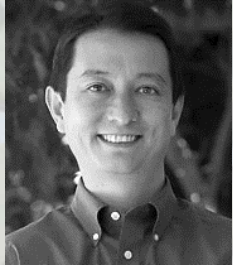


# Hot Sauce! Secret Sauce for Entrepreneurs



## About The Author

Akira Hirai is the founder and CEO of Cayenne Consulting, a firm that has helped hundreds of entrepreneurs prepare for the fund raising process by crafting strategies, business plans, financial forecasts, and pitch decks.

Akira started two technology companies in Silicon Valley during the dot com bubble. His previous experience has spanned investment banking, management consulting, software engineering, and sales management. He earned his A.B. in Engineering Sciences at Harvard University.

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## Fit to be an Entrepreneur

January 13, 2010

A large part of entrepreneurial success comes from perseverance: the ability to tirelessly grind it out, day after day. But if you aren't in great physical and mental shape, that's a recipe for burnout.

Pushing your body and mind for peak performance without adequate exercise, nutrition, and rest is like flying an airplane without performing regular maintenance.

A lot of people reason that they're simply too busy to take care of themselves the way they know they should. "I'll start in six months when the business is up and running," they say. Six months later, they're as busy as ever, and it keeps getting pushed off.

I know. That describes me during most of my 20's and 30's.

By the time I hit my late 30's, as I labored to bootstrap Cayenne Consulting, I realized that it was finally time to break some old habits and live a healthier lifestyle if I wanted to be able to handle the demands of entrepreneurship.

I'd like to share a few tips that I personally found to be helpful. I know that everybody is different, so what worked for me may not work for you, but if I can help just one entrepreneur be just a little more successful, that's enough for me.

With that, here are my tips:

- **Make a Decision.** I went through a lot of soul-searching and decided that personal wellness was going to be a real, lifelong priority, rather than some abstract goal that understood without embracing. Until I made that decision, my previous attempts at getting fit were no more meaningful than most people's New Year resolutions.



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- **Know What You're Doing.** Living a healthy lifestyle is so much easier if you know what you're doing. Subscribing to *Men's Health* magazine was a great start for me. I try to read a little about fitness, health, nutrition, and medicine every week. I also try to be aware of the nutritional content of what I'm consuming, both at home and at restaurants. I still occasionally eat foods with saturated fats, for example, but I do so in moderation because I'm aware of the effects the food is having on my body. Knowing what I'm doing allows me to make better choices and avoid fad diets.
- **Start Gradually.** If you try to do everything at once, you're setting yourself up for failure. All it takes is a small setback--bad weather, a minor injury, or Thanksgiving--to bring everything to a grinding halt. Make a series of small, manageable lifestyle changes. Start with the easy ones. Once you've scored some small accomplishments, the larger changes will seem more achievable.
- **Make it a Habit.** Being active doesn't mean hitting the gym every day. It means taking the stairs instead of the elevator, turning up the radio and dancing, or finally getting around to organizing that garage. And eating well doesn't mean counting every calorie. It means ordering the small fries instead of the super-size, choosing complex carbs over simple carbs, and ordering wisely when eating out.
- **Avoid Shortcuts.** Most of the diet and exercise programs sold on TV are designed to do one thing: to clear your wallet of excess cash. The ones that actually work fundamentally boil down to a sensible diet and exercise. There is no magic pill; there is no machine that will give you a thorough workout in five minutes twice a week. Don't buy into the false hope--you don't need them to live a healthy life.
- **Associate With the Right People.** If you hang out with friends who sit around smoking, drinking, and eating chicken wings, guess what you're going to do? If your friends aren't going to change (and they probably won't), then maybe it's time for you to change friends. A good, supportive, and sometimes competitive support network can do wonders for helping you implement and stick with major lifestyle changes. It's difficult--even traumatic--to disrupt your social network, but you need to think about what's best for yourself in the long run.
- **Mix it Up.** It's a good idea to combine stretching, aerobic exercise, and strength training. It's also good to find a mix within these categories to prevent boredom and overuse injuries. On the aerobic side, I like to alternate among trail running, mountain biking, climbing, using the elliptical machine, plyometrics, and martial arts. Having many activities to choose from ensures that I always have something interesting to do that will suit my mood, the weather, and the amount of time available. For strength

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training, I really like the P90X workouts because you only need a chin up bar and a variety of dumbbells.

- **Multitask.** When I'm out for a long run or bike ride, I sometimes use the time to think through a difficult problem or to brainstorm ideas for a project. This way, I don't feel too guilty if I take time out of a busy day to burn some calories.
- **Make it Fun.** I don't do things that I don't enjoy, at least not for very long. When I first started running, I didn't care for it very much. It's amazing what a good running tempo on the iPod does for me. I keep a log of my workouts so that I can see how I'm progressing from one day to the next. When running or biking, it's fun to wear a Garmin Forerunner 305 heart rate monitor. It has a built-in GPS and altimeter, so you can see how hills affect your pulse and your pace. You can even export and overlay the 305's data to Google Earth so that you can see your workouts in 3-D.
- **Get a Body Composition Analyzer.** These electronic scales, some costing less than \$50, that estimate body fat percentage, bone mass, metabolic age, and other factors (which are calibrated based on your age, gender, and activity level). It's fun to see your body fat percentage fall, or to see that your metabolic age is a few decades lower than your actual age.
- **Push (But Know) Your Limits.** You get the greatest benefit when you challenge yourself. Once something becomes easy, find a way to increase your intensity. I'm not going to tell you to "talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program" because I assume you're smart enough to avoid doing something that's going to kill you. If you follow some of the tips above, namely Start Gradually and Know What You're Doing, you should be okay.
- **Quit Smoking.** I smoked for over 15 years, sometimes more than two packs a day. It's incredibly addictive. I tried to quit every few months, using everything from hypnosis to the nicotine patch, but nothing seemed to work. Not even my father's death from lung cancer was enough to make me quit. I just wasn't "mentally in the right place" to quit yet. That's why Deciding--the very first tip listed--is so important. I finally managed to quit in 2005, and it was probably the single best thing I could have done for myself.

I've made some profound changes over the past five years, and as a result, I have more energy, better endurance, and sharper focus. I'm also sure that I've added a few decades to my expected lifespan. As an entrepreneur, this means that I've given myself a better chance at achieving success, and a better chance at enjoying the rewards in my later years.