

# BUSINESS INSIDER

## A startup president named to Forbes' 30 under 30 shares his advice for aspiring entrepreneurs



FRANK CHAPARRO  
FEB. 23, 2017, 4:58 PM



Michael Hill Kennedy

Michael Kennedy wasn't a well behaved child.

"I was a horrible kid," he said. "I was always breaking the rules."

The recent inductee to [Forbes' 30 under 30 list for food and drink](#) told Business Insider that he's still that mischievous kid who doesn't mind breaking some rules and taking risks.

And when he set out to start his own wine business, [Component Wine Company](#), Kennedy was looking to break some of the strict rules that have underpinned the wine industry for the last 100 years.

Kennedy got his start as a part-time tasting room employee at a small family-owned winery in Missouri in 2009.

It didn't take long for Kennedy to rise through the ranks. He quickly obtained his certification as a sommelier and snagged the spot as the winery's director of wines. His love of wine brought him to Washington D.C. in 2012 where he served as sommelier for two different Ritz-Carlton locations.

Kennedy said the idea for Component Wine Company was born during a visit to one of Napa Valley's posh wineries.

"I was drinking a glass of Petit Verdot that was so full of life that I thought I had to share this with the world," Kennedy said.

According to Kennedy, Petit Verdot is a "component" wine. That means it is typically grown exclusively to be blended with other wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon. In other words, a wine-lover can't really get his or her hands on a pure Petit Verdot, but they could pick up Petit Verdot-Cabernet Sauvignon blend.

Kennedy's idea for Component was to create a place from which people could purchase standalone components. That may sound simple, but it's unheard of in the industry.



Flickr/Kristian Hogsberg

"These wines may not conform to what the industry has deemed standard," he said. "But they are still amazing."

Kennedy said he sources his company's component wines from only the most elite wineries and then sells them on his website.

"We allocate certain wines and limit how much people can buy so that they don't all go to the same person," he said. "That way a wide range of people can enjoy them."

We asked Kennedy to share his best advice for young aspiring entrepreneurs. He said they should

consider two things:

**Listen to your crazy idea.** If you have a crazy idea then you need to try it out. Don't let your fear of failing and looking dumb get in your way, because if you do then you will fail. It's as simple as that.

**Don't blindly follow the status quo.** One of the biggest mistakes I made early on had to do with the structuring of the company. I thought that I had to do what everyone else was doing and that made things difficult for us in the beginning. When I was backed into a corner, I was able to think of a creative solution that worked better.

×

