

Three Words To A Significantly **Richer Life**

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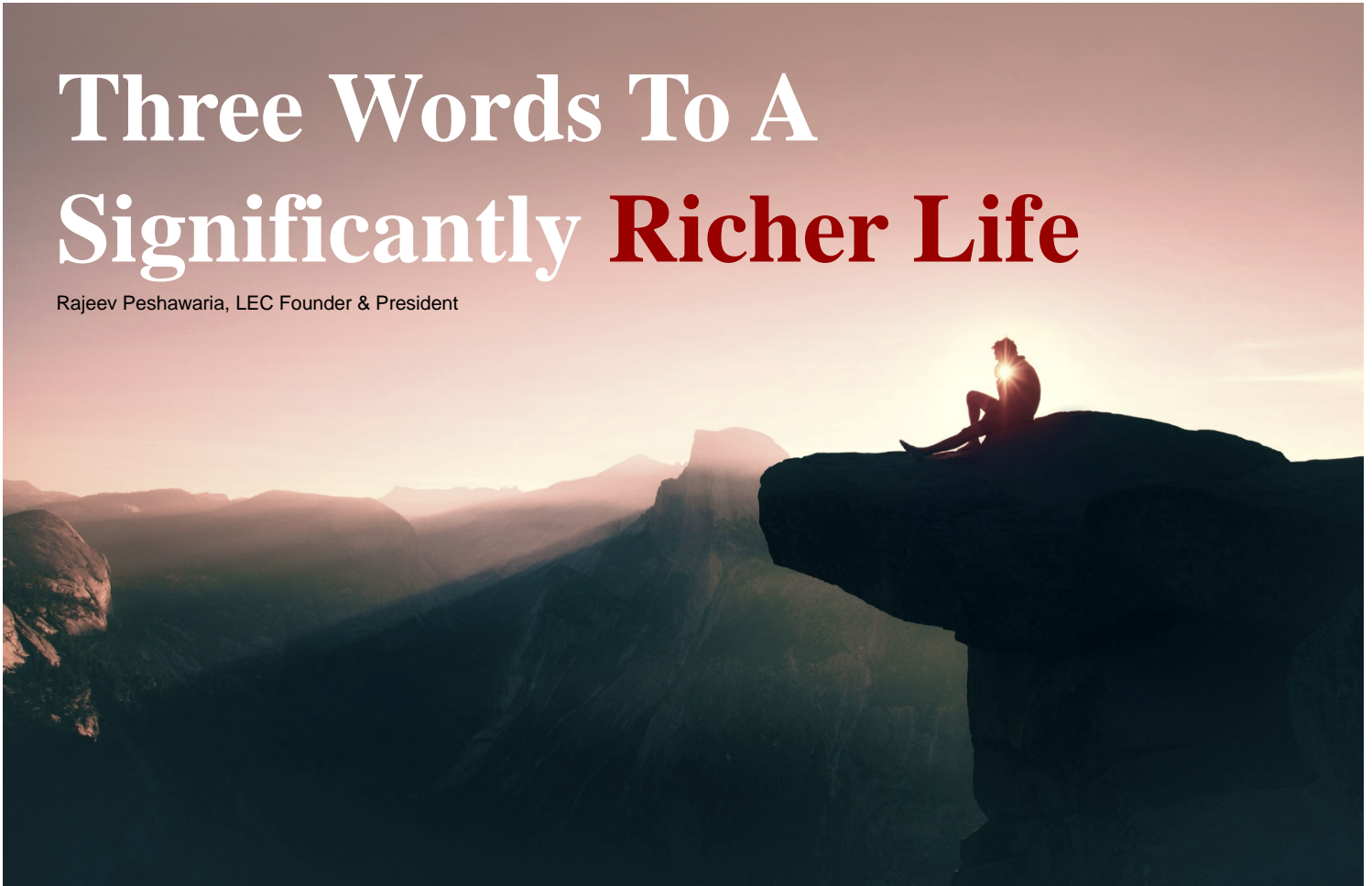


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Throughout school and college, Joshua's academic performance was consistently at the top even while playing three varsity level sports and captaining the school debate team. After graduating summa cum laude with a double major in Computer Science and Philosophy from Stanford, he joined a two-year rotational induction program at a top Silicon Valley firm. He worked on his first full job assignment for a year after the program before joining Columbia Business School for an MBA.

After Columbia, he went back to the Valley and did well for himself for a number of years. Like most other people, he wanted to be successful, and worked hard for it. Early in his life, his immigrant parents had taught him about the importance of hard work and being financially well off. At one stage, he wanted to be a song writer, but his parents had guided him away from that profession towards something more "sensible, secure, and solid as computer

science." Agreeing with their logic, he had given up the idea and had done everything by the book. As soon as he was able, he bought himself a nice house, a fancy car, and other entrapments of a successful lifestyle. Everything was going according to plan until he faced the first major recession of his career, and was laid off as part of a massive downsizing exercise at his firm.

Not having faced much failure or rejection in life until this point, losing his job was hard on him. He could not understand what he could have done differently, and worried about fulfilling his financial commitments without a steady income.

Why he was without a job today, he could not understand. Not only was he confused, he was also angry because he felt he was better and more deserving of retention than some of the others at the firm. Why had his bosses not protected him? Why did they play favorites?

A year went by with no luck on the job front, and he slipped into deep depression. His condition was on the verge of becoming very serious when he finally managed to get a good job at another company. Luckily, he managed to get himself together again, and immersed himself into his personal success recipe of working hard and creating results. He even met someone at work and after a year of dating, got married. Together, his spouse and he earned a very decent packet, moved into a very affluent part of town, and made a glamorous couple in social circles. Life was back on track, or so he thought. Bad luck stuck again in four years, this time in terms of major differences with his wife. The marriage ended with a messy divorce. He had given everything he could to the relationship, and could not understand why his estranged wife had been so unfair.

His personal problems took their toll on his work, and his performance started slipping behind some of the colleagues who he thought were not as good as him. Again, he was heart-broken, confused, and depressed. Why were such horrible things happening to him; why is everyone so terrible to him, he wondered. Given his growing cynicism about everything, his career and life would have derailed permanently had it not been for his boss, John. John knew that Joshua had great potential but needed help, and approved an executive coach to work with Joshua for six months.

Teresa, the coach, had been a senior Silicon Valley executive for many years and had just retired. She began by asking Joshua about his dreams, aspirations and values. He replied easily enough with, "I believe in working hard and creating as much wealth as possible so that I never have to face the financial insecurity my family had to face when I was a child. The problem is, the whole world is unfair...." Through many conversations that followed, Joshua finally realized how much negative energy his cynicism was generating.

"But what would you want your children to remember you for? What would you want your industry to remember you for? Are you fully passionate about what you do? Do you have what it takes to overcome your current and future crises?" Teresa asked. For the first time in his life, Joshua was at a loss of words. Teresa explained that she did not expect immediate answers, and told him to think about the questions for a couple of weeks until they met again. Without calling it such, she wanted him to think about his larger purpose in life.

Two weeks went by quickly, and when he drove to work on the day he was to meet Teresa again, Joshua was not sure he had all the answers to Teresa's difficult questions. Through a series of meetings following reflection times over the next few months, Teresa helped Joshua realize that he needed to utilize his many gifts to do more than just creating wealth. "The only goal in life cannot be to work hard in order to make lots of money. It must be to do or create something that makes a difference. And if you can make loads of money doing something that can leave a meaningful legacy, that would be like hitting the bull's eye," she explained.

With Teresa's help, Joshua eventually decided that he wanted to create a for-profit crowdfunding platform. The platform would help young entrepreneurs raise capital for ventures with financially viable disruptive ideas that could make life better for ordinary people.



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With John's help, Joshua was able to develop this business as an incubator within the company he was working for. As he assembled a team and started work on the new project, he found himself working long hours and loving every minute of it. The ride was not easy, but he found himself facing crises much more positively than ever before. Each time it got really hard, Joshua would visualize how the project would look and feel when it was fully successful. The vivid visualization would energize him again. As one of his colleagues commented, "the word 'cannot' does not feature in his vocabulary anymore." His transformation was complete!

Joshua left the company after a few years of building out his pet project, and is now a successful venture capitalist and entrepreneur. He is happily married and has a daughter he adores. He also coaches young start-up entrepreneurs in growing their businesses, and writes poetry in his spare time. Along the way, he has learned to appreciate what he has rather than what he doesn't. Most importantly, he doesn't hold grudges any more, and has long forgiven his ex-wife. He often wonders what would have happened to him had he not found his second job just when he was on the brink of collapse, and is thankful to the recruiters who helped place him. He fully acknowledges that had his boss and coach not helped him when he was most vulnerable, the outcome would have been disastrous.

When asked what the secret of his success and happiness is, he sums it up in three words: Purpose, Gratitude, and Forgiveness. "Once I realized the power of these three words and made them a part of my identity, my life became rich and beautiful. I now try to enrich others' lives by introducing these three sources of 'wealth' to them," he says.

What do these three words mean to you? Do you have them in your life?