

Thank you very much for the introduction, Betty!  
I'm very honored for the opportunity to be here to introduce our three speakers.

As Betty mentioned, I'm Alexander Erling, the CEO of Brute Jute LLC

While I may be only 13 years old - I'm already thinking of embarking on a second company based on the inspiration I'm getting from these serial entrepreneurs who will be speaking to us this morning.

Before I introduce these amazing panelists. I will briefly highlight a few things I learned while being in the Young Entrepreneur's Academy last year.

Many of these business insights might seem familiar, but as a new entrepreneur, I will recap what especially stood out for me in my journey as a Young Entrepreneur!

FIRST STEP as an entrepreneur \*\*\* Brainstorming a business idea:

This is in some ways the most challenging part ...

Getting Started. I saw there were two roads:

Either a service or product oriented business.

A service business could have been offering or facilitating professional services—

or even providing a web site, such as Craigslist,

After a lot of brainstorming I settled on starting my product business—

The Brute Jute company selling Versatile, reusable

\*\* Brute Strength \*\* Grocery Bags.

The Early stages of creating my business focused primarily on Manufacturing & Importing \*\*\* as well as discovering my Target market

I knew part of my target market was shoppers, but it wasn't until I went door to door in my neighborhood that I got keen insights on who exactly is most interested in my fine ECO FRIENDLY Jute bags! Turns out on many days I was able to make a sale to approximately 1 out of 5 households I visited!!!

I proved I am a successful CEO-door to door salesman!

Then there was the IMPORTING \*\*\* Talk about challenges!? Anybody here ever tried importing?

- Beyond Locating a manufacturer there is the issue of TRANSPORTATION
- By Air OR By Sea
- BOTTOM LINE \*\*\* I learned that to AVOID headaches, one must Contract and obtain a Customs broker for importing.

**Many more details of preparing my business I learned from the pros here in this room.** Things like business licensing, corporate structure, bank accounts, paper works, marketing and packaging products, web development, patents etc.

these are all really important and take a lot of time.

**But I can tell you very enthusiastically -- Entrepreneurship is not for the faint of heart. Above all else... Maintain your mental health!**

**Rejection is everywhere in the business world**

\*\* the majority of my door to door sales were rejections

\*\* good lessons for me there! I got used to Rejections.

**Identify/Create a support group** right from the start

\*\*\* For me it was my family and everyone involved in helping me while in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy.

**Have realistic expectations and** don't expect instant success

- Slow progress is still progress

**Rome wasn't built in a day**, and neither is one's new business.

- Be accountable and Have courage of ownership (with everything) success or failure
- Be honest with yourself, know yourself, and face your fears and follow your heart
- Success is the result of consistent action
- ALWAYS Give 100% and be the best version of yourself every day.
- Read entrepreneur books & articles

MOST importantly ...

**Surround yourself with experienced, like minded entrepreneurs and business tycoons-**

**and on that note, it is my pleasure to introduce our panelists...**

.

**Asha Sharma** is the Chief Operating Officer of **Porch.com**. In this role Asha is responsible for building a truly great company that both employees and customers love. As one of Porch's earliest employees, Asha helped build Porch from the ground up across the development of revenue streams, the brand, the product, and talent. In addition, Asha was instrumental in closing and executing the national online, in-store, and financing partnership with Lowe's Home Improvement. Prior to joining Porch, Asha worked at Microsoft, Deloitte Consulting, Cargill and SC Johnson & Son. She started her career by founding two companies, one of which was recognized by the President of the United States in 2012. Asha earned a bachelor's of science degree from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management.

**Mark** is the chief executive officer of **Smartsheet.com**.

Mark is passionate about productivity and collaboration. Mark strives to enable teams and organizations worldwide to transform how they work using cloud, collaboration, and mobile technologies. Prior to Smartsheet, Mark served as senior vice president of global services for Onyx Software, leading the consulting and customer-facing teams in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. A dual-citizen of Germany and the United States, Mark has spent considerable time working and living abroad and makes every attempt to apply global perspective and relevance to what Smartsheet provides.

## **Alexander Gounares THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF Concurix Corporation**

Alexander is building a novel data center security product using containerization and software defined networking. Prior to Concurix, Alex served as AOL's Chief Technology Officer. In this role, he led all aspects of AOL's technology strategy, platform development and external technology partnerships. Alex joined AOL from Microsoft, where he was Corporate Vice President and Chief Technology Officer for the company's Online Services Division. During his tenure at Microsoft, Gounares led significant strategic and technical operations for some of the company's most important projects including Microsoft's global advertising platform, Bing search, MSN and Microsoft Virtual Earth. Alex also served for three years as Technology Advisor to Microsoft Chairman and founder Bill Gates, as well as Corporate Vice President of Corporate Strategy in Microsoft's Finance Department.

Each of our panelists are going to tell us what makes them tick, a bit about their company(s), and what is needed in our communities for entrepreneurs to be successful.

Plus, since I'm a kid ---- and they are a "serial entrepreneur" --- their favorite brand of cereal ☺