



FINDING MY **PATH**

By **Paige Arnof-Fenn**

My first job out of college was in finance on Wall Street in the 80s. I realized early on it was not a good fit so I wanted to switch career tracks. Being a Financial Analyst in investment banking paid well but the hours and lifestyle did not leave time for anything else and I really did not enjoy the work even though I was always good with numbers and strong analytically. I wanted to find work that was a better balance between my left and right brain. My game changing career move happened when a friend at the bank helped me realize my skills and strengths could be put to better use. We worked in different groups but often grabbed lunch or hung out together on weekends. After our 2 year commitments were done we traveled together to Spain & Portugal before going off to business school.

One day on a beach in the Algarve we discussed what we wanted to do after grad school and she said she loved

finance and would stay in the field after her MBA. I had really disliked my job and knew I wanted to do something else but had no idea what that would be, all I had ever wanted to do was finance and banking so I was stuck. She prodded and said there **HAD** to be parts of my job over the past 2 years I had enjoyed and finally I said yes there were in fact 3 things I liked about it — running ads in the WSJ & NYT when deals closed, planning the closing dinners to celebrate the end of a successful transaction & choosing the “deal toys” to commemorate the event. She blurted out “*Paige I have no idea why you always thought you were a finance person, every single thing you liked about the job is marketing NOT finance! You liked advertising, event planning & promotions. You are a marketing person! That is what you should be doing!*” She was right. I got the top grade in my first year required marketing course for my MBA



and a great summer internship that lead to a full time offer in marketing post graduation. I have never looked back. Being comfortable using data is a big competitive advantage in marketing too. She & I are still friends and I am forever grateful to her for setting me on such a fulfilling career path. I have no idea how long it would have taken me to figure it out without her brilliant insight when we were 23. She saved me a lot of career angst for sure!

On Wall Street I learned to jump in and roll up my sleeves, come in early and stay late. I worked really hard and built a great reputation for having a strong work ethic and being fun and easy to work with. This is great for entrepreneurship too! In my experience when you are curious and ask a lot of questions people appreciate working with smart people who enjoy learning. Pay your dues, get great experience learning from smart people in well run organizations who train and develop your skills so you will be prepared and set yourself up for success. Great opportunities tend to follow great teams and talent so I have found when you learn from the best doors open and interesting ideas/options appear.

You have to keep your antenna up! Entrepreneurs have to be driven, focused, intensely curious and always be looking for the next way to make something better, be a good listener, show respect for great ideas, and be a strong communicator. With these traits and a strong work ethic you will be a success.

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