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ENTREPRENEURS | 10/15/2012 @ 3:39PM | 19,012 views

100 Founders Share Their Top "Aha" Moments -- Guess How Many Jobs They've Created So Far?

Prepare to be stunned. Recently, I [took issue with news reports](#) questioning the role of small business as a source of new jobs. I summed it up with a remark from **Jim Clifton**, the Chairman of **Gallup**, from his new book [The Coming Job Wars](#):

“What the U.S. needs more than anything in its quest to win good new jobs in its cities is that rare talent [entrepreneurship] to start companies or to create new business models that work, that grow organizations—big ones, small ones, medium-sized ones, sustainable ones.”

To test my assumptions further, my associate [Cheryl Conner](#) issued [an invitation last week](#) to successful founders (whose companies survived 5 years or more). We asked them to share the pivotal “aha” moments that solidified their decision to go forward and set the direction for their entrepreneurial careers. We also asked them to tell us how many jobs their idea created.

The responses floored us. In less than 24 hours, more than 200 company founders responded. Their stories amazed us, and the number of jobs astounded us even more.

Granted, this is unscientific data. We compiled the stories and totaled the job results of the first 100 who were able to finalize their stories with us within the space of a day. If we missed your story, we're sorry – feel free to include it in comments. If we included less than you hoped to tell us, feel free to make those additions in the comment section as well. Already, this compilation is beyond anything I have published here yet.

Several (12) of the companies were younger than 5 years, but because they responded with such compelling stories, we let their submissions remain (although they have been noted with an asterisk.)

So clearly this is not a pristine statistical survey. However, it is my hope that it will leave you inspired. Are you ready? The 100 firms we present to you today have collectively created a total of **69,224** jobs. This is not a typo. These 100 “aha’s” have very literally led to the creation of an average of **692 jobs apiece**.

Here are their stories. I welcome your responses. If there is sufficient interest, I will consider a sequel. Enjoy!



These 100 entrepreneurs have shared the pivotal moments that set the direction for their companies and for their entrepreneurial careers.

1. Jim Bodden, 1-888-WOW-1DAY! Painting, 100 jobs,
www.wow1daypainters.com

I was seeking a way to differentiate my painting company from the others. My "aha" moment came when I realized that speed without sacrificing quality was the answer. People hate having their homes taken over by painting crews so why not complete painting project in one day? If two painters can paint 10 rooms in 5 days, why not get 10 painters to paint the same 10 rooms in one day?

2. Chris Sloan & Carla Kaufman Sloan, 2C Media, 350 jobs,
www.2cmedia.com

Our "aha" moment came when we figured out we could leave the craziness of showbiz in [Los Angeles](#) and start our own entertainment studio in [Miami](#), a move many thought was crazy, but here we are now one of the largest independent TV production entities outside of Los Angeles and [New York](#).

3. Matt Fifer, 8th & Walton, 25 jobs, www.8thandwalton.com

My "aha" moment came from watching supplier teams that were struggling to grasp the fundamentals of doing business with Walmart. In 2006, I founded [8th & Walton](#) and began training and consulting Walmart's supplier teams all over the world.

4. Tarek Fadel, AdaptiBar, 8 employees, www.adaptibar.com

While sitting through a lecture-based bar exam prep course, I was desperate to find a better way to study. My "aha" moment happened when I withdrew from the exam to develop a personalized, adaptive tool. I used my own program to pass on the first try, and now thousands of students worldwide benefit from AdaptiBar.

5. Alan Dabbiere, AirWatch, 800 jobs, www.air-watch.com

When I watched [Steve Jobs](#) reveal the iPhone at Macworld, I knew that device would dramatically change the way people interact and the way businesses operate. We immediately recalibrated our operations to manage smartphones for the business market. Since then, AirWatch has grown to support more than 4,000 customers and manage millions of smartphones and tablets in 47 countries.

6. Toma Clark Haines, *The Antiques Diva & Co European Tours, 12 jobs, www.antiquesdiva.com

No one – not your mother, your clients or the vendors you're working with – wants to tell you "No" when you ask for something; most people want to find a way to tell you "Yes". My "aha" moment was when I realized this and started asking for what I wanted in life.

7. Kent Lewis, Anvil Media, Inc., 14 jobs,
www.anvilmediainc.com

After getting fired twice in a 2-year period, I realized I was unemployable and therefore, had to become an entrepreneur. I started Anvil Media in 2000 and since then, Anvil has been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in the country for the past five years.

8. Kenny Rosenblatt, Arkadium, Inc., 140 employees,
www.arkadium.com

When my wife and I were dating, we had an ongoing bet about who was the best Ms. Pac-Man player. We searched online for a site that would let us challenge one another, but we couldn't find anything. This inspired us to start our own game development studio, one which now boasts the largest library of Flash-based games in the world, and serves some of the most distinguished brands, including CNN, Discovery, Hearst, Lifetime and [Microsoft](#).

9. Adam Aronson, Arrowsight, Inc., 60 jobs,
www.arrowsight.com

My epiphany came when I realized the remote video auditing technology I was using to monitor daycare workers could revolutionize the meat processing industry. Our platform is now in more than 50 percent of the beef industry in the United States. We are expanding into pork and poultry, plus hospitals to monitor patient care.