

Atypical Adventures in Entrepreneurship

There's no set of instructions for being an entrepreneur.

Hubert Morrisette's professional journey encapsulates this idea.

By Ian Sherlock

A charismatic man in his 70s wearing dress clothes and running shoes approached the jumbled intersection without hesitation. He stepped off the curb, evolving into a slight jog to avoid oncoming commuters in a rush to get home from work. It was 3:14 p.m., and Hubert Morrisette was beginning his daily one-and-a-half-mile walk to Shippensburg University.

He may appear as a simple man to the cars passing by, but there is more than meets the eye. Morrisette's professional journey has been a whirlwind of unexpected turns igniting a powder keg of ambitious pursuit that would result in two master's degrees, three doctoral degrees, the founding of two businesses and a 22-year career as an educator.

Morrisette is an associate professor of entrepreneurship at Shippensburg University's Grove College of Business. He was hired to start the program after selling his second startup in 2002. He accepted the position, expecting it to give him a break for a few years from the hustle and bustle of being an entrepreneur. Little did he know he was embarking on a 22-year career that would impact the lives of many students and others around him.

"I need a break. I have a Ph.D, I can teach," he says. "I never thought it would be a career, and it ended up being my longest career."

Fast-forward to 2024. Morrisette walks into one of the conference-style classrooms in Grove Hall, shedding layers as he enters, informing his students of the harsh weather on today's one-and-a-half-mile trek to campus.

"I walk. That was not a smart move," he says, laughing at his quip.

From his little jab at himself, he began straight into the lecture. The lesson focused on marketing, but Morrisette wasted no time showing his students that his lecture wasn't like any other marketing discussion they'd had before.

Morrisette's teaching style demanded his students' attention like a war general. He talked about topics such as gross profit margin and intangible goods as if his lecture were the end of a Netflix episode, and the students were smashing the controller to play the next episode.

When one student asked about the importance of packaging goods, Morrisette went on a tangent explaining how important proper packaging is when it comes to marketing a product. He ended the rant by giving an example of something he bought that was packaged poorly, saying, "I'm going looney tunes, I take hedge clippers and go, (proceeds to make cutting gestures with his hands)."

Despite his eccentric approach to lectures, Morrisette has impacted countless students throughout his time at Shippensburg. The program he built has gone on to cultivate the minds of young entrepreneurs who would start 40 companies and take over 35 family businesses. He teaches his classes by stressing creativity and pushing students to become problem solvers.

His small cohort classes force his students to remain engaged during the discussion-based lectures. Rather than focusing on theory, Shelly brings his business and consulting experiences into the lessons to challenge his students' growth.

“Seeing how relentless he was and how he came to be the person that he is today it motivates me for the future and gives me a lot of confidence that even if something goes wrong, he taught me that you can always learn from that mistake,” says Jake Lawson, one of Morrisette’s cohort students.

The relentlessness that Lawson refers to stems from Morrisette’s background before teaching. In the earlier portion of his professional career, Morrisette developed the foundation that would allow him to have such an impact on students through various unpredictable turns.

After finishing his undergrad in mathematics at Old Dominion University, he began working as a coder and quickly realized it wasn’t for him. So, he started studying finance.

From there, he began working for the Gallup Organization, a management consulting firm in Washington, D.C. While there, Gallup paid for Morrisette to attain a master’s and a doctoral degree in economics. After 18 years of climbing the corporate ladder and furthering his education, Morrisette took a massive risk. He left his executive vice president position to start his own business ventures.

Morrisette started a research company that specialized in high-tech research. It examined products being developed in every industry, from the Internet and software to science companies, and sold its findings to other businesses. After eight years, he sold this company in 2000 to start his entrepreneur consulting business.

The consulting firm focused on helping guide other business owners in various ways. Around this time, Morrisette began to look for a break from corporate America and recognized he may have a passion for mentoring entrepreneurs.

He sold the consulting firm in 2002 and began to develop the only entrepreneurship program in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) from the ground up.

Despite all he has accomplished professionally, Morrisette's office reflects his humble way of life. There are no framed degrees, certificates or awards—just a half-filled bookshelf, a couch and an almost barren desk with his laptop and book bag.

Morrisette may have a multimillion-dollar net worth but chooses to live below his means, shifting his attention to others.

In an instant, when his neighbor and close friend, William Oberman, had a vision problem while driving, Morrisette stepped in to help him out. Morrisette got Oberman's stepson, Hayden Hunt, and went to where Oberman was parked. Morrisette drove Oberman to the doctor, and Hunt took the other car home.

"How could you even drive without being able to see? You endangered so many people," Hunt recalls Morrisette saying in a sarcastic tone when they got to Oberman at his vehicle.

Hunt often joins Morrisette for his walks to campus and through town.

At 3:34 p.m., Morrisette arrives at Grove Hall's doors, exactly 20 minutes after beginning his daily one-and-a-half-mile journey to teach.

Just like entrepreneurship, Shelly's professional journey had no instructions. However, it was fueled by a question he asks his students.

"Why are you doing it, and how are you gonna win?"