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ENTREPRENEURS
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Minnesota Grown

Minnesota's own Louie Anderson talks about success, failure and having a sense of humor.

BY STEVEN SCHUSSLER

ST. PAUL NATIVE LOUIE ANDERSON is one of the most versatile and successful comedians in the business today. Loved by TV and live audiences alike, Anderson performs for standing-room-only crowds in Las Vegas and is well-respected by the readers of his books. He is worshiped by the rising comics he mentors and encourages others with his honesty and wisdom.

SS: You're best known as a comedian, but you're also an author. How many books have you written?

LA: I've written three books. The first book was *Dear Dad*, a journal to my father, the second was *Good-bye Jumbo...Hello Cruel World*, which is a self-help book for those who struggle with self-esteem issues, and my newest is, *The F Word: How to Survive Your Family*. People still come up to me and say how much these books mean to them—it is extremely fulfilling to know that you made a difference.

SS: How did you get into comedy? **LA:** I was at a comedy club and I told my friend I didn't think the guy on stage was funny, and he said, "If you think you're better, then get up there." So I did. At the time, I was employed as a social worker. So basically I got into the business because of a dare. Plus, people thought I was funny. Actually, I really wanted to be the president of the United States. I always thought I'd be good in politics but I wouldn't want to do the work the position requires.

SS: What was your big break? **LA:** I wanted to be on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*; it was my big goal. It took me two years of auditions, but the guy who interviewed me didn't like me so finally I decided to go with Letterman. And then, at the same time, Johnny Carson called me. I decided to go with the *Tonight Show*, and I got my stamp of approval. That was the turning point in my life because I went from playing clubs and making a few hundred dollars a week to making thousands of dollars ... overnight!

SS: Were you prepared for all this success? **LA:** I didn't understand that comedy was a real business, and I wasn't good with money, so I had a difficult time. Money ran through my fingers. Finding the right business people to surround you is key.

SS: Tell me about your latest project: Stand-Up Boot Camp. **LA:** This isn't just for aspiring comics. In fact, we have had several attendees who were business people looking for



inspiration in order to grow their business. We give attendees from all walks of life the opportunity to take what they are doing to another level. The Stand-Up Boot Camp teaches you how to take your plans to the next level, how to discover your voice, and taps into your authentic self. In the case of business people, they will learn a lot about public speaking, overcoming stage fright, how to tap into their creativity and originality.

SS: What was a key to your success? **LA:** The best advice I can give is to practice seeing yourself in the situation you want to be in. Visualize where you want to be. I never thought I was crazy. I thought, "When is it going to happen?" I always saw myself getting on the *Tonight Show*.

SS: What has been your biggest sacrifice (personal and/or professional)? **LA:** Deciding not to have a family but to have a career; I would've been a really good father. I also didn't always enjoy the journey. When I was at the White House, when I went to Japan, Australia; I wish I had enjoyed the surroundings instead of being single-minded about my performance.

SS: What advice would you give to entrepreneurs, business professionals and students? **LA:** You need to enjoy and have passion for what you are doing; if you don't, it will be tough. Every time I step on that stage I leave my troubles on the stairs. In business you have a chance to change somebody's day, so I think what's really important is what you are giving, because giving is the nourishment. And the most important thing to remember is that it's a very small world, so be good to everybody—you may see them on your way up or down.

« Steven Schussler (steven@schusslercreative.com) is the founder, chairman and CEO of Schussler Creative, Inc., which specializes in creating, designing and developing theatrical attractions, restaurants, retail stores and entertainment venues worldwide. He is also the author of the upcoming book, *It's a Jungle in There - Inspiring Lessons, Hard-Won Insights, and Other Acts of Entrepreneurial Daring*—to be released in September by Sterling Publishing.