

mymoney

EX-CON IS A PRIME EXAMPLE: NEVER QUIT

Opinion

JAMES DORAN

HOW TO MAKE IT,
HOW TO SPEND IT



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This week I encountered one of the most remarkable characters I have come across in more than a decade of business journalism.

David Koch — author, entrepreneur and careers coach — had so much of value to share with those of you out there looking for a new path in life that I felt compelled to devote the whole *Loot* column to his story. Millions of Americans are out of work, and many of that number have been looking for a job for more than a year.

If you are one of those who has struggled to find a new job, you should read Koch's autobiography, "Slaying the Dragon: The Journey from the Dungeon to the Ivory Tower."

Koch, 53, is today the CEO of his own green energy company. Prior to that he founded and ran a highly successful Internet company, and even further back in his varied career he was a pilot who jetted around the world on private Learjet aircraft.

But before all this, in his early 20s, Koch spent several years in jail for crimes related to fraud and theft, yet he never let this adversity stand in his way.

"When I first got out of jail, I did not know what I was going to do. I was at a loss," he says.



Quoted

"In times of adversity, you must have the courage to reinvent yourself."

KOCH

But one afternoon in Cleveland, Ohio, Koch walked onto an airfield to take a closer look at a fleet of Cessna light aircraft. He spotted an old timer mowing the grass. Koch assumed the groundskeeper was about to tell him to leave.

Instead, the old man asked Koch if he had ever considered a career in teaching, as the airfield belonged to a flight school looking for

new staff. Koch explained in a round-about way that he had no means of paying for the training needed and no way of getting a loan.

"But rather than giving up the old man offered me a soda, gave me a knowing look and asked me to tell him what was troubling me," Koch says. "I had never done so before but within minutes, I found myself spilling my guts. I told him everything."

The old timer asked Koch if he had a mind to mow the grass, scrub the hanger floors and clean down the planes. Koch took the job, while his new boss and his wife helped him reestablish his credit and apply for student loans. Within 18 months Koch was a qualified pilot and flight instructor. "In times of adversity, you must have the courage to reinvent yourself," Koch says.

Today Koch travels the country in a 6,000-pound trailer pulled by a Hummer that he shares with his Labrador, Buddy. Together they visit prisons and other institutions all over America, giving advice to convicts and others who feel they have reached rock bottom.

"My strongest advice to everyone who thinks they will never make it back is simple," Koch says. "Never quit. I never have."

— You can read more about David Koch's amazing life at www.dkoch.net

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