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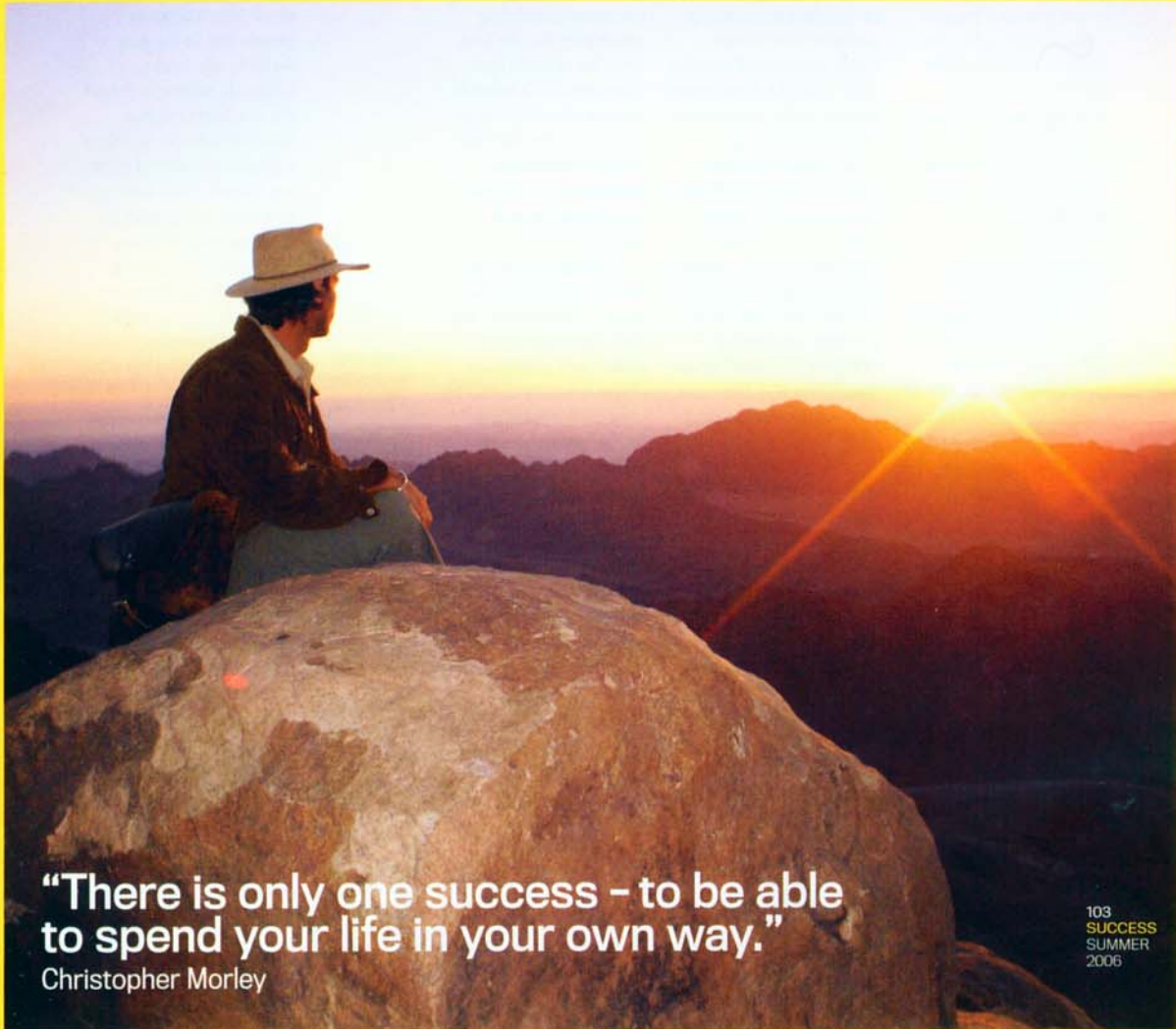
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Inspire
Summer
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THE
REWARDS
OF SUCCESS



**“There is only one success - to be able
to spend your life in your own way.”**

Christopher Morley

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Josh Bernstein's Journey of a Lifetime

No one has it all, but survival expert Josh Bernstein comes close. An entrepreneur in his twenties, today, at 35, he finds himself the savior of the History Channel, billed as the new Indiana Jones and given credit for making archaeology fun again. **BY DAVID NAPIUK**

Digging for the Truth, an adventure and archeology show on the History Channel, was a surprise hit in its first season. With an extensive marketing campaign, the History Channel has invested heavily in the show, which searches for the truth behind such legends as the Holy Grail and King Solomon's Mines. The success of *Digging for the Truth* is due to its host, survival expert and explorer Josh Bernstein, a Manhattan-born Utah resident and owner of BOSS, America's oldest and largest survival school, based in Boulder, Colorado.

Bernstein is the adventure-loving guide, traveling the world sorting fact from fiction. From the plains of Patagonia in Argentina in search of the Land of Giants to Greece to investigate the real battlefield of Troy, each week sees Bernstein challenging long-held theories with modern science. It's not a traditional archeology show, where the host lectures the audience and the only highlight is the discovery of a coin or two – it's the very best in armchair adventure. Bernstein inspires his viewers, taking them on a hands-on journey into the past.

In one episode, he takes to the air in a powered paraglider to view the Nasca lines in Peru; in another, he descends a darkened shaft in an abandoned copper mine in England. Much of the fun comes from seeing Bernstein scramble, rappel, climb cliffs, and hack his way through dense jungles. "I was at the top of Chichen Itza one day and then later I was inside the Great Pyramids and I thought, How many people in the world get to do this for a living?"

Bernstein has delivered the History Channel their top-rated series, with over 1.4 million viewers. His looks probably account for part of his female following (he was recently selected as "Hottest TV Host" by *In Touch Weekly*), but most fans seem to be hooked on the history. His success in making it seem fresh and exciting lies in his approach to the genre. "I don't go in pretending to know too much. When I was a kid, I hated history. So to keep a kid's attention now, I ask, How can I

bring the curiosity into the question?" His interviews with local experts are friendly rather than dry, and his use of ancient tools gives viewers a sense of how people really lived in the past. Above all, he makes his adventures seem so much fun that it's hard not to feel you're part of the show. Joking with the camera or doing something for the first time, his relaxed and down-to-earth attitude creates a bond with his audience, one that has inspired countless statements of devotion on message boards across the Web.

Traveling from one exotic location to the next is a dream job, but Josh Bernstein isn't lucky; he's passionate about what he does. "My core philosophy is to follow your passion. I'm a big fan of 'do what you love and get paid for it.' I'm passing on the passion." So, how did a kid from the Upper East Side in New York end up investigating history in some of the remotest locations on the planet?

"It was never the intention of the show, but now we're in schools and universities. It's overwhelming and flattering and totally unexpected."

Bernstein rides across Egypt's Giza Plateau to the pyramids.

The answer lies in his story. Although born in New York City, Bernstein was drawn to nature from an early age. "I've always loved the wilderness. I took to it like a fish to water." After a couple of summers in Wyoming, his mind was made up. "I wanted a career in the outdoors industry. I was interested in desert survival—how indigenous people live in the desert." So he headed out to Colorado where he found the Boulder Outdoor Survival School (BOSS), a wilderness survival training school. After joining as a student, he quickly became an apprentice and then an instructor. Taking a break from the outdoors, he attended Cornell University, getting a double major in Anthropology and Psychology. Then he traveled to Jerusalem where he spent a year studying, among other things, ancient mystical texts.

No longer a fresh-faced kid from the big city, he returned to BOSS with an offer for the owner. Make him the director of marketing. Considering his lack of experience, it was a bold move. "I like to take risks. The owner asked, 'What's it going to cost me?' I told him he wouldn't have to pay me anything unless I grew the school. Within four



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months we'd doubled our enrollment." The job was his. Eventually he was so successful at growing the school that the owner, David Wescott, suggested they swap duties. Bernstein leapt at the chance. "It was a leverage buyout, but I had to grow the school each year to be able to buy him out. A leverage buyout is impressive if it works, but stressful."

So, by 1997, Bernstein had risen from being an apprentice instructor to being the owner of the company. "The biggest challenge was to grow from being a kid to being their CEO." After BOSS did consulting work for the films *Castaway* and *Charlie's Angels*, Bernstein went out to LA, where someone suggested he meet with the producers of *Digging For The Truth*. After all, they were looking for a "young, adventurous man." They knew immediately they'd found their host. But now Bernstein had a dilemma. How could he commit to nine months of filming a year and still remain true to his school duties? By being accessible. "My BlackBerry is invaluable. I get ten to fifteen emails a day. You'd be amazed where cell phones work today! From the Pyramids of Giza to the icebergs of the Arctic, I've had full contact with my staff. But if I didn't have so much faith in them, it'd be hard to leave."

But his role at the school had to change. "My duties these days include sharing the mission of the school with the public and hopefully bringing that message to a larger audience. I also keep an eye on our financials and the overall marketing of the school. So while I may not be there to welcome each student, I'm still involved in all aspects of our operations."

Keeping up with two separate schedules requires planning on a military level. "I keep one calendar for the series production schedule and a second calendar for my personal schedule. They're both updated, synched, and posted to a secure server daily so that everyone knows where I am on any given day of the year. That gives me the ability to plan my free time." Dividing his free time between the city and the country gives Bernstein the chance to indulge both passions. As his friend and former coworker Diane Nagler says, "He's just Josh. He loves his time in the wilderness, but he also loves the cosmopolitan side of life."

Inevitably, though, something has to give. A long-term relationship found itself unable to endure through the long absences. But he has a loving family for support. His twin brother and his stepbrother are both entrepreneurs, a trait that was actively encouraged by their stepfather.

"He empowered us to follow our dreams. His support was invaluable." The long absences from his home and family, while filming on location, are tough. But the lessons he took from being a survival instructor have helped him cope. "It's the survival mentality of getting through anything. You have to reach down pretty deep." These same skills have also helped his business sense. "You can bring outdoor survival techniques into the business world. The ability to manage your resources can translate into financial management. Brainstorming is like starting a fire—you begin with nothing and create something magical." For Bernstein, business is just another passion. "I was always entrepreneurial. I started two businesses—I was Editor-in-Chief of *The Outdoor Network* magazine and I created a dotcom that was a clearinghouse for manufacturers of outdoor products. We were bought out, but it was a great experience."

Bernstein's enthusiasm has rekindled people's interest in archeology so well that the effects have spilled over from his show. "It was never our intention, but now we're in schools and universities. It's overwhelming and flattering and totally unexpected." But that is a consequence of his pas-

sion-making others as excited as he is. "I think it's great that so many people are being turned on to exploring history. It's important, if not critical, to look at the past. The more people reflect on where we've been, the more we know where we're going."

So what's next for the man people are dubbing the new Indiana Jones? "I like today. I'm grateful for where I am now and the potential I have to fill. I'm happy to keep this going." With a book deal with HarperCollins and another season of *Digging for the Truth* on the way, Bernstein's future looks bright. "Honestly, I love what I do at both BOSS and the History Channel. It may take you a few years to make it all work—it took me almost 15—but if you have the patience, determination, and entrepreneurial spirit, it's the most satisfying work lifestyle you can create."



"You can bring outdoor survival techniques into the business world. A simple skill can be translated into business leadership."

Bernstein rappels from Montsegur Castle in southern France.

