

EXCERPT of

lifehacked

HOW ONE FAMILY FROM THE SLUMS
MADE **MILLIONS** SELLING APPS



ALLEN WONG

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regoapps@gmail.com

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PREFACE

What you are about to read is a detailed story about the experiences my parents and I faced while dealing with the unfortunate circumstances that we were given. All of the lessons I learned from those experiences are weaved into the story along with an explanation as to how they molded me. The story wraps up with how I used that knowledge to create and market some of the best-selling apps available in the App Store®. Overall, it's a philosophical and anecdotal guide to life that takes you through the major events in my life as well as my parents' lives.

Before we begin, here are a few things that you should know prior to reading this book:

LIFEHACKS

The term 'life hack' (or 'lifehack') used to refer to tricks that computer programmers used for increasing productivity by cutting through the information overload and organizing their data. It has since been expanded to describe any trick, skill, shortcut, or clever method to increase productivity and efficiency in any part of your life. For the purpose of this book, the term 'lifehack' will be defined as any life lesson that brings you closer to reaching your goals in life.

Most of you are more familiar with the phrase 'thinking outside of the box'. Learning to solve problems in a clever and unorthodox way is just one of the many methods for getting ahead in life. And learning how to think outside of the box has been one of those

pivotal life lessons (or lifehacks) that changed the way I solved problems, the way I socialized, and the way I viewed the world.

I picked up many of these important lifehacks on my decades-long journey to the top. Some were passed down from generations upon generations of my family. Some were picked up by observing and learning from the successful people around me. And some were created by me through discovery, creativity and experimentation.

ORIGIN OF THE BOOK

While I was growing up, I noticed that several parents were struggling at raising their children. Even though the proper way of raising a child can be highly subjective, I have the luxury of hindsight and can compare my peers' current standings with how they were raised when they were younger. Sometimes parents are not to be blamed for their bad parenting skills. Some parents were taught parenting skills by people who did not understand children so well. While I believe that their intentions are good, I also believe that some people just forget what it is like to be a child after a few decades. Or they never possessed the knowledge on how to raise their children to begin with.

As a teenager, this made me wonder if I would grow up to be one of those parents who did not understand their children and did not raise them properly. So instead of risking it and winging it in the future, I kept a journal with most of the parenting tips and lifehacks that I picked up along the way. I had been updating this journal for over a decade now, and it was originally intended either to remind me of what I learned or to teach my future children all of the important things I learned. The latter reason was meant for a situation where I pass away before I get a chance to teach them the lessons first-hand.

After I did an interview with Secret Entourage® and told a much shortened version of my success story, I noticed that there was a growing demand for more about my life and what I learned through the obstacles that I faced. That was when I figured that instead of keeping all of these lifehacks to myself and my family, I could share them and help others improve their quality of life and succeed.

So what you are about to read is a compilation of lifehacks that took me years to complete. It is written and organized in a comprehensive manner that takes you through the decades of my life as well as the lives of the people around me. Those who read my Secret Entourage interview know that I have been through many years of pain and stressful torment. But with each obstacle, I adapted quickly and learned to survive better.

BECOMING LIFEHACKED

The term 'hacker' has been given a negative connotation by various news outlets. Thus, people have associated hackers with the cyber crimes that are committed by criminals with the intent to do harm. What most people do not know is that the word 'hacker' can have a completely different meaning from this. A hacker to me is someone who challenges the existing order. Thus, a person who is lifehacked is someone who does not accept a predetermined place in society. A person who is lifehacked is someone who does not do things strictly the old-fashioned way. A person who is lifehacked is someone who stares down a seemingly impassible roadblock in life and finds over a dozen different ways to circumvent it.

So, if you are looking for a book to tell you exactly what to do in your life, then this is not the book for you. This book instead teaches you how to think rather than what to think.

The key challenge to being successful is learning how to be an independent individual rather than a person who depends on others for guidance or money.

MILLIONAIRE FROM THE SLUMS

There is a story behind each lifehack I picked up. By taking you through my past, you will pick up on these lifehacks as well and hopefully become a better person by learning from them. Because of this, those who read this book tend to draw comparisons with the 2008 movie, *Slumdog Millionaire*. Like Jamal, the protagonist in the movie, I, too, have been through a rough life before becoming a millionaire. I, too, came from a family that grew up in the slums of Asia. And like Jamal, I, too, never gave up on life and the pursuit of happiness. The difference is that Jamal used the knowledge he gained from his unfortunate childhood to win money on a TV quiz show, while I used the knowledge I learned from my unfortunate life to create multimillion-dollar businesses.

Spoiler alert: In the end of that movie, it was determined that Jamal succeeded because “it was written” (meaning that he was destined to win). However, believing that your fate has already been predetermined is detrimental to succeeding.

Always believe that you can turn your luck around at any moment, because each new day could be the start of a new you. Most successful businesses were built from the ground up. So, do not stop trying to be successful in life unless you are completely satisfied with what you currently have. As Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple®, once advised, “Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.”

You, too, can hack your life. Just by having the right mindset, you are already setting in motion your vehicle to a better life.

By choosing to hack your life, you are pledging to let no tough situations in life defeat you. You may lose some battles here and there, but you are determined to win the war. I made this pledge over a decade ago, when the circumstances were against me. By the time you finish this book, you will have the necessary tools and knowledge to make the same pledge and to push aside the things that are hindering you from reaching your full potential.

This is my journey. These are my battles. This is my life... hacked.

SKYROCKET

It was morning in New York City, but I was still awake from the night before. Sleepless nights were fast becoming the norm. For most people, chirping birds and sunrises were nature's morning calls. For me, they were pats on the back for another productive night. I had just made an update on my flagship app, "5-0 Radio". I was trying a new marketing technique, and was waiting eagerly for the results.

At this point, I had been coding apps for about a year, but this was still considered early in my career. I was still working at a nine-to-five job. I was still living in my mother's basement. I was still addicted to the rush of making limitless money. While staring at the screen in the dark basement, I kept refreshing the App Store rank charts and kept pressing "F5" on my keyboard like an anxious druggie waiting for his next fix.

Watching my apps climb the charts was probably the best part of the job. Even though it has no effect on its sales, watching my app do well in the market to this day still gives me immense pleasure. "You reap what you sow," as they say. And I sowed something big this time. I was just not prepared for how big this would become.

As I was watching the rankings, I noticed that there was something strange about the way my app was moving up the charts. Normally, my apps would raise maybe five positions every hour after a new release or a new update. But this time, things were different. It jumped ten positions in just fifteen minutes. I thought that it was just a glitch. So, I refreshed my browser again. It jumped ten more positions. I refreshed it again a few minutes later, and it jumped another ten positions. It was still a weekday, so I went to my office job. By the time I arrived at my workplace, my app had jumped another 50 positions.

“Holy *sheeht*,” I mouthed quietly in my office, “This app is skyrocketing!” In my mind, it sounded much louder.

At that point, I was not only breaking personal records; I was shattering them. By night, my app had broken into the top 100 paid apps chart. This was the most coveted spot by all developers. Only 100 apps could be in this spot at any given time, so being here was a sign that your app had made it. It was a badge of honor that only a few developers out of the hundreds of thousands of app developers achieved. And I had just achieved it.

I took a well-deserved sleep that night while eagerly waiting to wake up the next morning. To an app developer, the only thing better than watching your app rocket through the charts was getting the actual download and revenue numbers the next morning.

The numbers were nothing short of astounding. More than fifty thousand people downloaded my app that day. But that was not the end of it. The next day, eighty thousand more people downloaded the app. The app later became one of the top 10 apps with close to a hundred thousand new users per day. I had come a long way since the days of making only fifty dollars a day. And when I took a step back to view the bigger picture, I realized that my entire family had come a long way since the days of being in the slums.

TIGER PARENTS

My life story begins with my parents. Those of you who read or heard of the 2011 book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua, would be familiar with the term 'Tiger Parenting'. For those who are unfamiliar, 'Tiger Parenting' is the practice of traditional, strict child-rearing with the goal of academic success while steering them towards certain career paths.

With that being said, my parents, while traditional in many other ways, were not tiger parents. They were never very strict when it came for me to choose what I wanted to do with my life. I got to where I am today, not because my parents forced me to do certain things. Instead, their parenting worked out well because they taught me great life lessons and led by example.

Some of you may not have had an advantageous upbringing. Perhaps your parents both worked and never paid attention to you. Perhaps they were too poor to afford to buy you things and put you in a private school. Perhaps they were too strict, and pushed you to become someone who you were not. You may choose to spend the rest of your life blaming your parents and others for not being successful. Or you may realize that all of that does not matter now. You are ultimately in control of what is going to happen for the rest of your life.

THE SLUMS

Do not get stuck on the belief that only the rich get richer, or that because you do not have wealthy parents, then you will never be wealthy. According to *Millionaire Next Door*

by Thomas J. Stanley, Ph.D. and William D. Danko, Ph.D., 80 percent of millionaires were first-generation millionaires. This meant that their parents' wealth was not the deciding factor that made them rich. My own parents were not wealthy at all.

In fact, my father grew up in the slums of Guangzhou, China. His mother had passed away when he was really young and his father wasn't around to take care of him. Thus, he became homeless as a little kid along with his siblings. They had to beg for food in order to stay alive. As a teenager, he was forced to work on farmland by the Chinese communist regime, because his family was too poor to afford an education for him. Instead of being given a high school education, my father was given farm tools and 100 lb. bags of rice to carry over his shoulders. He received only a few cents a day for his labor, and was eating mostly rice as sustenance. Meat was rationed and scarce to him, so he was malnourished as a child. Thus, he only grew to the height of 5'3" despite having a father who was 5'9". By the time he was 18, he knew that he had to escape the communist regime in order to get a better life. At that time, Hong Kong was still controlled by the British government, so my father sought refuge there. However, the trip was not going to be an easy one.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Not only was it illegal for my father to leave China for Hong Kong, it was also a perilous journey that required months of preparation and training. With several of his close friends, my father concocted a plan to cross the border that separated Hong Kong and China. At the border, he would have to swim over a long channel of water filled with oyster shells on the bottom and sharks prowling the surface. On top of that, there were coast guards who would search the waters for escapees and arrest or shoot those they caught.

The only other route of escape was to jump the barbed wire border fences that were patrolled by armed Chinese soldiers. Those soldiers were ordered to shoot and kill anyone attempting to escape. According to the 2010 book, *Big Fleeing* by Bingan Chen, there were so many refugees killed trying to escape this way that some people in Shenzhen even made a fortune from collecting the dead refugees. What had happened was that the Chinese government started a program that paid citizens 15 Yuan per body collected, because there were just too many dead refugees for them to handle alone.

Therefore, my father and his friends chose to swim across the channel instead. Their athletic build acquired from all of their farm labor helped them become avid swimmers. While this gave them a better chance at escape, they still planned their escape meticulously to better their chances at survival.

My father and his friends were all too familiar with the risks. They knew people who were caught, jailed, and beaten badly after failing to complete the same feat that they were about to do. But this was not going to deter them. They were brave, ambitious, and motivated to lead a life where the government would not keep oppressing them economically and physically.

This was actually my father's third attempt at crossing the channel. In the first two times, he was caught by coast guards and jailed for several months. They would torture him by withholding food from him, so that he would starve. They would try to use propaganda to convince him to stay in China. And they would interrogate him for hours to try to get him to tell them who helped him and who else was trying to escape.

So, he knew that this third attempt would be his last one. Going to jail for the third time for the same crime would carry much more extreme punishments. This was a do-or-die situation for him.

He was at the shore now with his friends. There was no turning back once they started swimming. This time around, he had a new route of entry to Hong Kong and new strategies to keep him and his friends from getting caught again.

When my father arrived at the channel, it was in the middle of the night. He looked at his friends and silently nodded to them. It was time. With nothing except for two tied-up plastic bags filled with old discarded tennis balls and a hollow bamboo stick, my dad and his friends began their long and dangerous swim to freedom.

To prevent themselves from cutting their feet on the oyster shells, they would have to swim without stopping for about an hour across the channel separating Shenzhen, China and the New Territories of Hong Kong. And they had to do all of this while fighting the currents that could wash them into the open ocean and while avoiding the sharks that prowled those waters.

While swimming through the treacherous waters in the dark, he and his friends would occasionally have to stay underwater to avoid being seen by the coast guards. Using the bamboo sticks, they were able to stay underwater for long periods of time. This, combined with the darkness of the night, caused them to lose sight of each other during the journey. That was the last time my father would see his friends again.

Once they reached the shore, they were on their own. My father would later find out that all of the friends he was with made it across safely. Hong Kong wasn't very populated at the time and welcomed all refugees. The government of Hong Kong saw Chinese refugees as sources of cheap labor and gave all of them citizenship.

The first thing my father did in Hong Kong was head to the nearest police station and register as a refugee hoping to gain citizenship to Hong Kong. Because my father never received a birth certificate, he actually never knew his real birthday. Since he arrived in Hong Kong on September 7th, 1966, he called September 7th, 1946 his birthday. He figured that he was starting a new life in Hong Kong anyway, so he might as well call that day his birthday.

After he got his papers, he rang up his older sister who was already in Hong Kong. She helped him find a place to live and a job as a Chinese herbalist. His older sister was also a refugee. Together, they thrived in Hong Kong, and my father became a great herbalist while reading herbalist books and studying under his boss. He eventually saved enough money from working to buy a plane ticket to the United States.

LIFEHACK #1: BE AMBITIOUS IN THE FACE OF DOUBT.

These refugees were some of the bravest and most ambitious people in China. Their cheap labor and ambitions brought about Hong Kong's economic success in the late 20th century. Several of them even went on to becoming millionaires. Chen estimated in his book that 40 of the 100 richest men in Hong Kong were refugees from China.

This was no coincidence. One of the most important lifehacks that I had learned was to be ambitious even when doubt starts to flood your mind.

When I was younger, I used to be very afraid of roller coasters. The very first roller coaster that I had been on was Space Mountain, an indoor roller coaster that took place completely in dark at Disneyland. My cousin had brought me there when I was around 7.

Throughout the two-hour wait on the line, I was extremely nervous of riding it. I had an imaginative mind, so I thought of all the possible ways in which the ride could go wrong. My cousin, who was around my age, had no fears at all. I was baffled by his courage and felt inferior and embarrassed by my own cowardice. I wanted to go on the ride to show my bravery, but my body refused to cooperate.

When I finally got on the ride, my cousin was laughing and having blast, while I was clinging onto the handle bar as if it was my only friend in the world. But in the middle of the ride, things changed. My anxiety turned into excitement. When the ride was finally over, I no longer had a fear of roller coasters. I still got body chills and shaky nerves, but this time I embraced them. I didn't fight those sensations. I let those sensations intensify and I played with them. They made me feel alive.

Later in life, I would go on many other thrilling adventures, such as water-powered jetpacking, skydiving, and being shot up via a giant slingshot. I would have missed out on many thrilling adventures if I wasn't able to drown out the self-doubt and overcome my fears. You've probably been through a similar first-time roller coaster experience. Or perhaps you've once talked yourself out of asking someone out, because you let your self-

doubt convince you that you were not good enough. And if you add your self-doubt to the doubt from your haters and peers, then you have a recipe for failure.

Curiosity may have killed the cat, but we're humans and not cats. So be curious and ambitious, and take risks. You don't know how many things you are missing out on by fearing the unknown. As long as you plan accordingly to keep yourself afloat in case your ambitions fail, you will be fine. And even if your ambitions do fail, it is not truly a failure. You will learn from it and grow as a person.

LIFEHACK #2: FAILURE IS NOT DEFEAT.

There have been many people in history who were deemed as failures in the beginning. When rapper Eminem first rapped at a club, he was booed. He admitted years later that he almost quit rapping after that night because it was both extremely traumatizing and embarrassing. He was also a high school dropout who nearly died from overdosing on drugs. And he attempted suicide because he couldn't deal with the drug habit and poverty.

The Beatles were infamously rejected by Decca Records when they first auditioned for the record label. In regards to their rejection, the Decca Records explained, "Guitar groups are on the way out... the Beatles have no future in show business." They would later greatly regret that decision.

At a young age, Walt Disney was fired from his job at the Kansas City Star Newspaper company because his boss thought he lacked creativity. He later acquired his own animation studio called Laugh-O-Gram, where he hired a vast number of animators.

However, the studio profits were not enough to cover the salaries paid to the employees and his studio went bankrupt. But that did not stop him. He later started a studio in Hollywood, CA and the rest was history.

As you can see, failing is not necessarily the same as defeat. It is more of a delay to your eventual success. If you try to shoot a 3-pointer in basketball, you may fail the first few tries. But eventually, with enough practice, you will succeed.

True failure is never getting started in the first place.

“DON'T FEAR FAILURE. — NOT FAILURE, BUT LOW AIM,
IS THE CRIME. IN GREAT ATTEMPTS, IT IS GLORIOUS
EVEN TO FAIL.” - BRUCE LEE

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