



EPISODE 69 Create Something New Without Fear of Failure

With guest Dr. Adam Rosh

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AR: “The most successful businesses aren't necessarily new ideas. They're just an insight that you have when you say, you know what? That's a really great business, but there's something I could do a little better from that.”

HF: Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem Podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a non-clinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So, pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hello, hello, and welcome back to the Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. You are listening to episode number 69. One of the unexpected surprises of practicing medicine can be a feeling that even though you're helping people, working hard, and using your brain, something feels unsatisfying. And I'm not talking about all the issues with a healthcare system that can significantly diminish the satisfaction of being a doctor.

This is more to do with the feeling that you're not getting to create something of your own. We all have a creative side and many of us have a desire to be more innovative in some way, to leave a legacy, and flex some different muscles than we use in patient care.

But so often we get stuck on what that creative pursuit might be and how to get started. When we do come up with an idea, we stick a big sign in front of our face that says,

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“How? How are you going to do this?” And this question becomes a stop sign. We want a guarantee of success before taking that first step.

This episode is all about allowing you to think outside the box and have some encouragement and advice for getting your ideas out of your head and giving them legs so you can start taking those steps. To help us out today, our special guest is Dr. Adam Rosh, emergency medicine physician and founder of Rosh Review, a company that helps physicians, medical students, and other healthcare professionals be successful on their exams and certifications.

Dr. Rosh has a lot of experience as a serial entrepreneur dating back to childhood. Through hearing about his challenges and successes, we're going to get some great tips on how to move forward with our own ideas and dreams. It's truly a pleasure to welcome Dr. Adam Rosh to the podcast. Hi, Adam.

AR: Hi Heather. How are you?

HF: I'm great. It's so nice to meet you. I know we talked a long time ago, a number of years ago, and it's great to actually see you.

AR: I couldn't be happier. Thank you for inviting me to the Doctor's Crossing podcast. I've listened to a lot of your previous episodes and it's really great to be included in your list of guests.

HF: Oh, thank you so much. I'm very honored. I'm excited to hear your story. Would you like to take us back to childhood and tell us how this entrepreneurial bug got started?

AR: Well, yeah. I'll go directly to the latest venture of Rosh Review, and think about kind of how that started in my life. I think like many people who start a business, there are inklings of a lot of failures in their past, and eventually, they hit the mark. With Rosh Review, that was really born out of my struggles in college. I got to undergraduate college and really was in one of those high schools that I cruised through, but never ended up learning how to learn. So, when I got to undergrad at University of Wisconsin, Madison, I was sitting in classrooms and I didn't really know how to pass these exams and things weren't going so well. By the end of my second year, I had a 2.1 GPA,



cumulative GPA. I was on the verge of flunking out of college.

And I had one of these moments where I was asking myself “What am I going to do with myself?” and had to make a change. I dedicated myself to understanding and learning how to learn. That was the seed that germinated and grew into this idea of building an education company Rosh Review that would help others succeed and to help others build confidence and to provide the knowledge into being able to pass certification exams and being able to become better learners and the ultimate goal of Rosh Review is to provide better patient care by making better decisions at the bedside by having better knowledge.

I look at it as scratching my own itch. I was a struggling student and I spent so much time rectifying that, changing that in my life, and then ultimately built a Qbank and product that scratched my own itch. I wanted a better review resource out there for these certification exams. Ultimately, that's how Rosh Review started.

HF: I never knew this backstory, Adam. I really appreciate you sharing this. It's so helpful.

AR: I think a lot of people in our profession, we're surrounded by high achievers. And I know for me, I didn't start with the foundation of success. I actually started with the foundation of failure, but it was those failures that drove me to not want to feel a certain way. It was those failures that drove me to disprove people and to kind of get over insecurities in my life that I had when I got to college and in medical school. And then that changed for me.

And now anytime, I come across people who are in similar situations, those are the people who I love to work with. Those are the people who I spend time with, because I know there's so much potential in them. The spotlight just needs to be shined on those strengths that they have.

HF: Wow, there's so much in here when you said foundation of failure. This is something we don't typically hear. We tend to want to hide our failures, but it makes me think of a quote that I hear, which is, "We tend to teach what we want to learn."

AR: Absolutely.



HF: I'm curious, Adam, where in this story, did you start thinking about doing this for other people? As you said in college, it's when you realize that, "Oh my gosh, like I have a 2.0. I need to do something here."

AR: I think when we all start out going into the health professions and being a physician, there has to be some component of wanting to help other people. That was always there for me. I always wanted to be able to assuage someone's pain. I went into emergency medicine and we get to do that a lot.

After I struggled through undergrad and made it to medical school, and really my learning journey had flipped. My learning journey became something that I became proud of. It became something that drove me and built my confidence. And by medical school, I said I have a really good grasp of this material. My special skill, what I learned, was being able to take complex material and simplify that. I think that is harder than it seems.

I started tutoring when I became a third-year and fourth-year medical student, I started helping out the first-year and second-year students. Then even through residency, I was always involved in some type of education. I became a chief resident. I was involved in writing review articles. As a resident, I authored the PreTest Emergency Medicine book for McGraw-Hill. It was about being able to take my knowledge and giving it back to people because I knew if there was just one person like me out there, it was going to help them.

That ultimately, making the decision to do this at scale was building Rosh Review. When I built Rosh Review, you're really just trying to help one person, but you're able to scale it, because it's a digital product, and that's kind of right where it grew from. It grew from this idea of how I can help one person get better at test-taking. Then now we help probably close to 300- 400,000 people.

HF: You talk about helping people. That's fundamental. And obviously as an emergency medicine physician, you're helping patients all the time. How would you compare this desire to help people as a physician and the satisfaction you got from it to the desire to help people in this realm of learning and the satisfaction you've gotten from creating Rosh Review?



AR: That's a really great question. I think there's an opportunity here. And oftentimes the business world gets this kind of bad, people feel like it's very individualistic in the business world. It's about profit. And ultimately yes, most businesses, the end result is profit.

But I think an approach that I committed to very early on was not only how are we going to interact? How do I interact with learners or subscribers or customers ultimately, but how do we interact with everyone that we work with? That could be employees, that could be other contractors, that could be anyone that we're doing work with.

Something that was the most important decision that I made early on in building Rosh Review was from a single sentence in a book called "The Advantage" by Patrick Lencioni. And in that book I was reading and it said the greatest competitive advantage an organization or a business could have, or a team could have is organizational health and it's free.

That piqued my interest and I dove into this, what is organizational health? And really it's about building true values of a company that you live by. When you think about being a physician, we enter that world with the Hippocratic oath. We enter that world with values that we have a responsibility to society. We have a commitment to helping individuals from suffering, from removing suffering and eliminating suffering. And that same type of commitment could easily be applied to the business world.

The great part about it is it's free. There's no cost, there's no marketing cost, there's no database cost. It's simply treating other people with respect and humility and understanding humanity and everything. In the same way, the lessons that I learned, let's say, from my chairman, Dr. Lewis Goldfrank at NYU Bellevue, that every human has value.

It's the same thing in the business world. Every human has value. Whether it's a customer, a coworker, or another business that you're doing work with. And building that, applying that became so critical and so valuable. And it's actually the thing I am most proud of at Rosh Review.

HF: That's why you're showing how the values can be connected and congruent with your work as a physician to doing something different and it's going to bring you a lot of satisfaction regardless of where you're sort of the landscape that you're working in.

Since we're focusing in this podcast on physicians who might want to create something of their own, do you want to talk just a little bit about how to think about bringing an idea forward, because you've started a number of different businesses when you're getting stuck in that "how" phase?

AR: A lot of times one of the fears, or one of the reasons why people can't get started, there's that initial, you think about that big, big boulder and be like, "How do you get that boulder rolling?" And the hardest part is that initial friction point. You just need to get something rolling. And oftentimes people are like, "Well, I don't have any great ideas. I don't know how to code. How do you gather all the people together?" Those are the things that stall a lot of people and prevent a lot of people from pursuing these desires that they want to maybe build a little side business or even start something entirely new or change careers.

I would say that the most successful businesses aren't necessarily new ideas. They're just an insight that you have when you say, "You know what? That's a really great business, but there's something I could do a little better from that." And that's really what Rosh Review was. It wasn't its first question bank. It was just a question bank that we did, I thought in a little better way. I thought we were able to put the learner at the center of it.

For people who want to start a business, but maybe don't know where to start, just look around and just say "What out there isn't working the way it needs to be working and let me focus in on that and try and make it better."

HF: That's a really excellent point because people will often look and see, "Well, someone's already doing that." But if you think about it, look at all the diet programs that there are, there's always going to be more, there'll be more diet books, there'll be more books that get published. So yeah, I like that point that you brought out. It doesn't have to be different, but you can do it in a different way.

AR: Yeah. I think it's an overlooked area of starting businesses. It's always about, "How do I start the new Apple or the latest Google?" And those are very common fears that we have. We're always comparing ourselves to others. I think in the business sense, there are millions and millions of ideas out there. And sometimes that could be overwhelming. Just walk around, just think about what in your life, what itch can you scratch? And those are the best places to start. Where are you seeing that there's areas of improvement in your own life and just start there.

HF: Excellent. I want to take a brief pause here for a short message and then we'll come back and we'll talk more about how to slay some of these roadblocks that inevitably come up.

If you are applying to a nonclinical job, it's a great idea to convert your CV to a resume. A well-crafted resume helps recruiters see why you are the right person for the job. My resume kit is a downloadable PDF that walks you step by step through creating an impressive resume of your own. You'll have everything you need, including templates and a bonus on writing a winning cover letter.

To get immediate access to this kit that I use with my coaching clients, go to doctorscrossing.com/resumekit or simply go to the Doctor's Crossing website and hit the products tab at the top of the page. Now, back to our podcast.

All right. We're back here with Dr. Adam Rosh, and we're talking about how to slay some of these other roadblocks. Another common one, I think people can get caught in is analysis paralysis. They're researching, they're reading things, they're talking to people, so they're in motion, but they're not really in action. They're not really moving forward.

AR: That's a very common issue that causes people to exactly what you say, just become stale and static and not move and not make forward progress. And oftentimes it's fear that is causing that. It's the fear of what happens if I fail, what happens if I don't know what I'm doing? When I take a step back and think about that, when I made the decision to fully commit to Rosh Review, I had to leave a position of being a program director in medicine. Something that was my dream from starting residency, was to become a program director and oversee and be involved in the life of residents. And I walked away from that. I stepped away from that, and that was extremely fearful. There was a lot of fear around that, but I did fear setting exercises and was able to get past that.

But the way you get around that also is just, you have to just start actually doing things. And here's a kind of way I mitigate the risk of fear. I think I like to only do things where if I fail, I fail high. What do I mean by that? I know failure is going to happen, but let's say I want to get involved in something that I'm going to end up building some networks, or I'm going to end up learning new skills. I started a company before Rosh Review called Probiotics MD that sold probiotics. I spent a ton of time, a ton of money in building it and it failed.

But you know what? In the end, I learned how to develop a brand. I learned how to communicate with distributors. I learned how to build a website. Probiotics MD was a failure, but I gained so many skills that I took those skills and immediately started shortly after that, building Rosh Review and using those skills. I like to say, I like to fail high. Do things that if it doesn't succeed, you still get something out of it and make those choices of what you're going to spend your time on, knowing that if you fail that you're going to get something out of it.

HF: That is so golden, Adam, it is such a great reframe on failure. And it reminds me of something I heard too. I think it was by Marie Forlio and she said, "There's no winning or losing, there's winning or learning."

AR: I like that.

HF: You captured that. It's interesting you say this, because just the other day, I was speaking with a physician who spent a lot of time and number of years and money on trying to establish a business and it didn't work out. And we talked about all the things she learned in creating this business. And she rattled out probably 30 things. When she started saying these things, she got happier and happier and happier. She's like, "Oh my God, I learned all this stuff."

I'm really glad you shared this and your own failure because we need to normalize failure as part of the learning process. We could even reframe it as failure to me is failing to try. If you try something, you're not failing because as you articulated so well, there's always learning. Always.

AR: Yeah. You're spot on right there. I think it was like Ben Franklin or Ford who said something like, "I didn't fail 1,000 times." What was that saying? Do you remember? I don't know.

HF: I think it was Edison or something.

AR: Yeah, Edison.

HF: Like "I didn't fail 10,000 times. I tried 10,000 things that didn't work."

AR: Yeah. Something like that, whatever that quote is. I love that quote. I apologize I'm botching it right now, but it's definitely something that I always tell my kids too.

HF: No, it's all good. I don't know if I have it right either, but we have the point, and that's what matters. We need to give ourselves permission to be human and learn. Just like when you're a kid, you fall down so many times when you're learning to walk. If a kid said, "I'm not going to learn to walk if I fall down on my butt," no one would be walking around.

AR: That's right.

HF: We'd still be crawling. Let's talk a little bit about what you learn about yourself. And also, maybe what you've seen about learners, who you've been helping learn about themselves when they're willing to really dig in and do something that's difficult.

AR: I think in medicine specifically, but any environment that has a level of competition, there's a very psychological component to this. And a lot of it is around confidence. We've all heard of the imposter syndrome in medicine. I think it also exists in business, but the personalities in the business world are a little different.

What's really interesting is when we look at the people who fail exams in Rosh Review, the students who fail, the learners that fail, they're on two ends of the spectrum. They either didn't spend any time engaging in content studying, or they've gone through the question bank two or three times. They are on an extreme end of it.

And one of the areas that I like to really focus on with test-taking is having a healthy mind when you're doing test-taking, even in the business sense or even in being a physician. I like to really focus on building confidence, and I think what we were alluding to earlier, having people dive into things and putting them and throwing them in the water and forcing them to swim but being there by their side, ready to intervene and to help them out. That's also what we've tried to do at Rosh Review is to really stand by the side of learners and to provide whatever support we can along their journeys.

HF: Oh, this is wonderful because we often do when we think about doing something hard and potentially not having it work out the way we want, we don't often think of having someone by our side, someone who's maybe gone before, someone who can help us when the challenges come up and we want to pull up the tent stakes. There is something just part of human nature to want to collaborate and be in community and be seen.

AR: Yeah. It's an interesting point because we always have someone by our side, believe it or not. At the library, you could go and check out a book about other people that have been doing the same things that you may be trying to do. We have the internet now where you could find resources and people available who are doing similar things. This is an audio podcast. But if you look behind me right now, you will see bookshelves filled with books of my teachers, of my mentors. I didn't go to a business school, but I probably have close to 200 books just on business principles.

When I was struggling in different facets of the business, different growth periods of Rosh Review, I would go and find books about people who went through the same thing. People who explain how they got through it from books.

I encourage people that whatever journey you're on, you're probably not the first person to be on that journey. Seek out others who have done something similar and ask them how they got through it, ask them what advice they have. When you're tackling anything difficult, get as many other opinions about the people who have done something and it gives you a sense that you could do this. There are other people that have been in this position.



I mentor, I work a lot with people who are in the business world. The progress of a business is very similar. It's almost like, as physicians, we know what it's like to apply to medical school, the different years of medical school, getting through residency. We know the ups and downs.

The same thing happens in the business world. Businesses will start off right as infants. And then they go through this adolescent period. It's where you're going through puberty as a business and you have the same challenges. Every business has the same challenges. You don't have to reinvent the wheel to solve these problems. You just need to find the people who have been through this and they'll help you out. That's something that I've always done and I still do that. It's one of the things that is most rewarding. It's interacting and working with other entrepreneurs who are on that same course that I was on.

HF: I love this. If we think about walking at night down like an alley, if we're walking with someone else, we're a lot less scared. We feel like, "Oh, someone's with us on this journey." It's the same thing. When you're doing something where you're going into the unknown and you're going to hit some dark periods, having this community, like you said, if people have done this before helped you come along.

I think one of my big mistakes in my business is once I established it, I didn't ask for help. I should have had a business coach or mentor. I would've gone along much more quickly. It would've totally changed my trajectory in terms of how I could help people and scale the business. That was a big mistake I made and I don't have a problem admitting it. So maybe someone else will learn from my mistake.

When I got help and got a team and got a coach, the curve changed exponentially. Get help, whatever it is, don't go it alone. And it's also more fun to share your ideas and your process with other people.

AR: Yeah. I first heard about this idea of coaches probably almost 10, 15 years ago. In fact, when I was just starting off as a faculty member, there was an attending physician who had a life coach and I kind of chuckled at it, at the time. I was like, "Why do you need a life coach?" Fast forward 5, 10 years, I actually started working with a CEO coach, a



business coach. It was something I did for a while. I haven't done it in a while, but I did do it. It was so valuable and I totally got it. I am an advocate of having people.

Everyone has coaches. Michael Jordan had a coach. The greatest athletes, the greatest musicians, they all have coaches and they are all practicing every day to get better and better. Their coaches are identifying weaknesses and helping them get past those. It makes total sense in the business sense if you're trying to build a business, just in life to find other people.

HF: Yeah. I'm sure Oprah has a coach. We all need these things. This has been a wonderful conversation, Adam. I'm so happy to have you here. You shared so many pearls of wisdom and I just really have to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

AR: Thank you, Heather. It's really wonderful. I hope the audience here at Doctors Crossing Carpe Diem podcast got something out of it. If you guys ever want to reach out to me, feel free. You could email me at adam@roshreview.com.

HF: Oh, thank you again, Adam. And I just like to say guys, if you're listening to this and thinking, well, I don't really want to start a business, you don't need to. It's really just doing something where you get to express your creativity and maybe even have a challenge. It could be something, just a hobby, learning an instrument, setting a fitness goal, doing something like being more adventurous in your travels. So don't think it has to be a business. Just anything where you feel like you get to grow and be who you want to be. So thanks so much for listening and don't forget to carpe that diem, and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

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Podcast details

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