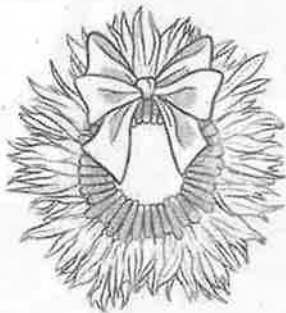


THE Mills Family OF Entrepreneurs

Discovering Business &
Honoring God Through It



Patrick Lowndes



BIKE
startups

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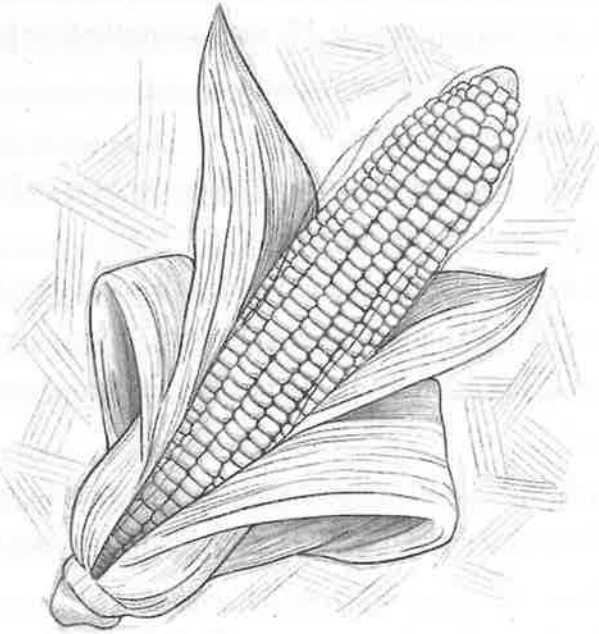
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What Kids Will Learn:

- Basic understanding of some business terms
- Simple ability to manage money
- Awareness about jobs and what it means to work
- Examples of how to begin working at home
- Basic ideas and best practices about entrepreneurship
(*ideation, collecting feedback, building products, pricing, marketing, sales, and more.*)

CHAPTER 1



WHO WILL BUY DEAD CORN?

It was another rainy day in the beautiful fall season in South Seattle. The Mills family was just getting back from the local farm outside of town. The kids loved to go through the farm's corn maze and bring some harvest produce to celebrate the fall season at parties in their church and neighborhood apartment complex. This year, however, Dad had another one of his business ideas he wanted to test.

The sound of rain on the car rooftop made the younger children,

Max and Zoe, fall asleep on the ride home. Liam was daydreaming about riding his bike, which he absolutely loved to do. He was frustrated that the dry days of summer were gone, since he couldn't ride when it was pouring rain outside. He was passing the time by fiddling with some corn they just got at the farm.

"Give it back!" shouted Elsy.

"No, this baby corn husk is mine. I'm the one who picked it out," argued Liam, convinced he was right.

"Keep it down," hushed Mom. "Your brother and sister are sleeping. You each have your own harvest basket of yellow corn, but we are all sharing the colored ones. Remember, they are part of Dad's experiment."

Robbie, their dad, had bought twenty dried husks of colored corn in hopes of selling them at the Fall Harvest Festival to their neighbors and friends.

"Who's going to buy them anyway, Dad? You can't eat them—they're as hard as rock!" commented Liam.

Dad drove steadily through the rain with his eyes looking forward. He answered, "Remember, Son, these are not for eating. Some people buy dried harvest goods to decorate their homes and remind them of the harvest season."

Elsy cut in, "Can I paint some beautiful flowers on them, Daddy? I can think of so many colors that people would like!"

"Yes, I'm sure we could try flowers on some of them and see which ones people really like," Dad replied. "I think Mom has some good ideas as well."

Kara, their mom, added, "I know we're all excited to plan it all out,

but let's first get organized when we get home. You guys are so loud in the car, but I can still barely hear you over the rain."

The rain was still pouring down as they pulled into the parking lot. They lived on the second floor of an apartment complex, so it took some time to carry all the harvest baskets and dried corn husks from their car up to their unit.

Max woke up because of the rain as Dad carried him inside, but Zoe, the youngest sister, stayed asleep for her afternoon nap.

After peeling off their wet jackets and clothes, Mom began laying out some newspapers on the dinner table. She collected all the supplies for a fun afternoon of making decorations using dried corn, squashes, baby pumpkins, and gourds.

"Elsy, bring me the paints. Liam, bring me the painting shirts. Max, can you grab the paintbrushes with your sister?"

All at once, the kids rallied around the table with their supplies, doodling on paper, while Dad heated up some canned soup for lunch. Dad added some sliced bread on the side because he loved warm bread with his lunch.

While they ate, Dad arranged several pieces of corn in a circle wreath with their husks peeled back, leaving the colorful kernels inside a circle of dried husks. Mom dug up a few circle wreath bases from the closet and secured Dad's corn to the base using hot glue.

After the glue set, Elsy picked up the wreath and said, "Oh I see, Dad, you could hang that on our front door like this." Elsy used some of Dad's thin black wire to put the wreath on the hook, and Mom hung it over the top the front door.

"Yes, that's it, Elsy," Dad replied. "People love decorating their

homes to move from summer to fall.” With excitement in his eyes, Dad pushed aside his empty bowl of soup, saying, “Now, kids, before we start decorating our dried corn tonight, in business we always need to start by thinking about the customer. Who do you think might want to buy these corn wreaths, and what designs would they like?”

“Wait, Dad, are customers rich people?” asked Liam. “Who is a customer, anyway?”

“Some customers are rich,” Dad said, “but that’s not the point. Let’s keep it simple: **Customers** are people who buy things...just like us! We are customers of the Valley Acres Farm, right?” He pointed to the pile of things they had just bought. “So, in any business, if we want to do well, we need to think about who might be buying these corn decorations from us. Make sense?”

“Yeah, I know,” said Liam. “Let’s ask Uncle Jack if he will buy one.”

Elsy disagreed. “I think Aunt Shelly would be better to ask.”

Mom asked, “Why do you think Aunt Shelly is better to ask, Elsy?”

“Well, she seems to be the one who decorates around their home while Uncle Jack—”

Liam interrupted, “Uncle Jack makes the money from his home-building business, so why wouldn’t he like to spend that money on something nice?”

Seeing her two oldest kids arguing over the right answer, Mom said, “Both are good ideas, but every family is different. Sometimes dads buy decorations, sometimes moms do. It sounds like we need to do some research.” Mom looked at Dad.

Dad often tried little “tests” to see if he could make some money “on the side” because he loved the thrill of business and was a little

bored at his regular job. He was always trying to learn something new about “startups,” which are new businesses that are just starting. He had hopes of one day starting a business himself. But his bank job was stable, and the Mills family didn’t have enough money in their savings account to risk Dad not getting paid if starting a new business meant he needed to quit his other job.

Bringing out a piece of paper, Dad began writing while he talked. “Okay kids, we need to write out a business sketch. A **Business Sketch** will help us answer basic questions to see if our idea could be a good business. So far, our sketch looks like this: we’re thinking of selling harvest decorations to people (probably adults) who like decorating their homes. Let’s ask some questions about this idea. Do people spend a lot of money on harvest decorations? What do you guys think?” Dad asked, looking at the kids.

“I would say yes – I see them at the store,” answered Elsy.

Dad continued, “That’s right, Elles,” (which was Dad’s nickname for Elsy), “and I’m sure they will pay a lot more than what we paid for this corn, so we know there is money to be made. Next question, how will we know what kind of designs people would buy?” Dad asked.

Elsy answered, “Maybe we can start by drawing some pictures of what we like.”

Dad said, “And then we can show those wreath designs to our neighbors after lunch and collect some votes.”

“Well, Dad, why do we need to talk to them—can’t we just do what we want?” asked Liam.

“You’ll see, Son. Proverbs 12:15 says, ‘The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.’ Do you want to be wise?”