Billionaire John Paul DeJoria Says It All Started With This Book

The Paul Mitchell and Patrón co-founder joins Chris Collins to talk Dale Carnegie, his first big break, and his new book, "Success Unshared Is Failure"



John Paul DeJoria.

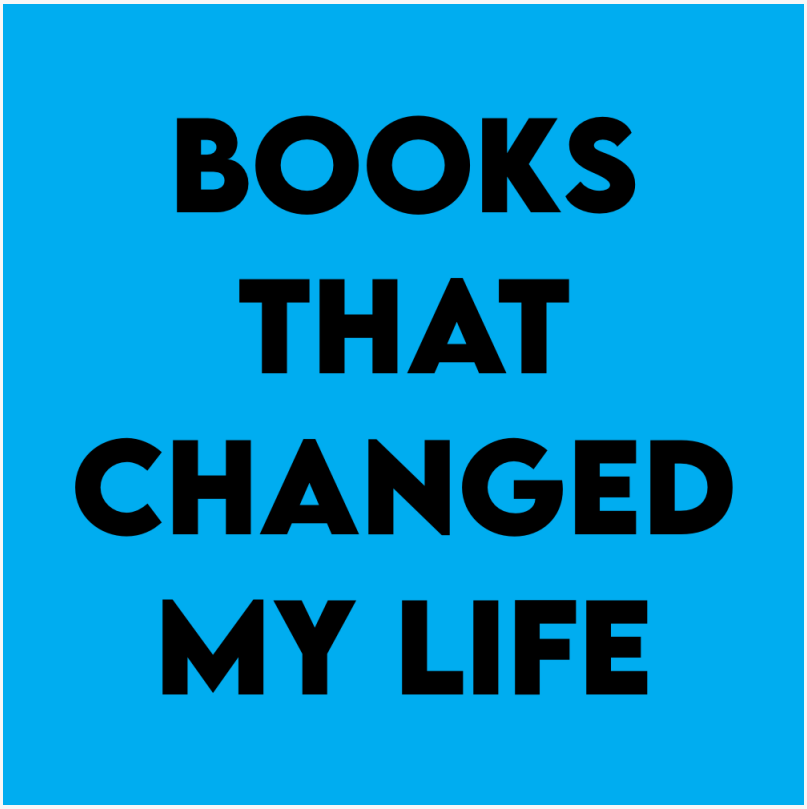
LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, October 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ask billionaire founder John Paul DeJoria what to read, and he'll give you a list, but it always starts with the same book. "When people ask me, 'JP, what book should I read?' I always tell them the first one is ‘How to Win Friends and Influence People,’" says DeJoria on the latest episode of Books That Changed My Life, the interview series hosted by Chris "Bulldog" Collins.

DeJoria read Dale Carnegie's self-improvement classic once, in 1964, and it still sits at the top of his list. "It hones in on how to address people, how to answer something, how to come forward with the right words so you're not coming across as a jerk or a fool," he says. According to DeJoria, the text has something for everyone: "Even if you're doing well and you have communication skills, there's something in there that's going to make you just a little bit better."

Fresh out of the Navy and hunting for something new, DeJoria took a job selling Collier's Encyclopedias door to door in Los Angeles: commission only, no leads, and four days of unpaid training before the first knock. At the crew's daily sales meetings on Seventh Street, he recalls managers telling everyone to pick up a copy of “How to Win Friends.” "The average life of a Collier's Encyclopedia salesman, commission only, no leads, was three and a half days," DeJoria says. "I lasted three and a half years."

He read Carnegie a chapter at a time and immediately put each lesson to work. "I read that book in 1964, just once, and it's stuck with me all this time," he says. "When you get something, apply

it, and have it down, you don't need the notes anymore."



Books That Changed My Life.

In 1980, DeJoria and hairdresser Paul Mitchell launched John Paul Mitchell Systems with three products, no advertising budget, and no staff beyond the two of them. For a stretch, DeJoria was living in his car. "I didn't do hair. He didn't do business," he says. What they needed was a distributor willing to take on a brand with no infrastructure behind it.

DeJoria spent weeks knocking on salon doors along Ventura Boulevard, sold twelve, and asked each salon to leave the payee line on its check blank. Then he pitched the largest beauty supply house in Los Angeles at the time. Understandably, they turned him down. But DeJoria had an ace in the hole. "I pulled twelve checks out of my pocket and spread them out in front of him," DeJoria says. "I said, 'That's your first twelve customers. I've already sold them for you.'"

He left with an order for roughly $2,000 in merchandise, and within minutes he was on the warehouse loading dock with the products, asking for a check. The stock sold out in a week. "That, and many other things, had a lot to do with ‘How to Win Friends and Influence People,’" he says. "It all started back here with this book."

DeJoria has spent decades recommending “How to Win Friends”; now, he has a book of his own. His new memoir, “Success Unshared Is Failure,” responds to a generation that has soured on the American Dream. "People have asked me for years, especially younger people, when I speak at colleges and high schools: 'JP, can you still do today what you did back then, when you were homeless, living in your car, with no money?'" His answer is unequivocally yes, and the book makes the case. "It was suggested to me over a long period of time: 'JP, write a book. America needs this now, because people don't believe America still works.'"

Beyond big-picture questions about the social contract, DeJoria’s new book deals with immediate, familiar questions, such as: "How do you reprimand somebody in your business and make them love you? How do you do it so that when they walk out of the room, they thank you?"

DeJoria also tells Collins why he sold Patrón, a company he says he never wanted to sell. When buyers pressed him for a price, he named one he considered impossible, expecting them to reject the offer. "Not wanting to sell it, I threw out just the craziest number in the world," he says. When, to his surprise, the buyers met his number, DeJoria said yes “in two seconds.” The episode hammers home a tenet of Carnegie’s, condensed by Collins into the aphorism “better to win than be right.”

Watch the full conversation HERE.

ABOUT BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE:

“Books That Changed My Life,” hosted by bestselling author Chris Collins, is a YouTube show exploring how great books transform us in profound and unexpected ways. Each episode features a special guest sharing a book that shaped or inspired them, sparking deep conversations and unearthing unfiltered personal stories.

Recent guests include actor and comedian Patton Oswalt, soap opera legend Susan Lucci, former covert CIA officer Andrew Bustamante, actress and reality star Lisa Rinna, Dancing With the Stars pro Jenna Johnson, Good Morning America icon Joan Lunden, and science educator Bill Nye.

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