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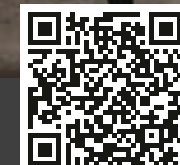
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Michael HELFANT

A PLAYBOOK FOR SUCCESS:

Translating Sports and Academics to the Closing Table

BY ROBBYN MOORE • PHOTOS BY STYLISH DETROIT
PHOTOS TAKEN AT LOMBARDO HOMES MODEL AT STILLWATER CROSSING IN MACOMB TOWNSHIP

When it comes to his approach to real estate, Michael Helfant is grounded in his academic and athletic background, resulting in a strategic perspective of a high-stakes game where his experience in the classroom and the field has translated into business success. As the lead agent of the FIRE Realty Team at Keller Williams Paint Creek & Somerset, Michael has made a name for himself by playing the real estate game with strategy, dedication and a winning mindset.

Michael's career path mirrors the ascension of a sports champion. Growing up in St. Louis, Missouri, he was immersed in a world of athletics and education, courtesy of a family heavily involved in those fields. After graduating with a degree in education from Lindenwood University — where he also played college lacrosse — Michael dedicated himself to teaching and coaching lacrosse and wrestling. His leadership on the wrestling mat earned him accolades, including being named Coach of the Year in North Carolina.

When Michael and his family relocated to Michigan in 2020, the game changed. "With schools uncertain due to the COVID-19 pandemic and job prospects in education slim, I decided to pivot into real estate," Michael explained. "Real estate is a field I have always been passionate about." The timing was perfect. What began as a strategic career shift soon became a winning play.

Michael's transition from the coaching sidelines to the real estate market was marked by incredible achievements. In just five years, he has amassed a career volume of nearly 400 transactions and almost





\$70 million, with transactions totaling near \$16 million in 2024. He also leads the FIRE Realty Team and has guided his squad to become the top team in Michigan by transactions sides and the third best in the nation. This victory is evidence to the robust game plan he put in place and the dynamic team environment he has cultivated.

Much like a successful sports coach, Michael understands the importance of team dynamics and strategy. “Our FIRE Realty Team is composed of Joe Hammel, our team owner, nine dedicated agents and three skilled admins,” he said. “We thrive under a culture of energy, commitment and excellence. My leadership style mirrors my coaching philosophy: focus on the fundamentals, foster strong relationships, and continually strive for improvement.”

Michael applies his strategic planning and problem-solving techniques from his coaching days to his real estate practices, crafting personalized “game plans” for his clients. “Rather than adopting a cookie-cutter, high-pressure sales tactic, I listen to my clients’ needs and develop a tailor-made plan that is unique to them — similar to designing a winning playbook,” he said. “I’m no stranger to lesson or practice plans, and that

same sort of planning applies in real estate, too. My goal is to always be the best at the actual job — not the best at getting the job.” Michael’s personalized style has proven effective, with repeat business and referrals.

Despite his generally introverted demeanor, Michael relishes the opportunity to build lasting relationships with clients. Whether helping a family find their dream home or guiding an investor toward financial independence, also known as F.I.R.E. (Financial Independence Retire Early), the satisfaction of “winning” for his clients is a driving force. “My math background further enhances my ability to analyze numbers and solve complex problems,” Michael said. “This ensures that each client’s needs are met with precision.”

When he’s not meeting with clients or closing deals, Michael enjoys spending time with his wife, Alyssa, and their two young boys — Weston and Hayes. Whether Michael is traveling, boating or watching sports, these moments with his family provide a welcome balance to his high-energy career.

For aspiring real estate professionals, Michael’s story offers a valuable lesson: the importance of work ethic and

“
My goal is to always be the best at the actual job — not the best at getting the job.”

consistency. Just as a coach’s commitment to practice and preparation can lead to championship wins, Michael’s dedication to his clients and his craft has driven his success in real estate. His journey illustrates that, with hard work and the right strategy — and a focus on relationships — anyone can turn their career into a winning game.

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All about Oakland County Real Producers



Real Producers magazine started in Indianapolis in 2015 and is now in more than 130 markets across the nation.

Q: WHO RECEIVES THE MAGAZINE?

A: The top 500 real estate agents in Oakland County. We update our mailing list annually to ensure Real Producers reaches our area's top-producing agents.

Q: WHAT IS REAL PRODUCERS ALL ABOUT?

A: Real Producers is a platform that brings together the most elite individuals and affiliates in Oakland County real estate. Every month we share stories of some of the area's most recognizable names in real estate, as well as the rising stars in the industry and the preferred partners that are highly recommended by top agents. Beyond the magazine, we host exclusive events that bring titans of real estate together.

Q: HOW DO YOU GET FEATURED IN THIS MAGAZINE?

A: You have to be on the top 500 list to be a featured agent. We welcome nominations for other real estate agents, businesses, brokers, owners, or yourself. Office leaders can also nominate real estate agents. Though we can't guarantee a feature, we strongly encourage you to meet our team and attend our private events so we can get to know your story.

More info at www.oaklandcountyrealproducers.com

Q: HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BE FEATURED AGENT?

A: Absolutely nothing! Real Producers is not a pay-to-play model. We share real stories of Real Producers – no price tag attached.

Q: WHO ARE THE PREFERRED PARTNERS SHOWN IN THE MAGAZINE AND AT EVENTS?

A: The businesses that sponsor the magazine and attend our events are some of the best vendors in Oakland County in their category. Find them listed in our index. We partner with businesses that top agents have recommended to us, so every single business you see in this publication has earned its "stamp of approval." Our team also vets every business to make sure they are a good fit and bring value to our powerhouse network.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A BUSINESS?

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Q: CAN I SUBMIT AN ARTICLE OR IDEA FOR REAL PRODUCERS?

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Garrett MOREAU

A POSITIVE
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PHOTOS BY JAY DUNBAR OF GREAT LAKES AERIAL VIDEO SERVICES • PHOTOS TAKEN AT LOMBARDO HOMES MODEL AT STILLWATER CROSSING IN MACOMB TOWNSHIP

As a dedicated agent and REALTOR® with Anthony Djon Luxury Real Estate, Garrett Moreau has amassed a career volume of over \$12 million in just six years. His journey, marked by a love for the business, is as inspiring as it is impressive.

Garrett's foray into real estate began in 2017 — straight out of high school. "I embarked on my real estate journey part time, balancing morning classes at Oakland Community College, afternoons in real estate, and late nights at a distribution center until 1 a.m.," he recalled. It was a grueling schedule, but Garrett embraced it wholeheartedly. His first sale in the spring of 2018 was a turning point. "That first sale sparked a realization that real estate was my calling," he said with a smile.

Garrett's transition to full-time real estate wasn't smooth at first. Initial challenges included a scarcity of referrals due to his age and limited connections. However, everything changed in the fall of 2018 when he met Anthony Djon. Under Anthony's mentorship and with the resources he provided, Garrett transitioned seamlessly to a full-time career.

Raised in Lake Orion, Garrett was always a go-getter. "I was working at a distribution center, doing maintenance on a golf course, and running my own small engine repair business while still in high school," he shared. This early entrepreneurial spirit laid the foundation for his career in real estate. Influenced by motivational speakers, Garrett learned that "you can get whatever you want from life — all it takes is hard work and consistency."

Today, Garrett is most passionate about servicing his clients and sharing his wealth of knowledge. "Every time I show a home, I find a way to surprise my client with an 'ah-ha' moment," he said. His dedication to client service has earned him accolades, including Top Producer and Rising Star awards from his team.

Working with his team, Hotel Company, Garrett thrives in a collaborative environment. "There are eight agents on our team and one transaction coordinator. We communicate very well and even have our own team



group chat," he explained. Their camaraderie is evident in their regular outings, meetings, and call nights. "We build off each other and hold everyone accountable. Team building is very important to us," Garrett added.

The road to success is seldom smooth, and Garrett is no

stranger to challenges. "You run into a lot of roadblocks from the start of a transaction to the end," he admitted. "You have to be creative and think outside of the box to get over most of the roadblocks."

Garrett sees real estate as a perfect fit for his future. "It will give me access to

my dreams and goals, and already has," he said. With aspirations to delve into property management, rentals, and house flips, Garrett is well on his way, having already purchased his first rental property.

Beyond real estate, Garrett is a man of diverse interests. An Eagle Scout,



"DON'T STOP! WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING WRONG, THEY ARE GOING RIGHT. TRUST THE PROCESS. CROSS YOUR T'S AND DOT YOUR I'S."

he values hard work and perseverance. His family — mom Jaydee, dad Jerimy, older brother Blake, oldest sister Cassie, and youngest sister Deanna — shares his love for the outdoors, road trips, and car racing.

Garrett's philanthropic efforts include donating to his church and helping the homeless with dinners and cookouts. "I praise and credit everything I have accomplished to the man upstairs," he said humbly.

For those looking to follow in his footsteps, Garrett advises them to keep going. "Don't stop! When everything seems to be going wrong, they are going right," he said. "Trust the process. Cross your t's and dot your i's. Keep your blinders on."

The world of real estate has found a passionate and endlessly positive rising star in Garrett. "Knock out all distractions, but mainly, be you!" he added. "Find what you love, and you will find your full potential."



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Visiting family. - **Steve & Kim Durecki** | Great Lakes Aerial Video Services and Photography



Doing a staycation, going on a city exploration, visiting new towns or villages, or just camping. - **Jessica Juel** | Arterra Luxe



Sitting poolside with a good book or spending time with family and friends. I love to host, so I am always planning something! - **Stacey Taylor** | Quest Realty



Going to the beach or fishing with my kids. - **Cameron Boutros** | Anthony Djon Luxury Real Estate



Working on my property. - **Thomas Gaunt** | Keller Williams Showcase Realty



I enjoy going up north with my wife and son. - **Mark Kent** | Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices - Kee Realty



Golfing and playing pickleball. - **Mark White** | Mark White & Associates



Golfing - **Sarah Budreau** | Oakland Corners Realty



On a cruise. - **Shayla Haboosh** | Anthony Djon Luxury Real Estate



Going to a Red Wings game. - **Stacy Miletta** | Real Estate One



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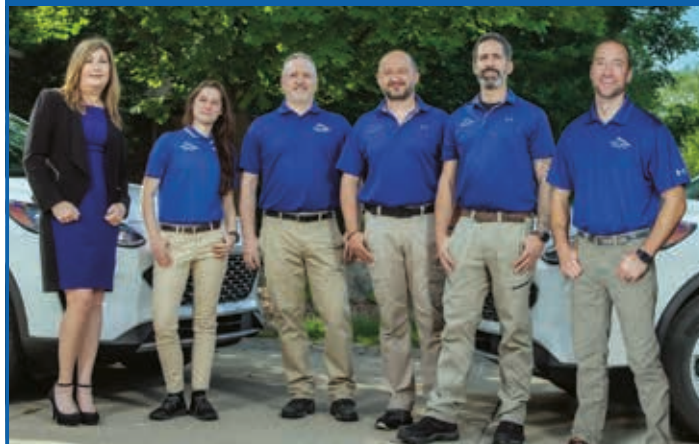


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Elevating the Client Experience

How To Truly WOW Your Clients

In Michigan's fast-paced real estate market, competition is tough, and expectations are higher than ever. Buyers and sellers want more than someone to handle paperwork — they want someone who understands their journey, eases their stress, and makes them feel valued. Going above and beyond isn't just good service — it's how you build lasting relationships.

Here are a few simple but meaningful ways to leave a lasting impression:

1. Be One Step Ahead

The best way to show your clients you care is to anticipate their needs before they even have to ask. Are they moving with young kids? Help them explore homes in neighborhoods with great schools — or even point out bilingual education options for families who value cultural diversity. Working with someone downsizing? Highlight single-story homes in peaceful communities where maintenance isn't a headache.

This extra bit of thoughtfulness shows you're not just in it for the sale — you're in it to make their lives better.

Tip: Create a neighborhood guide that includes local schools, coffee shops, parks, and anything else you know your clients would love.

2. Make Communication Easy

Buying or selling a home can feel overwhelming. One of the simplest ways to ease that stress is to stay in touch. Regular updates — whether it's a quick text, a friendly email, or a short video explaining next steps — can make a huge difference.

Set a schedule for check-ins so your clients never feel out of the loop. Even a quick five-minute call to say, "Hey, here's what's happening," can reassure them that everything is under control.

Tip: Ask your clients their preferred way to communicate and stick to it. A little personalization goes a long way.

3. Add a Personal Touch

People remember how you make them feel, and small gestures can go a long way in creating a positive experience. Surprise your clients on closing day with a thoughtful gift — maybe a "welcome home" basket with Michigan-made goodies, or a framed photo of their new house.

After the sale, keep the relationship alive. Send a thank-you card, check in during the holidays, or wish them a happy anniversary on the date they bought their home. These small touches remind them you're thinking of them, even when you're not working together.

Tip: Personalize your gift to match their personality. For example, a coffee-loving couple might love a gift card to a local café in their new neighborhood.

4. Celebrate the Wins

Closing on a home is a huge milestone — it deserves to be celebrated! Whether it's hosting a small gathering at their new home, arranging a family photo shoot, or simply toasting their success with a bottle of wine, help them mark the occasion in a special way.

This isn't just about celebrating the transaction: It's about showing your clients that their happiness matters to you.

Tip: Partner with local businesses to create memorable celebrations while also supporting the community.

5. Keep the Connection Alive

Just because the deal is done doesn't mean your relationship ends. Stay in touch with past clients by hosting fun events like community appreciation picnics, happy hours, or holiday gatherings. These events aren't just great for reconnecting — they're perfect for meeting potential new clients through referrals.

Tip: Use your CRM to track important dates like home anniversaries or birthdays so you can send a quick, thoughtful message.

Why It Matters

At the end of the day, people don't remember the fine print of a contract or the number of showings — they remember how you made them feel during one of the most important decisions of their lives. By anticipating their needs, staying in touch, and celebrating their wins, you're not just their real estate agent — you're their trusted partner and friend.

In a market as competitive as Michigan, that kind of care isn't just appreciated — it's unforgettable.

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PHOTOS TAKEN AT LOMBARDO HOMES MODEL AT STILLWATER CROSSING IN MACOMB TOWNSHIP



When Matthew Martinec traded his fire helmet for a real estate license, he didn't just change careers: He embarked on a new adventure and has now been a real estate agent for three years. Currently at @properties - Christie's International Real Estate, Matthew has already made a significant impact, boasting an impressive career volume of over \$18 million.

Before Matthew began full-time real estate in 2021, he had dedicated 20 years of his life as a firefighter and paramedic, eventually retiring as a lieutenant. "I spent over two decades helping people on the worst day of their lives. Transitioning to real estate felt like a natural extension of my desire to help others, but in a different way," he said.

Life's twists and turns played a role in Matthew's career change. He and his wife, Andrea, faced the challenges of gym ownership during the COVID-19 pandemic, ultimately deciding to close their business. This led Matthew to explore new opportunities, and he found his calling at Keller Williams as a new agent.

Born and raised in Rochester Hills, he credits his father and high school football coach for instilling in him the values of hard work, dedication, and honesty. Armed with degrees in criminal justice and fire science, along with multiple high-level lifesaving certifications, Matthew was well-prepared for any challenge.

"Becoming a lieutenant and witnessing the birth of our three children were defining moments in my life," Matthew said. "They shaped who I am today, positioning me to lead by being the best person I can be."

Matthew operates as an independent agent, supported by a high-performing group of colleagues at his brokerage. "The agents I work

with are incredibly supportive," he shared. "We strive to help each other in any way possible, which creates a fantastic working environment."

Matthew finds it incredibly rewarding to help people navigate homeownership — a process that most individuals would consider as one of the most stressful events of their lives. "The real estate market is constantly changing, and I

relish in the challenge of adapting so that I can provide the best financial outcomes for my clients," he said.

One of Matthew's proudest moments in real estate was helping his oldest son, Mason, purchase his first home at just 20 years old. "Being part of that process with him was amazing. Celebrating his accomplishment was truly rewarding," Matthew said.



Matthew's journey in real estate hasn't been without its challenges, however. "The lack of inventory for clients can be tough, especially when homes receive multiple offers and sell within days," Matthew explained. "Building relationships with fellow agents and seeking off-market opportunities have been crucial in overcoming these hurdles."

Matthew sees real estate as a means to support his family's dreams. "Real estate gives me the flexibility to be present with my family and support my kids' education at the University of Michigan," he said. "My wife and I are also developing our forever home, and being in the business has been incredibly beneficial."

When he's not busy closing deals, Matthew enjoys golfing, traveling with his wife, and supporting charitable organizations such as Mission 22 and Tunnel to Towers Foundation. "Supporting those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedoms is incredibly important to me," he said.

For Matthew, success is about making a positive impact. "I want to leave the world a better place and make a positive impact on those around me," he shared. "Meeting new people and showing them that what they think is impossible can become a reality is my favorite part of being an agent."

For aspiring real estate agents, Matthew recommends that they find a broker and coach who can provide exceptional training. "Foresee potential obstacles in transactions and address them proactively. Bringing real-life experience to showings helps clients navigate their questions and concerns," he added. Matthew also emphasizes the importance of having tenacity and an open mind. "You get out of life what you put into it," he said. "These principles are the foundation for success in both our work and personal lives."



“
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IT ALL BEGINS WITH YOU:

How To Rise Above the Odds, Overcome Addiction and Live Your Dreams

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Your Title/Position: Broker and Owner
Years in the Industry: 19
Are you an active member of the National Association of REALTORS®?: Yes

Title of Book: It All Begins with You: How To Rise Above the Odds, Overcome Addiction and Live Your Dreams
Year of Publication: 2024
Genre: Self-Help
Publisher: JM Publishing LLC

1. What inspired you to write your book?

My battle with addiction — overcoming huge obstacles in my life and coming back from rock bottom. I hope that my story helps others overcome whatever obstacles they may face in their life.

2. Please provide a short summary of your book and its key themes and/or messages.

Find out how to break the cycle of self-destructive behavior with this book and start living the life you deserve.

“It All Begins With You” offers a powerful, inspiring, and practical guide to overcoming addiction and reclaiming your life. This transformative book is not just about breaking free from the chains of addiction: It’s about harnessing the strength within to overcome any obstacle and achieving your deepest aspirations.

Drawing from my personal experiences, extensive research, and real-life success stories, this book is designed to empower individuals at any stage of their journey, offering tools and insights to help them rise above their circumstances and build a life they love.

I provide readers with actionable strategies and heartfelt encouragement that will provide the foundation for recovery and practices that will last a lifetime.

Key themes addressed in “It All Begins With You”:

- Understanding Addiction: Delve into the nature of addiction, its root causes, and its impact on every aspect of life.
- Personal Growth: Learn how to develop self-awareness, self-compassion, and resilience through practical exercises and reflective practices.
- Recovery Strategies: Discover effective methods for overcoming addiction, including mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and the importance of a supportive community.
- Living Your Dreams: Explore how to set and achieve meaningful goals, turning dreams into reality through sustained effort and a positive mindset.

“It All Begins With You” is not only a recovery manual but also a blueprint for living a fulfilling and purpose-driven life. It is perfect for anyone battling any kind of

addiction, striving for self-betterment, or looking for encouragement.

Whether you’re battling addiction or supporting a loved one on their journey, “It All Begins With You” is a beacon of hope and a testament to the transformative power of the human spirit.

3. Describe your book in 10 words or less.

A blueprint for living a fulfilling and purpose-driven life.

4. What do you hope your readers take away from your book?

Self-discovery, self-awareness, resilience and hope

5. What was your favorite part of the writing/publishing journey?

Having an opportunity to get vulnerable and share my story with the world, and a platform to inspire and provide hope to others.

6. What was your least favorite or most challenging part of the writing/publishing journey?

Being vulnerable and putting myself out there.

7. Who helped you write your book, and/or who do you pay tribute to in your book acknowledgments?

My wife. She has been my rock and support system.

8. Where can readers purchase your book? What formats of the book are available?

You can find it on Amazon. It’s available in paperback, on Kindle, or as an audiobook.

9. Where can readers learn more about you and your book?

By visiting the website: thebenlang.com

10. Do you have any tips or advice for aspiring writers?

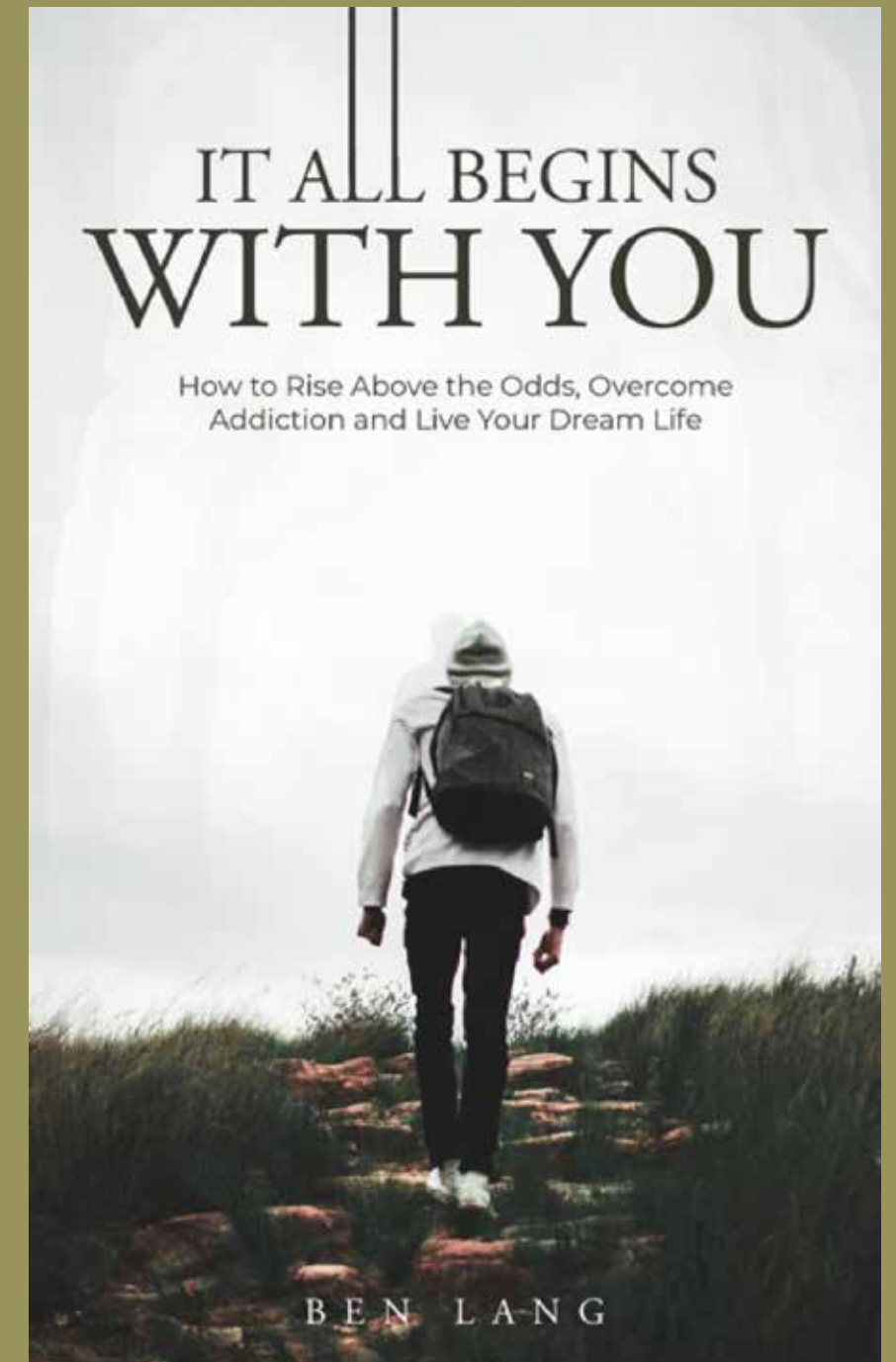
Just do it; stop waiting for perfection. Share your story. Be vulnerable and true to yourself. The world wants to hear your personal story.

11. Do you plan to write another book in the future, or do you currently have another writing project in the works? If so, please explain.

I am creating a workbook to go along with the book, where people can work through self-discovery and self-awareness, and how to live a purpose-driven life.

12. Is there anything else you’d like to share about your writing process, your book or the reception of your book?

I truly hope that this book changes people’s lives in a profound way. It was designed to change lives, after all.



“

I truly hope that this book changes people’s lives in a profound way. It was designed to change lives, after all.”

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