

## Wise Words with Matt Dimmer



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Air miles have acted as a welcome incentive for many a traveler over the past few years. However, while business travelers can often find they have a huge number of miles accrued, those who travel less often may find the cost of a one-off important trip is too high. This is a situation Matt Dimmer was keen to avoid when he set up The Extra Mile. Matt spent a significant part of last year traveling back and forth between his home in Los Angeles and Michigan to visit his father who was dying of cancer. This regular travel pattern was costly but also very important for Matt, as he had the chance to spend time with his father before he passed away. He realized though that not everyone would be able to afford the regular flights involved to visit relatives living far away and that's when the idea for The Extra Mile came to him – a startup that encourages those with unwanted air miles to donate

them to people who wish to visit relatives suffering from cancer.

Matt runs The Extra Mile as a side-project and in the day time works as a Creative Director at an advertising agency in Los Angeles. He is now looking to partner with like-minded organizations, and is determined to grow The Extra Mile into an nationally/internationally recognized NPO, with a long list of corporate partners. We caught up with Matt to find out how this ambition is coming along.

1. Where did the idea for The Extra Mile come from?

Traveling back and forth from Los Angeles to Michigan to see my dad who had just been diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer, I had a lot of time to myself on planes, in airports and driving. Sitting in the airports and on planes I started to look at people and ask myself what was their story? Were they in similar situations? Were they flying back for a funeral? Then it dawned on me, what if there were people like me, that were unable to fly to see their dads/moms/partners because they couldn't afford it. How would they be able to have these conversations that I was having, the ones where you get a chance to say everything you never did, or let your dad know what you thought of him as a dad and more importantly as a person? They may not get to, and if I can give at least one person that chance, I will.

2. Can you describe a typical working day?

Well, at this stage with The Extra Mile, a typical day consists of me working at my day job (where I'm a Creative Director at an advertising agency in Los Angeles) and coming home to tend to emails, tweets and any other phone calls or connections that need to be taken care of for the non-profit.

3. How do you unwind or relax when you're not working on The Extra Mile?

When I'm not working on The Extra Mile (or my day job), I enjoy running, cooking with my wife, browsing the flea markets of Los Angeles to add to our collection of mid-century modern furniture, traveling, and being outdoors.

4. What's the secret ingredient to success as an entrepreneur?

Passion. This is my first real go of it in this space, so I'm learning a lot every single day. But my personal experience would lead me to say that if your drive and vision for what you are doing is unwavering, you'll succeed.



5. What drove you crazy when building your business?

Well, I'm still building but there are a lot of things that drive me crazy. I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so anytime I can't figure out how to do something correctly, it's an issue. I want to learn all aspects of the business, but I know that it takes time to master them. And the one thing that is on top of my "crazy" list currently, is how tough it's been to connect with an airline, and have them work with us as a partner.

6. What motivates you to keep going?

My motivation truly comes from the thought of 'What if I wasn't able to have the conversations that I did with my dad?' There are things you want to tell that sick loved one, and things they want to tell you. Sometimes it takes a little while to get them out, because for the most part, neither of you have been in that situation before, and you both have a lot of trepidation.

7. If you were to start again, what would you do differently?

I truly don't think I'd start much differently. We've only really been a 501 (c)3 since the end of August, so we're pretty new on the map. I made a lot of calculated steps (especially in the branding arena) out of the gate, that I believe have led to some early successes. Also I've always been really into networking and relationships, and reaching out to the thousands of individuals I've connected with throughout my career has proven to be even more valuable than I had imagined.

8. Where do you see your business in five years, and how will you get there?

Five years is an eternity. Things are really just beginning to heat up at TEM, and I'm laser focused on the next six months. I'd love to have a few thousand flights in the books, and be operating on a national or even international level, as well as some product extensions that I'll be seeking partners for.



9. If you weren't working on The Extra Mile, what would you be doing?

If I wasn't working at The Extra Mile (and I wasn't working at my day job) I'd be either fly fishing, doing something related to furniture and interior design as well as traveling more.

10. Tell Springwise a secret...

I never wear socks that match.

11. Any final words for aspiring entrepreneurs?

You'll probably either seek to create something you've always wanted to, or have an experience that sparks an idea for a solution. Either way, follow your heart, and you'll make it happen. You can read more about The Extra Mile [here](#), or visit The Extra Mile website [here](#).