company and brand from scratch. If you want to invent your future, this book is for you!" —**Peter Sims**, author, *LITTLE BETS*

"Ido and Lance's story is exhilarating, scary, funny and ultimately enviable. For anyone who is ambitious and looking for a dose of perspective, this is a story about the hard work that it takes to win, with a simple message that you can win too." —**Katia Beauchamp and Hayley Barna**, Co-Founders Birchbox

"Ido and Lance's book should really be titled Yes to Courage. The boys will not only show you how to be a better entrepreneur but leave you inspired with passion and confidence to make big and improbable things happen." —**Eric Ryan**, method Co-Founder

"I say YES to the joy of life - to the pursuit of beauty in all its forms. Ido Leffler and Lance Kalish have written more than just another wonderful business book- this is a personal, accessible, informative look at what can be achieved with a clear vision, pure intent, and a whole lot of chutzpah!" —**Chip Conley**, Founder Joie de Vivre Hotels

"These two guys have made being an entrepreneur a way of life. A life of success, family, and altruism. If

you need a guide to making money and saving the world all at once, read this book!” —**Elizabeth McKee Gore**, Resident Entrepreneur The United Nations Foundation

“There is a lot to say yes to in this story. Yes to pursuing your dream. Yes to trusting your instincts, learning vs. failing, improvising and bouncing back, pushing ahead. Yes to thinking big--and then bigger—and making the personal commitment to make it happen. Whether you are an idea breeder in an established company or an entrepreneur who has an idea to pursue...there is inspiration and practical lessons here to keep you moving forward. Yes!” —**Mark Addicks**, Chief Marketing Officer, General Mills

“Ido and Lance have so many funny stories and practical lessons for aspiring entrepreneurs. If you're looking to start something that matters, I highly recommend that you read this book!” —**Blake Mycoskie**, Founder and Chief Shoe Giver, TOMS

“I LOVE this book! *Get Big Fast and Do More Good* is more than a business book. It's an inspiring, funny, must-have read. Ido and Lance are authentic, brilliant and their collective energy spills from the pages of this great book!” —**Porter Gale**, author of *Your Network Is Your Net Worth* and former VP of Marketing at Virgin America

About the Author

LANCE KALISH and **IDO LEFFLER** are the founders of Yes To, Inc.

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And in the Beginning . . .

Scene: 9:01a.m., Yes To offices, San Francisco, late 2012

When we first decided to sit down and write our book, we got the same great advice on storytelling from various authors and agents and editors: “Start at the beginning and end at the end!” So naturally we are going to ignore that advice and do the opposite. In fact, we are going to spoil the whole thing right now and tell you what happens on the last page of the Yes To story:

Everything works out really well!

As you'll see, we've gone through some pretty crazy stuff over the last six years, but the payoff has been worth it. We have a company that has survived the recession and is now thriving in the recovery. Lance tells anyone who will listen how Organic Monitor, a leading international market research firm, specifically recognized Yes To for changing the U.S. beauty consumer's perception of natural products from “alternative” to “popular.” We both have the personal lives we'd always dreamed of: happy kids, nice homes, and wives who willingly and frequently talk to us!

If you visit us in our offices in San Francisco you'll find a small but dedicated group of people who operate more like an extended family than a bunch of employees. There are around thirty of us, which is nothing when you consider the amount of business we do. A more traditional company would have five times the staff. As a company, we are light and nimble on our feet; as a result, we can react very quickly to both opportunities and problems, and we want to keep things that way.

Why base ourselves in San Francisco? From the beginning, we were as much a high-tech start-up as a beauty brand. Our goal was always to apply our very modern sensibilities to a somewhat old-fashioned

industry and develop a new business model that worked.

Eight years ago, Yes To was a novelty product manufactured in Israel and sold in about ten outlets there. We saw something special in this quirky little line, partnered, and remade it to fit our own vision of what a modern beauty brand should be. Now we are carried in 25,000 stores across twenty-five countries including retailers such as Target, Walgreens and Walmart. We've gone from six products to almost eighty, and from being an unknown newcomer to number two in the natural-beauty category. Three years after our U.S. launch, we started to overtake our well-established and highly aggressive competitors. Our sprint to the top shook up the heritage natural brands and changed the way natural products come to market. We're proud to say we made our whole industry start to think differently about the category.

Along the way, we've learned one hugely important lesson: We are positive people, and our company has to reflect that. We can compromise on the amount of sleep we get or the speed of a product rollout, but we can't compromise on being a company that does, and is, "good." What does "good" mean to us? It is, very simply, operating a business in an ethical, moral way with equal regard to our consumers, our partners, the environment and the wellbeing of everyone involved in the production of our products. We each have children, and we want those kids to grow up in a healthy, positive world. That means our company has to operate by certain standards, even when it costs more and causes more difficulty than other, less positive approaches. Too many businesses seem to think that they have to do negative—be it avoid environmental regulations or pay their employees the lowest wages possible—things to make their investors or stockholders happy; we think this attitude is nonsense. Investors need clean air and water as badly as the rest of us. Why not incorporate "good" into your business model right at the start, when your business is just a dream? Why not build the idea of giving back into your brand's DNA, even when your brand is just you, a cup of coffee, and a laptop?

We hope this book inspires you to look for opportunities in unexpected places and to realize that you don't have to go to the best business school (or indeed any business school at all) to learn the entrepreneurial skills that will allow you to succeed. Success isn't that hard; it's the screw-ups and "oh, crap!" moments that will really test you. We've had plenty of those, and we're still here. You will be too.

And now, back to the beginning!

A Tale of Two Schmucks

We are many things: business owners, investors, parents, husbands, sons and friends. But at the very core, in our hearts, we are and always have been entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship isn't for everyone, but if you have the nerve, we think being an entrepreneur is in many ways a safer and better way to approach your career than conventional employment.

So, how do you go about becoming an entrepreneur? We think the whole idea of nature versus nurture is a bit of a cliché. Successful entrepreneurs regularly come from unexpected backgrounds and experiences, and they just as frequently *don't* materialize in places you would expect to find them. For every Mark Zuckerberg, there are a thousand Harvard grads working in conventional careers, often with great professional success but no obvious entrepreneurial ambitions. Likewise, there are people like Bernie Ecclestone, who was born into an impoverished family in England, left school to become a mechanic, and managed to parlay that into a position ruling the Formula One racing franchise (where he made billions).

Entrepreneurs: You never know where you'll find 'em.

What does it take to create that entrepreneur mentality? Let's suppose you weren't raised in as optimal a petri dish as we were. Perhaps your parents weren't business people, or they were never particularly supportive of your dreams and ambitions. In this chapter we are going to share some of our most pivotal moments. Now, we're not telling you these stories merely because we are wildly charismatic and interesting people and you'd be nuts *not* to want to know more about us. We're sharing them because each of these moments contributed in some way to making us better entrepreneurs.

One thing you'll hear from us a lot is the value of having good accents and, frankly, we have *fantastic*

accents. Ido's is a confidently authoritative Israeli that accelerates into an excitable and earnest Silicon Valley-ese when he's talking about Yes To and takes on the hint of an Australian twang when he's finally back home with his family. Lance's chilled-out Australian accent morphs into a considerably more assertive Jo'burg inflection when he's talking politics. A great accent will impress girls, get you out of speeding tickets (and even tricky situations at customs), and generally make people pause for a second before saying no. If you are smart and fast, you can take that pause and turn it into an opportunity.

Our enthusiasm for funny accents is just a small part of our bigger life philosophy: Don't be afraid to be the odd kid. Both of us went through being the odd, out-of-place, new kid, and somehow those experiences gave us both a huge amount of confidence in ourselves and our abilities.

Ido left Israel for Australia when he was four, the age when you are taking your first few steps of independence from your parents, making your own friends, and generally breaking into the world as a child. Lance left South Africa for Australia when he was nineteen, the age when you are leaving your family home and taking your first steps outside of it as an adult. Lance wanted to seem cool and independent, but in reality he was just a kid with a funny accent and some truly terrible apartheid-sanction-era clothes.

Profound changes like these force you to do more; if we'd emigrated when we were one or two years of age, we'd just have blended in. Coming to a country later in life means you have to build your platform as a human being. You have to figure out who you are, how you present yourself to your potential friends, and what your story is. In other words, you have to build your own brand and market the hell out of it if you want some mates in the pub or on the playground. After all, as the odd kid you're going to stand out no matter what. It's up to you to make the most of it.

Australia welcomed a huge influx of South African immigrants in the eighties and nineties. Newcomers had to decide pretty quickly if they were going to adapt to their new reality—life in Australia—or cling to memories of the old life they'd left behind.

We embraced change. We both have friends who arrived at the same time we did but never really assimilated into Australian culture. Instead, they stuck with the behavior and fashions of their old life. It's important to stay connected to your old community, but it's also important to become part of the local scene. Being able to be part of more than one world at a time is an incredible skill, useful in both your personal and professional life. And these kinds of big changes give you a fantastic opportunity to change your trajectory.

Even if you've lived in the same house on the same street since the day you were born, you can still make a conscious decision to create an identity that sets you apart and attracts you the positive attention you'll need to succeed. If you can, beg, borrow, or save two grand, get on a plane to a randomly chosen Asian country, and live off twenty bucks a day for a few months. Try being a "different" person and see what you learn from the experience.

Ido: I was born in Israel in 1977. Israel is a small pressure cooker of a country. I love Tel Aviv; it's full of noise and color and the kind of intensified energy and emotion that comes with knowing things can get dangerous very quickly. The city has a palpable creative energy. People don't waste time, and there is a real pressure to do something big with your life. The flip side is that you're also dealing with the constant unknown of where and when something unexpected will happen.

My dad was a robotics engineer. When I was four years old, he moved our family to Australia for a two-year contract. Of course, once you get to Sydney, it's hard to leave; we loved the great weather, the positive people, and the exquisite surroundings. After the constant stress of living in Israel, it was incredible to live in a country where the only things you had to look out for were spiders, snakes, sharks and jellyfish.

Before the first year was up it was clear we were never going home.

Some people are inspired to take risks because their parents never did. Some carry on a family tradition of taking chances on long odds. For me it was a mix: My parents made conventional career choices in Israel, but once they got to Australia they were inspired to dream bigger. My dad quickly realized there was a cap on how much money he'd ever make as an engineer. A friend of his was making a fortune excavating, so my dad quit engineering, bought a truck and a Bobcat, and started driving them himself.

Eventually, my dad became even more ambitious. He found an ugly little house on a great piece of land,

knocked it down, and built a palatial new home in its place. (Like everyone else in the world, my dad had contracted the real estate bug.) He and his partner decided to make one big investment and build a house that they would sell for seven million dollars.

You'll notice that this story is being told in the past tense. Right when my dad put all his capital into the house, Australia went through one of the worst housing recessions in its history. The value of homes halved, interest rates went from single digits to high double digits, and my parents lost everything.

Here's the point of my story: I was twelve when we went from wealthy to broke. The day they found out, my parents drove to school to pick me and my brother up, and we sat in our Mitsubishi in the school parking lot while they told us everything that had happened and the whole truth about what we had lost. I don't think it occurred to them to try and hide any of it.

Good or bad, my family was in this thing together.

Now that I'm a parent myself, I can appreciate how brave and wise they were to be so honest with us. Knowing the truth about our family's situation made us grow up fast, but it also made us feel incredibly bonded to our parents and determined to pull our weight and help get our family through this disaster. I do the same thing now: Good or bad, my family will always know the truth about what's happening. Ditto with my employees.

Realizing You Want to Run the Game, Not Play It

Lance: I grew up in apartheid-era South Africa. My family was very happy there for years. However, by the early nineties it was incredibly dangerous. Unfortunately as young kids, we were more or less oblivious to the miserable conditions that our black neighbors endured. My family had a big house in a safe suburb, and like most other families we had nannies and gardeners and maids. My nanny was a funny, no-nonsense woman named Sarah. Her way of taking care of me when I was young was to strap me to her back with blankets in the traditional African style and get on with her life.

The highlight of the nannies' workday was playing a game called fafi. Fafi was basically a numbers racket, rumored to be run by the Triads (the local Chinese mafia). Every Monday, Sarah would sneak me out the house and we would walk to the corner. She and I and the other nannies would wait there for a rusted, beat-up van to arrive. The door would slide open, and a pair of hands would emerge from the gloom to take the nannies' bets and hand out small amounts of cash to last week's winners. A twenty-five-cent bet paid out twenty-five rand, roughly a week's wages. It was hugely popular because you only needed to bet a small amount of money and your chances of winning were relatively good.

When I was ten, I decided this easy money was a great thing and that I wanted in on it. The next time we went, I gave Sarah all of my pocket money and she placed a bet for me. The guys running the game were smart; the first time I played, I won. Right away I was hooked. Clearly I had some special, intuitive skill that allowed me to beat these gangsters at their own game.

I decided I needed to play a bigger game for a bigger return, and this required more cash than my meager pocket money. I knew of only one source of ready cash in the house, so when my mum wasn't looking I rifled through her change jar for a handful of coins. My mum was either not observant enough to notice, or too kind to mention, the small amounts of money I pilfered to up my stakes. Either way, my parents never knew that I was a committed gambler, and at the age of ten occasionally indebted to China's most deadly gangsters. I may have looked like just another schoolboy, but I was convinced I could beat their system and figure out a way to win the numbers racket.

Sorry, Mum.

I would love to be able to tell the inspiring story of a young boy and his South African nanny beating the Triads, but no such luck. My first win was also my last and I quickly realized that I didn't like being on the losing end of the deal.

After daydreaming about what *my* numbers game might look like, I decided that running a rival racket up against some pretty scary characters was not a great life choice for a ten-year-old to make.

As they say, "The house always wins." It's the same thing in business. Do you want to be the person who

owns the idea or the product and sets the terms by which it is sold, or the person who's hired to sell, market, or distribute that idea or product? There's nothing wrong with either choice, but it's important to know where you will work best and find the most success. My short-lived career as a high-stakes pre-teen gambler taught me that I wanted to be the guy running the game, not playing it, and I live by that lesson to this day.

Ido: I have to speak up here. Regardless of what Lance says, I've been to Vegas with him on a number of occasions. Inevitably, we have a few drinks, and then he drags me to the poker table in the middle of the night. I've yet to see him leave the table richer than when he arrived. At least he's no longer in physical danger when he loses!

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