



First Job Fridays: Mark Cuban

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Business acumen isn't always acquired in boardroom meetings and long phone calls with clients. Sometimes, valuable professional skills such as self-initiative and resourcefulness are molded at a young age. Many of the country's most well-known entrepreneurs got their start early on—far removed from the bright lights of corporate America.

In our regular First Job Friday feature on Information Station, we profile American success stories who found great value in their first taste of professional life.

This week, we're highlighting Mark Cuban, the self-made billionaire investor and host of ABC's "Shark Tank." Decades before Cuban was playing "shark" to cash-starved start-up companies, he was just a 12-year-old

boy enamored with a pair of expensive new basketball shoes. When Cuban asked his father to buy them, his father refused, "When you have a job, you can get whatever you want."

So off Cuban went looking for work. His father's friend suggested selling garbage bags for six dollars a box, which he did without hesitation. (The cost of each box was three dollars, promising a three-dollar profit margin for the young salesman.) As Cuban describes it, he went "door to door to door" in his neighborhood selling the garbage bags to local families until demand died down. Along the way, Cuban learned how to negotiate prices and quell objections from his customers by explaining that they would pay more for the same product in the supermarket.

"[T]hat's where I learned to sell," says the billionaire investor, "I learned to fill a need and I learned to problem solve"—two skills which he would successfully apply to his various business ventures in the tech industry.

Spurred on by his father, Cuban also learned a more valuable lesson: the importance of hard work, even if it means starting something completely new. As Business Insider's Richard Feloni wrote in his recent profile of Cuban, "From that point forward, [he] never stopped hatching business schemes." And Cuban never forget what laid the foundation for his streak of inventiveness: carrying garbage bags and knocking down doors.

It just goes to show how one person's trash can literally be someone else's treasure.