

# NBA's James Donaldson Writes Self-Help Book

Former all-star shares the secrets that have kept him successful in three career changes

By Brian Stimson  
Of *The Skanner News*

Former NBA All-Star James Donaldson wants to share his secrets to success. In his new book, "Standing Above the Crowd," Donaldson opens up about not backing down from a challenge, the importance of mentors and the keys to keep yourself focused during a time when many people are switching careers.

With three different distinct career changes under his belt – professional basketball player, small business owner and candidate for Seattle mayor's office – Donaldson says he knows what it's like keeping on task.

Here, the all-star talks to *The Skanner News* about his awkward and uncertain youth, career transitions and how he fed into an interesting piece of trivia from his days as a pro baller.

**The Skanner News:** What is your secret to success?

**James Donaldson:** I credit a lot the success I've had over the years with mentors who have helped me make good decisions and given me a lot of insight and expertise along the way.

**TSN:** Does that extend to your career in basketball, as well as your business and pro-

fessional career?

**JD:** Yes, exactly, it started in basketball of course and helped to get that career underway, but along the way, I was able to meet new mentors and professional mentors that helped keep me going and on the right track.

**TSN:** Can you share some of the secrets to success from your book?

**JD:** One of the biggest lessons I learned was from an assistant coach who taught me never to be satisfied. I think nowadays a lot of us get satisfied and complacent, we quit pushing ourselves to excellence. I learned that at an early age, well before I became a professional athlete, that reaching a certain level isn't good enough if I really want to reach the top of my profession. My lesson of never being satisfied, which is a chapter in the book, is one that I carry to this day.

**TSN:** Do you mentor a lot of young people yourself?

**JD:** I do. I do. Both officially and unofficially, there's not a day that goes by where I don't bump into a young person who wants to ask me questions or understand what I'm doing and what I've had to do to accomplish what I've accomplished through my years. And I'm always willing to offer a helping hand, or some suggestions or some advice or words of encouragement. I think I do a lot of mentoring in that regard, even



more than officially mentoring someone.

**TSN:** What is it that motivated you to write this book?

**JD:** As I've gone through two or three careers in my working life, as far as being a professional athlete and a small-business entrepreneur, and political candidate in the city of Seattle and very involved as a member of my community, I just got to a point in my life, here I am in my early '50s where I

have been looking back to whence I've come and understanding what it took to stay on track in the first place. And I just wanted to offer that advice to young people who are going to be following in my footsteps just as I followed in a lot of other people's footsteps along the way. I look out there on societal landscape as a whole and I see a lot of our younger generation really struggling, trying to focus in on what they're going to do, what they're going to be and how they're going to accomplish that. There's so many more distractions nowadays and temptations and pitfalls than there were when I was a youngster, so I really want to help younger folks navigate on that path to becoming successful.

**TSN:** When you were a young man, was your future career pretty well mapped out on the way to a

**JD:** Not at all, I actually didn't play basketball until my last year of high school. Simply because I was a youngster like other youngster, where I was full of insecurities, lack of confidence, very uncoordinated with my height and size and weight. Didn't have a high self esteem with myself. Most youngsters to through that phase at some point. It wasn't until I met the great mentor, my high school basketball coach, Chuck Calhoun was his name down in Sacramento,

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