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Mr. Greco

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A Journey of Resilience

In the scorching desert heat, a platoon of soldiers pushes through grueling training, surrounded by the constant barrage of commands. They must stay determined to successfully endure days of extreme pressure and physical exertion. Lior Delgo, 19 years old at the time, had been serving in the Israeli Defense Force for two years. To this day, he will never forget the physically and mentally grueling process of training he went through prior to being sent to Rwanda in a special forces unit on a humanitarian mission.

Lior's role in the Israeli delegation was far from ordinary. As part of a select unit of only 15 soldiers, they were tasked with a dual mission: ensuring the safety of the Israeli team and aiding the Rwandan population still reeling from the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. Never would he have imagined that this experience would equip him with the resilience and adaptability to eventually become successful in navigating through the dynamic corporate world of the Silicon Valley.

Upon departing to Rwanda, Delgo and the rest of the delegation left in a Hercules plane carrying medical equipment and 89 different people: medics, nurses, aides, and administrative personnel. Prior to Delgo's landing in Rwanda, the entire Israeli delegation received education of the cause and results of the genocide, including reports from the area about the conditions of the local population. Despite this information, witnessing the horrors that were taking place firsthand was still profoundly shocking. Delgo explains that, "immediately, the suffering, the real

condition of the population on the ground, the scale of the death and the casualties were very visible, very apparent.” As the plane touched down onto ruins of what once was an airport, a crowd of people, including children, rushed towards it, their faces showing desperation, begging for food and water. Delgo recalls his reaction to this tragic circumstance: “someone that was born into this situation, having no influence, understanding, impact, say, and yet has found themselves in the worst, most devastating situation that one can experience on planet earth, is something that is heartbreaking.”

In order to alleviate the suffering that surrounded them, the team set up a field hospital, an emergency care unit, and a mobile laboratory all within 18 hours. In fact, the delegation that worked alongside Delgo included individuals with diverse backgrounds, ranging from seasoned soldiers to experienced doctors who were used to seeing severe suffering and trauma. Even then, despite all of their prior experience and knowledge, seeing and experiencing the genocide first hand was beyond anything they had gone through or could have imagined. The experience of being at war is “an enveloping, sustained, extreme auditory experience that cannot be replicated in another setting,” continuing that, “someone who has never been to war, cannot really understand it” (Lambrecht).

Following a deeply emotional arrival, marked by devastation and shock, the soldiers and the doctors rallied support for one another. Although difficult, they had to remove themselves from the sorrow of watching that level of devastation. They shifted their focus to the mission, drawing on their intensive training to execute tasks and overcome obstacles amidst the tragedy. Delgo’s intensive military training not only taught him how to carry out tasks and follow instruction, but it also instilled in him psychological resilience and mental toughness. A recent article by Luke Jennings, a Loughborough University graduate who is currently studying MSC

Sport and Exercise Psychology, suggests that psychological resilience is one of the most important psychological skills in the armed forces as soldiers “experience an unprecedented number of adverse situations, and are required to prepare for unknown challenges”. With the combination of this resilience and support from his colleagues, Delgo explained that he and the rest of the delegation essentially “got used to it”. You may think, how can one “get used to” this drastic scale of death and suffering? As Delgo described, “getting used to it, is effectively an element of being able to function.” They reminded themselves, “I am here to accomplish something. I am here on a mission. I am focused. I know what I need to do. I'm here to have a positive impact” (Delgo).

Most of all, the adaptation and resilience of the local population there is what stunned Delgo the most. Reflecting upon Delgo’s experience in Rwanda, he remembers seeing people who had been stripped of everything. Despite that, they were able to survive and function. There was still a desire for life, and for the lives of their loved ones. There was a desire to support and help each other to survive and overcome.

The dreadful realities of war for the population of Rwanda became so prevalent that they gradually merged into their daily lives, essentially becoming the accepted norm, losing how shocking it is. This response can be associated with habituation. According to Kendra Cherry, MS, a psychosocial rehabilitation specialist, habituation is a mechanism which “helps humans function in environments where they are being inundated with sensory experiences and information” (Cherry). In this way, Delgo's observation emphasizes the remarkable resilience of individuals during the brutality of war, while also illustrating the human ability to adapt to the horrific circumstances. Delgo goes to say that, “That adaptation is something that I don't think

that people understand that they have in them. They don't think that they can push themselves to their extreme, but they do, and they can” (Delgo).

Delgo's life changing experience on this mission in Rwanda and the insights he gained eventually helped him to develop the ability to tackle challenges not just as a soldier, but also in his corporate and business pursuits. Only five years after returning from Rwanda, Delgo moved to the United States where he founded his first startup, Farechase, which was later bought by Yahoo. Following that, he co-founded his second startup, Videosurf, which was acquired by Microsoft. With every startup Delgo gained a lot of valuable experience and insights into various aspects of entrepreneurship. As a soldier, with a lot of training and a lot of experience, what you are designed to do is execute, achieve a mission, follow orders, and overcome obstacles no matter what. These lessons from Delgo's military experiences played a significant role in shaping his resilience, adaptability, and leadership skills, which in turn contributed to his success in the corporate world.

Now, Delgo is the Co-Founder and President at Globality, his third and most ambitious startup. Globality has transformed enterprise procurement into a smarter way that creates more efficient, inclusive markets around the globe. Globality was built on AI, which was perceived as risky and unreliable. As Delgo stated, "AI was already a wild card in the tech world. So building an entire company based on it seemed like a gamble no one wanted to take. But I took it." It played off: Many big companies such as Adidas, Tesco, Chick Fil A, US Bank, and UCB Pharma have adopted and partnered with Globality's product. Delgo's current role is to bring together the best team in the world, and work relentlessly to ensure that Globality's vision becomes a reality across the world. His ultimate goal, as he describes it, is “to grow Globality into one of the largest technology companies in the world” (Delgo). Individuals with military backgrounds, like

Delgo, bring a lot of leadership skills and qualities to the corporate world, including resilience, performance under pressure, teamwork, humility, and a sense of mission. These traits often allow them to excel in challenging environments and make significant contributions to their organizations, companies, etc. According to Stuart, "Veterans come to the corporate world having already gained incredible experiences in teamwork, setting expectations, holding people accountable and providing resources to their teams." The same determination and adaptability traits that were utilized during his service appear again in the corporate world. These attributes have not only propelled Globality towards its goal of becoming a successful technology company, but have also cultivated Delgo into a visionary leader who is capable of overcoming obstacles and achieving ambitious objectives. Delgo's path with Globality showcases his resilience, which as Delgo states, is the most essential quality honed from his military background. Starting a company from scratch, especially when facing skepticism about AI, is tough. Yet, Delgo's military experience taught him to push forward despite doubts. He knew the value of building a strong team, a lesson learned from the importance of teamwork in the military. This foundation helped him navigate challenges in the everchanging tech industry, where unforeseen obstacles are guaranteed. Delgo's resilience to succeed and his ability to assemble and lead a capable team are key factors driving Globality's growth in the competitive corporate landscape.

Delgo reflects on past challenges, "I find myself confronted with challenges on an almost daily basis, navigating obstacles that can often appear overwhelming. However, reflecting on my experiences in Rwanda, I'm reminded that the challenges I currently face pale in comparison. This reflection serves as a reminder of my immense fortune." Delgo concludes that gratitude and perspective have also helped to fuel his commitment to Globality.

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