

How Entrepreneur Ron Gold Intends To Cure America's Home Healthcare

forbes.com/sites/davidkwilliams/2017/05/01/how-entrepreneur-ron-gold-intends-to-cure-americas-home-healthcare

May 1, 2017

This week I met an entrepreneur who fully embodies the 7 Non-Negotiable traits of Commitment and Courage that I have covered in [The 7 Non-Negotiables of Winning](#) and that I write about frequently here. He is also a tremendous example of entrepreneurial grit.



Ron Gold, LeanOnWe, speaks at TEDx in New Jersey

Ron Gold, LeanOnWe

Ron Gold, the founder of LeanOnWe, is a former Wall Street executive, a husband and father of three, and an avid fitness enthusiast (as I am) who was at a lunch appointment across the street from the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. During 9/11, he worked across the street from the Towers in the World Financial Center. As his team was evacuated, they saw people jumping from the North Tower and saw both towers fall. He survived the fall of the Lehman Brothers organization in the banking and financial crisis.

Then, while on a 50-mile bike ride with friends, Gold and another rider were hit on Thanksgiving weekend, 2011, by an SUV driver who'd fallen asleep at the wheel. Gold's friend's pelvis and hip were shattered. But Gold's fate was much worse—three weeks later he awoke from a medically induced coma three weeks later to learn he'd been left a paraplegic.

The accident, however, was only the first step in an even bigger tragedy. Like thousands of injured and elderly Americans needing home care, he made some terrifying discoveries about the existing system: 1) The care is often not covered by insurance (his own situation allowed for only eight weeks), and 2) Most people avoid home care agencies that charge an extremely high cost (\$25 per hour is typical), provide little choice of providers, poor control and, in many cases, poor care (in no small part because providers are not interested in a program that pays them only \$9-10 per hour of the sum).

“So people go elsewhere,” Gold says. “They use word of mouth, or Craigslist. They know nothing about the person who will be providing this critical care. In any other sector, any service, you can find reviews and information. Yet when you try to find a caregiver for your parent, you receive less

information to prepare for this decision than if you were shopping for a flat-screen TV.”

Gold says these issues were not top of his mind in the months that followed his situation. In his distress, he was living in a state of grief, going to sleep every night with the hope he would somehow wake to find the situation had been a bad dream. Then his situation went from bad to worse when he discovered the woman who'd hit him had extremely poor insurance, and when the legal system charged her with two counts of fourth degree assault, she claimed a rare medical condition, “transient global amnesia” had produced a situation that mimics drowsiness and caused the tragic result.

She did not apologize and did not even look at the two men she had maimed during the hearings in court. The case was dismissed. Later on, Gold succeeded in the pursuit of a very small civil settlement. In the realm of courage and commitment, however, he has faced a situation in which both the home care and the legal systems have let him nearly entirely down.

While Gold admits to a lengthy period of time in which he wished he would die, he regained his courage (in no small part inspired by his family and by his friend Anne, who had dedicated a major part of her entire life to building and staffing a residential school for orphans in Rwanda, following the genocide there). Anne died in an equestrian competition while doing the thing that she loved.

He thought about what Anne's family would give to have her back in any way, even in a wheelchair. From there he found the strength to reemerge and to find new strength as an entrepreneur. He would create a company that would address the problem of home care by going “off the grid” – cutting out the expensive agency middleman to create what he calls an “eHarmony for home care” — he would seek out qualified caregivers and help match them up with fitting home customers. In this model, the caregiver is paid the full salary they agree upon with their client. “We can help that caregiver go from \$9-10 an hour to \$15 or more,” he says. “That's a 50% increase, and can make the difference that can give that person a living wage.”

Beyond an agency assignment, LeanOnWe's model helps families review the hard and soft skills of the providers, including their experience and interests. “If your mother fell and had a hip replacement, perhaps, and needs somebody who speaks Spanish, is comfortable with a couple of pets and is able to drive, we want to vet that out,” he says. “These things are very important.” Instead of an agency, LeanOnWe is working to provide a “managed marketplace.”

Participants can provide reviews or get a replacement provider when a regular caregiver is on vacation or ill. The industry that has traditionally been “hyper local” is thriving and growing in Gold's home base of Metropolitan New York and its surrounding areas, but much work remains to make it available nationwide.

A [recent *Washington Post* article](#) reiterates the full depth of the home health problem:

"A severe shortage of home health practitioners is affecting access to care for people with serious disabilities, as well as vulnerable older adults across the country," the article says. "The challenge will only grow worse as America's senior population swells to 88 million people in 2050, up from 48 million today," [the article continues](#) saying, "The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the U.S. will require an additional 1.1 million home health workers by 2024 (a 26 percent increase over 2014). Yet the population of people who tend to fill these jobs, women age 25 to 64, will increase at a much slower rate."

[The *Post*](#) continues: "One of seven caregiving positions in Wisconsin nursing homes and group homes are unfilled, with 70% of administrators reporting a lack of qualified job applicants. Eighteen percent of long-term-care facilities had to limit admissions, declining care to more than 5,300, bringing the words

'unprecedented' and 'desperate' to mind."

Meanwhile, Gold's desire to solve the home care challenge as an entrepreneur has made him resolute. To his credit he has created and established a program that for this niche sector, at least, has addressed the requirement for high quality and affordable home care while also allowing providers to receive a living wage entirely without legislation. As opposed to waiting for Obamacare or Trump Care or any other program to right itself with better solutions, he has demonstrated the entrepreneurial grit to develop a better way on his own. Now he needs to put the program "on steroids," he says, as he seeks and finds the ways to help his company scale. [Courage, Commitment, and "grit"—the core elements of a winning entrepreneur.](#)

CORRECTED to clarify precise wording of quotations from *The Washington Post*.