JAY VEAL
Taking the Road Less Traveled

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Do not despise the bottom rungs on your ascent to greatness.
Taking the Road Less Traveled

The Story of Jay Veal
Jay Veal, the son of retired military parents who served in the Air Force for 22 years, considers himself a citizen of the world. Education has always been of utmost importance for Jay, having attending schools in various places, including Japan and Korea, where he observed how they structured their educational systems quite differently. At a young age, Jay realized he needed to focus on subjects that not only interested him, but would help him achieve his goals in life.

A lifelong teacher, Jay started tutoring at the age of 10. He was active in school, participating in many organizations and activities, including the student council, Junior NASA, the Society of Black Engineers, and many other groups geared toward mathematics, science and engineering.

He holds a BS in Information Systems with a minor in Mathematics, and a Master’s of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction – Mathematics, from the University of Texas at Arlington. A certified math instructor, Jay taught at the #5 National High School, the Townview Magnet Center-SEM, Duncanville High School, and other high schools.

Recognizing a need, Jay started It’s Not Complicated, (INC), a tutoring program for students of all grades and ages. They take an individualized approach to helping students reach their goals, gathering input from the students, their parents and their teachers to create a balanced plan for every student that comes to them.

INC believes it’s not enough to simply tutor someone. They take the time to understand how each student learns, and then they encourage confidence and a positive outlook to ensure long-term success. They focus on tutoring in science and math, as well as test preparation for students from as young as five years old, all the way up to the master’s degree level.

A perpetual student, Jay plans to earn his Ph.D. in mathematics. His message on learning and achieving your goals: “It is a hard road, but if you believe in staying with it, you can take the road less traveled, and come out a winner.”

Jay took time from his busy schedule to discuss with Monica, the founder of Exceptional People Magazine, his vision for tutoring and mentoring students and inspiring them to achieve excellence.

Monica: Can you talk about your background growing up? How did you get to the point where you realized you had a strong aptitude for math?

Jay: Absolutely, I’ll take you back to when I was a little kid. Growing up, I was raised in a military family. Both of my parents were in the Air Force for 22 years, and I got a chance to live in different areas of the world. I lived in Japan for three years, and I’ve been to Korea and other places.

Growing up, I had the type of background where I was able to experience and see different cultures and people. I got to see how it looks outside of the U.S. I got a chance to learn and to go to school in Japan and Asia. That was a different type of system. They put much more into their kids to learn exactly what they need to know in a more scaled-down sense of curriculum, versus being broader, like in the U.S.

As a little kid, I was able to understand from the perspective, “Okay, I need to know what I need to know, in order to be a doctor, an engineer or an attorney.” They stretch that out over a whole year, versus nine months of general content, like we do here in the U.S. I was used to that type of educational system.

When I came back to the U.S., I started going to magnet schools from the third grade on. They were geared towards math and science. I first started out helping people when I was 10 years old. I tutored some people in college algebra when I was 10, and at that point, it was fun for me. I loved the fact of being able to interact with people, to figure out what their learning style was. It was just fun content for me at the time, as a little kid.

Fast forward to the middle and high school years when I got a chance to get involved with different organizations, like the student council, Junior NASA, the Society of Black Engineers, and other types of math and science groups. I got a chance to be involved with different organizations geared toward mathematics, science and engineering.

What that means, going through high school, graduating from the Academy of Science and Engineering, a magnet school, I helped out my colleagues in the AP classes. I also received help from some of my colleagues. We helped each other out. I surrounded myself with different people in different subjects.

From that point forward, I got to go to school at the United States Naval Academy. I went to Annapolis for
two years. At that point, they didn’t have a Computer Engineering major, but they did have Systems Engineering, but it wasn’t what I was looking for in the Navy as an officer. So, I went to the University of Texas in Arlington, Texas, and earned my undergraduate degree in Information Systems with a minor in mathematics. Subsequently, I earned a Master’s in Education in Curriculum & Instruction - Mathematics two years ago, Summa Cum Laude.

As I followed my path, I started getting an understanding for math and science, all through my middle school and high school years. I was in corporate IT and health care IT for quite a while, and I also worked in banking and telecommunications, before moving onto education. In 2007, I got an email asking, “Would you like to come to an informational session to become a teacher?” I said, “You know, I never thought about being a teacher,” because I was in corporate IT. My goal at that time was to be the CIO of a company.

Monica: Well, you have to dream big.

Jay: Absolutely. I didn’t know about the teacher aspect, but I am good at tutoring. I went to the informational session, ended up loving it, and the next thing I knew, I found myself in a training program to be an alternate, certified teacher. I started my teaching career in 2008 at Townview School of Science & Engineering. At that time, it was one of the top five high schools, just like it is now.

I taught four different Pre-AP mathematics courses: Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, and Pre-AP Geometry. I also taught a Fast Track Mathematics course. Many people may not know about this, but there is a course at this school where they teach the freshmen three years of math in one year.

I taught them a whole year of Algebra II in one semester, a whole year of Pre-Calculus in one semester, and then Geometry in one semester. That was a challenging task my first year of teaching.

My students earned 100 percent Commended on the state exam while I taught in Fast track and other students earned an average of 95% Commended in other subjects, which was phenomenal for a first year teacher.

Moving forward, I went to three other different schools: Cedar Hill Ninth Grade Center, Peak Prep HS which is a part of Uplift Education, a charter organization, where I got a chance to collaborate with great teachers and teach Pre-AP Pre-Calculus and AP Calculus. In addition, I was an assistant Junior Varsity/Varsity coach somewhere in there between for women’s basketball. Lastly, I taught at Duncanville High School teaching Algebra I and Math Models.

That’s my educational experience in the high school realm. I started as an adjunct professor in 2014, teaching mathematics at the university level for College Algebra. After that, I went to Microsoft, leaving the educational system in 2013 to go back into the corporate world.

I went back into the corporate world with the Microsoft Corporation for two years. I was a general account manager who managed operations in two different cities. Then, the Lord was tugging at my heartstrings again to go back to education, so here I am, as an instructional coach. I’m mentoring a group of math educators and also running a tutoring company. I started the tutoring company three years ago, by myself at the time.

I was going door to door to let people know we were the new tutoring company in town at that time,
servicing 32 different subjects across the board, which is quite broad. I’m talking five year olds, all the way to the master’s degree level. At that time, I had a basic branded website, basic cards, and I found out, as any entrepreneur would, when key things are not going as fast as you’d like, you have to re-brand yourself - you always have to reinvent yourself.

I changed up my website. I had a frat brother redefine everything, and revamp a lot of the material, and then, basically, we re-birthed to the new It’s Not Complicated Tutoring. We brought on more people. It’s always a challenge bringing in more consultants, because you have to make sure they are the right fit for your vision and your goals as an organization.

Monica: Sure. How many consultants do you have now?

Jay: Currently, we have nine consultants.

Monica: You decided to take the grassroots path and knocked on doors to make people aware of how you could serve them. How did it turn out? What kind of results did you get from that?

Jay: I like how you’re using the words, “grassroots path,” or bootstrapping, if you will. I asked myself, “Do I want to approach this with a sales approach, or do I want to approach this with an informational approach?” I made the decision at that time to use my approach as if to say, “I’m giving you information, if you’d like to use us as a tutoring organization to help out your kids, great. If you don’t, that’s fine. At least you have the information.”

At that time, my first clients were a couple who owned a marble and granite company. I ended up tutoring their kids in AP Calculus and Geometry. I always remember my first client. It’s funny, because I know exactly the location and everything, even though it was over three years ago.

Knocking on doors and getting interest from the information I put out was slow to begin with. I dealt with two clients in the first month and a half, and then ramped up to building the new website and things of that nature. I ended up getting about seven or eight clients within two months. Then it evolved, and I decided to get on social media.

All those social media avenues I used got It’s Not Complicated Tutoring out there. Word of mouth has been a huge thing for us. When people get outstanding service, as they always say in the customer service industry, “When you do bad, they tell everybody, but when you do great, people still tell folks, it’s just not as widespread.” But, the great things we’ve been doing and the results we’ve achieved have been phenomenal by far, from a lot of different organizations out there.

Monica: Sure, it’s exceptional when you can get your clients to do the talking for you.

Jay: Absolutely, and one great thing here in Dallas is that we’re the only minority-owned, private prescriptive tutoring company in the city. We have been able to market ourselves and gain interest from many people who were going to Sylvan, Kumon or Mathnasium, or other tutoring services of that nature and going to Karen Dillard for test prep.

Monica: By prescriptive, what do you mean?

Jay: By prescriptive, we are taking our clients on an individualized, one-on-one tutoring session that achieves results - not necessarily over time slowly, but quickly over time. We bring them in to get introduced to what we do with the company.

We analyze them and how they are as a character, meaning as a person first. We ask, who are you, what do you do and what do you love to do? Are you a person that loves basketball? Do you like dance? Do you like music? Do you like to play the piano? What really makes you tick? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

How are we able to approach that avenue to make sure you don’t get off task? How do we make sure to align with your goals? Do you want to go to MIT, Stanford, Harvard or the University of Texas? Whatever school you’d like to go to - how can we scale our scope down to make sure you get to the exact place you want to go?

It’s not something we approach as a general solution. We build a solution exactly for each particular person, and it works. Just like in test preparations, we do a multitude of test prep, and we scale the scope down to exactly how they need to learn it, how they want to learn it, and when they need to learn it. That’s the way we do business.

Monica: So, your approach helps you to quickly adjust to each individual student’s learning style?
Jay: Absolutely, and like you asked earlier, “What about the mentoring piece?” We throw that into what we do. So, if Johnny is getting tutored in a subject, or Sarah’s getting tutored in a subject, we’re also coaching them in other things, like financial literacy, or letting their parents know how to advocate for their children.

We work with these kids from elementary school through high school and college, because parents have us with their kids for a long time. Because of the fact they get results with us, as well as how we treat their kids, how we treat their family, we get treated with the same respect and regard when we go in. We’re almost like family to these students. It’s these parents who treat our consultants like they’re brothers and sisters, because we get to know them, and they feel comfortable with us.

One other important thing is that our curriculum is not a one-size-fits-all, cookie cutter template solution, but a holistic approach that includes input from the parents, the teachers and the students to help us develop lessons that foster accelerated learning. This basically equals lower customer costs at the end of the day, but it also ensures that the students become holistic in nature within their studies.

We have decided to partner. We went in with each other on a large grant, to be able to provide mentoring and tutoring solutions to youth from the seventh to twelfth grades, but there’s some fine details on how this is going to happen that nobody’s ever done before.

Monica: Excellent, and what is your current reach in terms of where you tutor your students?

Jay: We tutor any student that comes to us. We have quite a few clients in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. However, we have students in Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, San Antonio and the Florida area, too. We’re reaching out to clients in the Washington, D.C. area, as well.

Monica: Mathematics, science and some of the other subjects that you tutor or mentor students in are subjects you really have to see what’s going on, in order to understand it.

Jay: It has to be that visual approach. Again, that depends on the learning style of the student and how they understand the content. Again, it’s separate for everybody, because everybody does not have the same solution we approach everything with.

Monica: Do you have consultants in the other areas where you are not?

Jay: We’re working on having more consultants in other areas. We do have a couple in the Austin area. We have also done well with keeping it virtual. Our goal is to provide tutoring physically with about four to five consultants in each respective metroplex around the United States.

Monica: Did you have a special focus on underserved communities?

Jay: Yes, when we first started out, the goal, or the thought process was how we were going to do great things and improve the community. When we looked at where our clients were going to school, a lot of them were coming from, not necessarily underserved population-type of schools, but those students who would be on free and reduced lunches. When those particular types of students come to us, we always try to find out what we can do for them that is going to be the best solution. The parents may not be in the best positions themselves, but we take it upon ourselves to make sure that, regardless of where they come from, whether they came from a well-to-do family, or whether they come from an underserved family, they still get the type of quality tutoring and education they would get at a top school. If you come to INC Tutoring, you’re going to get a streamlined approach, either way.

Monica: From your experience in working with students over the years, what have you found to be some of the more common reasons, or setbacks why many students are not strong in math and science, and similar subjects?

Jay: I’m glad you brought that point up. A lot of students come to us with the initial reaction, “I’m afraid of mathematics,” or “I’m afraid of science,” or “I’m afraid of numbers and calculations, fractions and decimals.” We have to ease their minds about what it is they’re really looking at. If you go into things that people don’t understand in general, like building houses, for example, I may not want to build houses or like building houses, but if somebody takes the time to teach me how to build a house, then I might like it.

We take that type of approach to students who may not like math or science, or who may be scared of those type of things. It just happens that our initial visibility of this is in the underserved communities, in the minority populations.
Our approach is to make them feel comfortable with us first. Again, that relationship between tutor and client is key to this situation. It has to be a flawless relationship, so we can be in sync with each other at all times.

Once the connection is made between us and them, we say, “Okay, based on how we decided what your plan would be in this case, what are your fears? What is it that you don’t like?” They tell us, “I hate numbers, I hate fractions,” or “Every time I see math, I just shut down.”

We have to tell them, at this point, that math is not hard. It’s just that you have to understand the concept, and then be able to apply that concept. That’s basically it. If you trust us to guide you through this process efficiently and flawlessly, we will let you see that it’s not that bad.

When we get them calmed down, we begin to work with them. We start seeing them grow and learn, and they become confident. A lot of these kids come to us not being confident in their content, because they’re scared to see it. So, we build confidence, we build character, we build knowledge, and we build great citizens who contribute to society through what we do.

**Monica:** What kind of improvements have you seen in your students as they come back to you, year after year?

**Jay:** Awesome, I’m glad you asked that, as well. One key thing you asked earlier during the interview was about results. How do we monitor this progress? Our testimonials speak volumes. Once we do what we’re supposed to do for them, we then have them write their testimonials. When you read them, it’s like, “Wow, we’ve never seen this before.”
when they come year after year, they not only grow in content knowledge; they also grow as students.

A lot of kids don’t know how to study. Many kids don’t know what it means to be a great student. When they go through our program, we’re getting them groomed on how to be a phenomenal student, so they can be prepared when they go to college to compete with others who are doing well in math, science and STEM-related subjects. That’s what we focus on now.

If we make the students competitive, they come back to us year after year more competitive in order to get the scholarships they need for college. I was blessed not to have to pay for undergrad or grad school, so I went to college for free both times.

Being a minority, I think it’s important for us to help those students who didn’t have the chance to go to school for free. They had to go on loans. We don’t believe in loans at INC. We believe in students going to school for free, so we try to make sure they get the scores they need to make sure that happens.

In addition to that, I will tell you this: There have been students who have come in where the parents have let us know their kids have been accepted into top private schools - top performing schools after coming to us. One woman stated her daughter had the highest GPA awarded at the school after coming to us. One of the students recently played basketball and football and came to us with a 60 and after about six weeks, his dad told us, “Hey, look at his report card.”

He showed me, and he said, “He has 99’s across the board in math and in other subjects.” His confidence was boosted, so now he’s getting scholarships left and right. How do you go from a 60 to a 99 average in about six weeks? It seems impossible, but it’s not.

Monica: Because you have consultants helping tutor the students, what do you look for in the people you bring on board? What are some of the characteristics you look for before considering them for the job?

Jay: At INC, when we consider consultants who come on board, they need to definitely be passionate. That’s huge, that’s a word that flows around our culture. They have to be passionate about the subject they’re coming to tutor in. They have to be open to change, meaning there are so many things that are going on at a moment’s notice. We can get people who come in who need tutoring in ACT. Then we may get somebody that needs the SAT. Then we can get somebody that needs Algebra I, II or AP Calculus.

Flexibility is another big characteristic we look for with tutors. And definitely getting background checks on individuals to make sure we’re not hiring anybody who has a history that could negatively impact students. We make sure their knowledge is up to par. There are certain things we ask them that are content-based for the subject they tutor - to make sure they’re competent in what they’re doing.

We have a lot of great organizations that partner with us, as well. The Jack and Jill organization of Dallas has nine local chapters. It is a big organization nationwide, with 30,000 members, but in the city of Dallas-Fort Worth, it was an organization we had to definitely break into.

It’s a tight-knit organization. Working with their students was definitely a pleasure and a blessing, to the point where their organization started talking about INC, and taking their kids out of other places, making sure they got tutored with us. Now, we’re their preferred provider in Dallas.

Monica: The impact you’re having not only affects their lives at the moment, but much further down the road. Your entire approach has been proven over and over again, and it certainly surpasses any of the tutoring services I am aware of. I certainly hope you are able to reach a much broader audience, so you can have an impact on a lot more students.

Jay: We’ve worked with Steve Harvey’s Mentoring Weekend for four out of the past five years. When the moms come in and the boys fly in, we’re able to interact with them and ask the moms, “How are your kids doing in school? We offer this particular service.” We try to make sure they get those services as needed, and they need that to happen in the different states that they fly from, so we try to develop that relationship, as well.

We do a backpack drive, a turkey drive during November and Thanksgiving, and we do toy drives for Christmas. We’re not just a tutoring company, but we service the community. So, if they need something of that nature, we will either try to sponsor that, or we’ll do
the best we can to make sure those things are provided. Now we’re being called by a lot of people to sponsor many things at the moment, so I think folks are seeing that we really care.

Monica: It’s about serving your community and giving back through the skills and talents you have. As for the students you have tutored and mentored so far, how many of them have actually graduated from high school?

Jay: All of them have graduated high school. There is nobody that comes to us consistently throughout the years who doesn’t graduate high school, because we build, through our tutoring, an emphasis that college is important.

We’re not necessarily making it a, “You have to go,” kind of deal. We are empowering the kids with options and saying, “You should think about going to college. You should go to college and get that experience; however, if you’re looking to be the next Mark Zuckerberg, then maybe the college thing may not be for you. What I encourage you to do is figure out what your passion is, what you love to do that will drive you forward and make a positive impact on society, yet you will still be able to live the life you need.”

We let them know about all types of different options, whether it be the military, self-employment or working at a top company. We always try to give them resources.

That’s another way we help students. I was a graduate of Senator Royce West Conrad’s internship program. I got my first paid internship in college via this program. I was the first Network Engineer IT intern ever at Baylor Health Care System. I had this opportunity only because of this organization.

We let the students know about these internship programs. We let them know about scholarships at the Microsoft Corporation or at other organizations. We let them know when the SAT and ACT tests are coming out, and how to attack each one strategically, so that they do well. We let them know about scholarship-type of things, like FastWeb and other sites where they can look for scholarships, versus saying, “Hey, I don’t have any money for school.” That doesn’t fly with us.

We’re a no-tolerance type of organization where, when you come to us, you’re going to get the real deal. It’s not enough to tutor somebody. It’s more than that. It’s when someone tutors your son or daughter, for example, you are going to ask, “Do you understand my kid, versus are you tutoring my kid?”

Monica: This has been wonderful. Would you mind closing the interview with your last word?

Jay: I’ve got a couple things I’d like to say for a last word.

One is, definitely stay encouraged and stay positive in your school situation, because there are many people out there who do not have an opportunity to go to school or to make an impact. Everybody needs to remain positive and understand that oftentimes, school is not going to be easy, just like life is not going to be easy, and work is not going to be easy all the time. You have to have the gall and the hustle mentality to know you can get it done. It’s not impossible.

To the moms out there who are going to school while pregnant - we partnered with another organization recently that works with teen moms. Those who believe they can’t finish school need to get rid of that mindset. Just because you’re pregnant in school, or you got pregnant in school, it doesn’t mean you can’t follow your dream. Always follow your dreams and make sure you accomplish them, because that little one that you have inside you is going to need you to provide guidance for them. In order for you to do that, you have to stay the course until you finish.

Another word of advice is that we have to do our due diligence in math and science. We’re looking at approximately 10,000,000 jobs, I believe, in the next three or four years in STEM-related fields we have to fill, in terms of industries. The only way we’re going to be able to hire people is for our people to be qualified. So, I encourage those who are in math and science who want to be doctors and nurses, IT people, engineers, accountants - any of those fields, as well as other fields that use math and science, to stay the course.

I’m a person who got their Master’s in Education and Curriculum Instruction in Mathematics, and I’m looking to get a Ph.D. in Mathematics. It is a hard road, but if you believe in staying with it, you can take the road less traveled and come out a winner.

If anybody needs to contact us, of course, you can always reach us on Twitter: @INCTutoring. Go to our site at www.inctutoring.com, or follow us on Facebook under the same name. We’re here for you.

Monica: Thank you for those encouraging words. ◆
As fall arrives and trees begin to shed their leaves, it’s a sign of change – a new season is on the way. Are you ready to enter a new season? What things can you release from your life so that you can experience more peace, happiness, gratitude and success?