



FIVE THINGS I WISH SOMEONE
HAD TOLD ME BEFORE I
LAUNCHED MY BUSINESS

AN INTERVIEW WITH DOUG NOLL
AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR AND PODCASTER



Amit Patel Of *Mythos Group* On Five Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before I Launched My Business

An Interview with Doug Noll

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Taking the risk to start a company is a feat few are fully equipped for. Any business owner knows that the first few years in business are anything but glamorous. Building a successful business takes time, lessons learned, and most importantly, enormous growth as a business owner. What works and what doesn't when one starts a new business? What are the valuable lessons learned from the "University of Adversity"? As part of this interview series, I had the pleasure of interviewing Amit Patel.

Amit Patel is the Founder and Managing Director of [Mythos Group](#), a boutique management consulting firm that specializes in Strategy, Digital, HR and Organizational Transformations as well as Leadership and Executive Coaching and Talent Management. Amit has broad-based expertise in building and leading strategic global transformations resulting in cost savings, enhanced organizational efficiency and productivity.

Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Can you tell us a story about what brought you to this specific career path?

Shortly after I immigrated to the U.S., I decided to pursue a career in computer science. Upon graduating from the University of Maryland, I joined a small telecommunications software firm as a computer programmer. It was there that I had the opportunity to consult with clients on various corporate strategies, and I realized through working with those clients that my true passions were strategic planning and organization design and development. After this realization, I furthered my studies with a master's in management from Johns Hopkins University's Carey Business School, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I enjoyed great success working for marquee management consulting firms before I started my own boutique management consulting firm. I've been privileged to partner with Fortune 100 companies, Fortune 500 companies and start-ups across the globe to make strategic transformation actionable by building long-term relationships and developing innovative business solutions. I've been able to work across industries with executives to leverage their strengths, strategy, people, processes and technology to solve problems. After all these years, it's still my passion.

Can you tell us a story about the hard times that you faced when you first started your journey?

Getting your first job or your first client is the hardest part of starting your own firm. When you're just starting out, you're not a known quantity and you not only must have the courage to take the plunge into the unknown, but you also must have the conviction that you've got what it takes to succeed. I was lucky to have had experience with other well-known companies with name recognition but getting your name out there and gaining visibility without a big name backing you is always tough.



The key is having the ability to create a value proposition that endears you to your client. You must carve out a niche that serves as a roadmap to who you approach and how you market yourself. Ask yourself, “How am I different, and how do I stand out? What can I offer the client that no one else can?” Once you’ve defined your value proposition, it’s much easier to market yourself to potential clients. Then, as Steve Martin once said, all you have to do is “be so good they can’t ignore you.”

Where did you get the drive to continue even though things were so hard?

Everything I learned about hard work, perseverance and tenacity came from my parents. My mom and dad both encouraged me to dream big and never give up on what I set out to do. They taught me the importance of going after your dreams, and they instilled in me at a very young age that passion, drive, honesty, integrity and resilience are the qualities that one needs to succeed.

So, how are things going today? How did grit and resilience lead to your eventual success?

All things considered, business is good! Like many organizations, Mythos Group experienced a dip during the pandemic, but business is picking back up again. Like all industries, we had to pivot given the challenges of COVID-19. We reevaluated how we operated, how we attracted new clients and how we maintained visibility in a crowded field.

One of the most exciting things that came out of the pandemic for me personally was that I was afforded the opportunity to create a virtual library of content. The initial shelter-at-home mandates made it harder to network with colleagues and solicit new clients, so we had to find new ways to reach out. Through writing, I was able to leverage my expertise and experience to pen timely articles, blog posts and white papers that helped business leaders navigate through the pandemic’s unprecedented global economic crisis.

This content resides on our website, mythosgroupinc.com, and is available for free. Simply go to our [Insights page](#) or [Blog](#) to access our full library. We encourage those who are interested to take a look and reach out to us with any questions.

Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

In the early part of my career, I worked for a management consulting firm, and I was leading the effort to put together a client proposal. Since I needed several documents for reference, I booked a conference room so that I could spread things out. When my time was up, I quickly gathered my documents, grabbed my laptop and headed out for a lunch break. After lunch, I



realized that I had forgotten my computer mouse in the conference room. So, I headed up to the room, popped my head in and asked, “Has anyone seen a mouse?”

Much to my surprise, my colleagues thought I was talking about a live rodent, and it created quite a commotion. I quickly clarified that I was looking for my computer mouse, not an actual mouse. Needless to say, it was a very funny but very awkward moment. The lesson I learned was to be crystal clear in my communications – leave nothing to ambiguity or assumptions. It’s a lesson that I have carried through my career, and I believe that this clarity in communication is one of those defining attributes that my clients appreciate most.

What do you think makes your company stand out? Can you share a story?

One of our greatest strengths is that we are a small firm. When it comes to management consulting, bigger is not always better. With a smaller firm, clients get the same level of expertise that they’d get with a consultant at a bigger firm, but they get a level of personalization and attention to detail that they would likely not get at a large firm. At Mythos Group, we live for that partnership, collaboration and co-creation. We are ambitious for our clients’ success, and we only work with a handful of clients at a time so that we can forge meaningful relationships. We bring our authentic, sympathetic and empathetic selves to the table to work with clients, not just for them.

For example, we once worked with a high-tech cloud computing client that was looking for someone to help them create a corporate strategy to grow organically as well as inorganically through partner alliances and mergers and acquisitions. They had previously worked with top-tier consulting firms, but they weren’t getting the results they wanted.

Our approach from the very beginning was collaborative and inclusive instead of rigid and dismissive. After all, strategy is not a one-size-fits-all proposition and defining a corporate strategy to create a pragmatic and actionable roadmap is a highly individualized process. This particular client also valued our leadership, our commitment to teamwork and our honesty, and as a result, they renewed our contract over and over again. I’m happy to report that they are still using the corporate strategy that we developed to this day.

Which tips would you recommend to your colleagues in your industry to help them to thrive and not “burn out”?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines burnout as, “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.” I think the latter part of that definition says it all. We will never totally eliminate stress in the workplace, but if we can successfully manage it, then we can avoid burnout.



Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is the key to avoiding burnout. Creating boundaries inside and outside of work is important. Having clearly defined roles and responsibilities is a good way to stay focused and remain resilient. It's also important for my colleagues to seek out opportunities that are just as fulfilling and meaningful as they are competitive and profitable.

Outside of work, find the activities that make you feel relaxed, reinvigorated and reenergized. For example, I enjoy playing music and sports, but what works for me, may not work for you. Yoga, martial arts, meditation, gardening, painting – all of these are ways that people can find moments of peace and serenity to manage the stress of work. Remember, eliminating all work-related stress is not realistic. Successfully managing the stress that you experience is the secret to avoiding burnout, and that can look different for different people.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story?

It's so true. No one can achieve success in a vacuum. Just like they say about raising children – it takes a village. As I mentioned earlier, my parents were instrumental in shaping my views on success and perseverance. My dad, especially, showed me what that looked like in practice. My dad was a serial entrepreneur and he dabbled in a lot of different businesses over the years, including coaching and tutoring, media and entertainment, real estate and angel investing.

Not all of the ventures were successful, but he took failures in stride and made a diligent effort to learn from his mistakes. He would then apply that knowledge and insight to his next venture. Dad always insisted that you should prepare yourself for both success and failure as an entrepreneur. To prepare for success, bring your most genuine self to every venture and nurture relationships with friends, family, mentors, clients and colleagues inside and outside of work. Prepare yourself for changes that lie ahead and have the courage to pivot quickly when necessary.

The entrepreneurial journey will always include challenges like defining a corporate strategy, handling finances, soliciting business or managing a team. The key to success is to have a clear vision – you need to stay focused on what you want to do, why you want to do it, and how you want to do it. Watching my father handle challenges throughout his career gave me invaluable lessons from which I still benefit every single day.

How have you used your success to bring goodness to the world?

When it comes to spreading goodness in the world, I have three words: Pay It Forward. There are so many opportunities for business leaders to pay it forward, including providing mentorship, doing pro bono work, serving on boards and advisory boards, being a good steward of your industry, and encouraging others in their dreams of being an entrepreneur.

At Mythos Group, we participate in university programs to support students and MBA cohorts by providing them practical real-life insights as to what they can expect when they venture out into the real world. We also reach out to the greater community to provide mentorship through one-on-one and group consultations.

What are your "5 things I wish someone told me when I first launched my business," and why? Please share a story or example for each.

1 . Ideas aren't unique – execution is. People just starting out tend to think that their ideas are unique, but the truth is that they usually aren't. We've all heard the adage, "There's nothing new under the sun," and to a great extent, it's true. The ideation process is important, but it's not the ideas that you have that matter. It's the execution of those ideas that will set you apart and set you up for success. In management consulting, everyone solves problems, and the framework for solutions may even be the same. However, the cultivation of a deep and meaningful relationship with the client is what allows us to co-create solutions that set us apart.

Google is a perfect example of superior execution that catapulted the search engine's success. Before Google, there was Lycos, AltaVista, which would later get bought by Yahoo, and the different iterations of Microsoft's search engine. The basic idea of the search engine is the same. However, Google came in with a novel execution that based search results on relevancy and popularity rather than revealing results that were the closest match to the search terms. They also provided a superior user experience and design. Since its release in 1998, no other search engine has been able to compete.

2 . Networking is not a boon, it's a lifeline. No self-made business leader was actually self-made, and success isn't achieved in silos. Behind every success story there are mentors, colleagues, bosses, clients, teachers, friends and family. You simply cannot do it alone no matter how hard you try. Surrounding yourself with the right partner alliances and team members can be the deciding factor when it comes to achieving your goals. I've heard more than a few cautionary tales over my career of bad partnerships that led to professional and financial ruin.

I remember one time an ex-colleague of mine approached me about an opportunity to facilitate the divestiture and subsequent merger and acquisition of a biopharmaceutical company. Since I had worked with this colleague in the past, I knew that her vision and her values matched mine, so I didn't hesitate to take the assignment. As expected, under this colleague's leadership, I experienced one of the best engagements of my career. Together we worked with the CHRO team and senior executives to make a significant impact in this bio-tech firm's trajectory.

3 . An omni-channel approach is essential. From day one, you should create an omni-channel content strategy that utilizes web, social media, blog posts, email, direct mail, podcasts, white papers, interviews and in-person speaking engagements. The marketing landscape has

changed, and now more than ever, your audience is fragmented. When it comes to potential clients, you have to meet them where they are, and right now, they are all over the place. We've seen many larger companies continue to be resistant to new channels, and truth be told, we were too. I wish we had moved into the social media space sooner, but for us, it was definitely better late than never.

When COVID-19 hit, many of our marketing avenues changed. At first, this was disappointing, but we quickly learned that while some doors had shut, many others had opened. As I mentioned earlier, we were able to pivot quickly and adjust our marketing strategies to be much more content-based. This allowed us to reach people where they were and pushed us out of our comfort zone. We were able to integrate a content strategy that solidified our brand voice and positioned Mythos Group as a valuable resource for insights, trends and research.

4 . All businesses have their peaks and valleys. I wish someone had told me that there would be highs and there would be lows. I think when you're first starting out, you expect the beginning of your career to be tough. However, once people start to experience some success, they expect that trajectory to continue. The truth is that if you plot success on a graph, it looks more like a roller coaster than it does a rocket launch. It's important to mentally prepare yourself for the highs and lows, and know that there will be multiples of both. Having a realistic and pragmatic approach is key.

Early in my career, I had the good fortune of working as a managing director for a successful e-commerce company. We were wildly successful, and we were able to take the company public with a \$6 billion market cap. Then the dot-com bubble burst, and like so many other tech companies during that time, our company was not able to recover, and we had to close our doors. From that experience, I learned to celebrate success, learn from failure, and know that if you're at the top of the mountain, you probably won't stay there. But luckily, if you're at the bottom of the valley, you likely won't stay there either.

5. Create a corporate culture of wellness. The health and well-being of your workforce (including yourself) is directly tied to productivity and profitability. Companies that are committed to mental, emotional, social, physical and financial wellness will not only attract and retain the best and brightest talent, but they will also drastically cut costs associated with lost productivity, healthcare, absenteeism, turnover and poor employee morale. There is an epidemic of anxiety, depression and burnout in corporate America and it's important to have open lines of communication where employees are heard and topics like mental health are not taboo.

At Mythos Group, we believe that leading by example is one of the most powerful strategies that business leaders can employ to ensure worker wellness. We are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB), and we always encourage our employees to talk to us about what they're going through – inside and outside of work. We make sure that our employees are given clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and we offer fair and competitive compensation so that our workers are not stressed financially.

Can you share a few ideas or stories from your experience about how to successfully ride the emotional highs & lows of being a founder”?

As I previously mentioned, every business will experience highs and lows. Because we’re human, these highs and lows will naturally elicit emotions. When things are going well, you’ll be elated. When things are going poorly, you will experience stress. The key to successfully riding these peaks and valleys is to not act on those emotions. This seems simple, but in practice, it can be very difficult. Acknowledge the emotions that you feel when you feel them, but wait for them to pass before you act. Emotional decisions rarely work out well for anyone involved.

To stay grounded, stay focused on your North Star, your vision. With that in mind, make sure that any important business decisions that you make are based on facts and figures. You can always do your market research and anticipate future trends, but at the end of the day, ensure that you’re acting objectively to make decisions that are proactive, pragmatic and actionable rather than reactive and emotional.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

I watched my dad mentor and tutor disadvantaged students from his village, and I saw how it made a profound difference in their lives. I believe he helped them to envision and pursue a better life, a life that they might not have known even existed if it weren’t for my dad. There are so many voices out there that are not being heard, either because they’re shut out completely or they’re simply not encouraged.

My movement would involve setting up a philanthropic foundation that supports initiatives like these. Through widespread community outreach, we would support disenfranchised youth who were smart, driven and motivated, but who experienced socioeconomic barriers to realizing their dreams. By leveraging a network of business leaders, we could provide resources and networking opportunities with an ultimate goal of instilling an unwavering self-belief that they are worthy, they belong, and they can succeed.

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I invite your readers to go online to the Mythos Group [website](#) to learn more about me and the services my firm provides. On our [Insights page](#), you’ll find a wealth of information, including articles, white papers, e-books, interviews, presentations and webinars, or you can check out our [blog posts](#) for timely discussions on what’s happening in the business world. You can also connect with me directly on LinkedIn.



This was very inspiring. Thank you so much for joining us!

Thank you! It was my pleasure as always.



About Mythos Group

Mythos Group is a management consulting firm. We partner with senior executives to solve complex issues across all industries and business functions.

From Fortune 500 companies to start-ups we collaborate with clients in formulating innovative strategies to design and implement impactful transformative business solutions.

Our home page is www.mythosgroupinc.com.

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