

PHYSICIAN · INNOVATOR · MENTOR

# The *Autonomous* Physician

*Building, Failing, and Leading in the Age of AI*

## Dr. Caleb Masterson

Board-Certified Otolaryngologist  
Founder — MyAllergyScore · Breathe & Brew

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*"It's not fear of the unknown.  
It's fear of what we think we know."*

*"It's not fear of the unknown.  
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Find related content



Find related content



Physician Boss



Practice Manager

— WHAT THEY DON'T TEACH YOU

40,000 hours of training.  
Zero hours on this.

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## **1 The business of medicine**

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- 5 Finance**

## SECTION ONE

# Building from Nothing

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I How you practice

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1 How you practice

2 What you practice

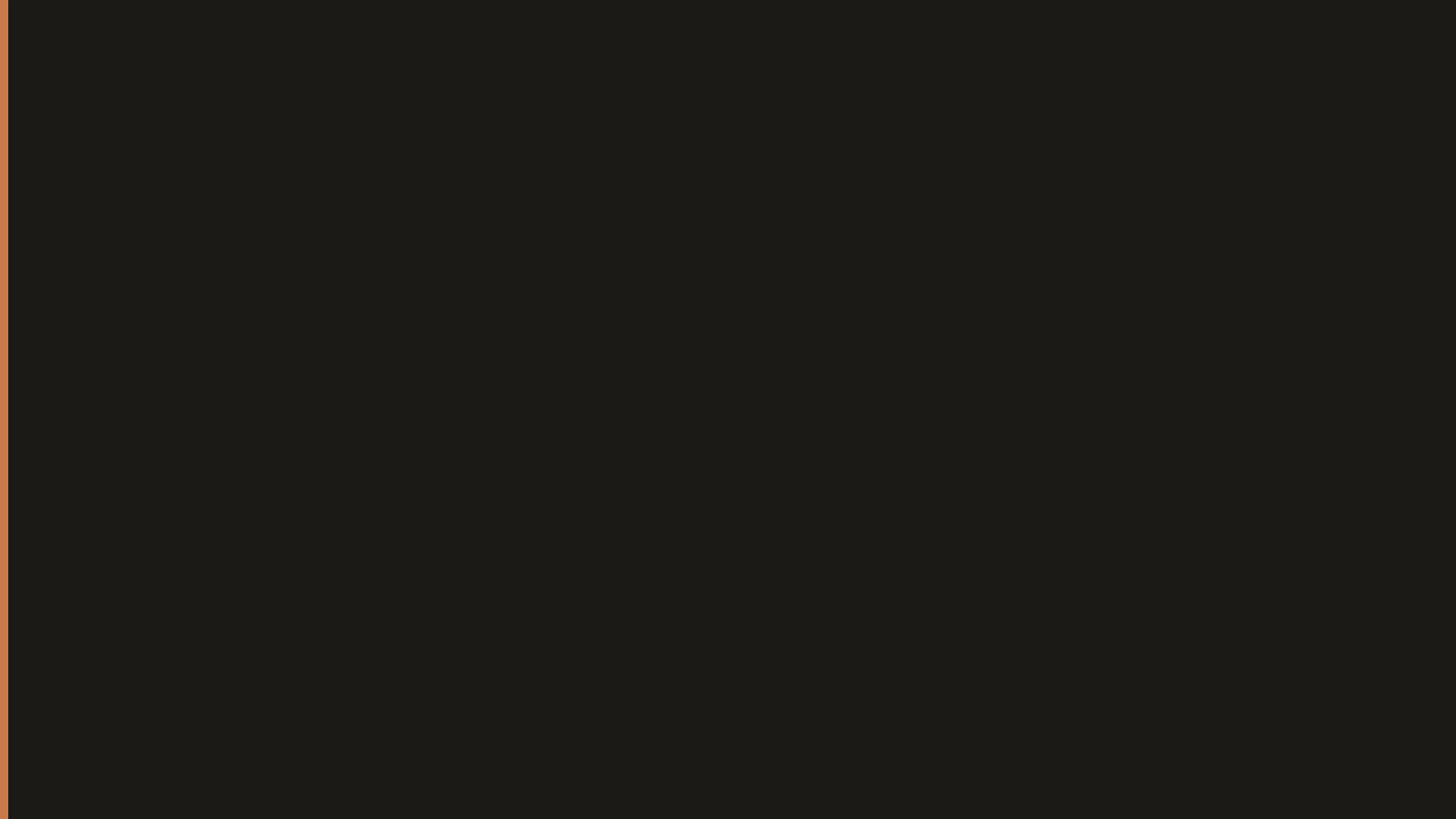
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1 How you practice

2 What you practice

3 Where you practice





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*"You're buying a practice?"*

*"You're crazy."*

*"You're going out on your own?"*

*"You're buying a practice?"*

*"What are you doing?"*

# 80%

AMA 2024

of physicians now employed by a  
hospital system or corporation

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## THE GRAVITY OF THE SYSTEM

+86%

Corporate ownership of physician practices (2019–2022) — the largest surge in modern history

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58%

Practice in the same state as residency — not by accident, by institutional gravity

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40%

Practice within 10 miles of where they trained

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0 hrs

Medical school curriculum hours dedicated to independent practice



B



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OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH + CENTER  
LLC





# ENT CENTER OF NORTHWEST ALABAMA

ENT | HEARING | ALLERGY



1949



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FEBRUARY 2020

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## FEBRUARY 2020

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### **2 Performing advanced airway cases on patients with aerosolized COVID**

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### **3 Autonomy meant I could make the call**

No health system dictating how I served my patients. I could decide what was right for this community — and act on it.

# The Hedgehog Concept

Where three circles overlap. What you can be best in the world at.

What drives your economic engine. What you are deeply passionate about.

COVID forced us to ask: what does this community actually need?

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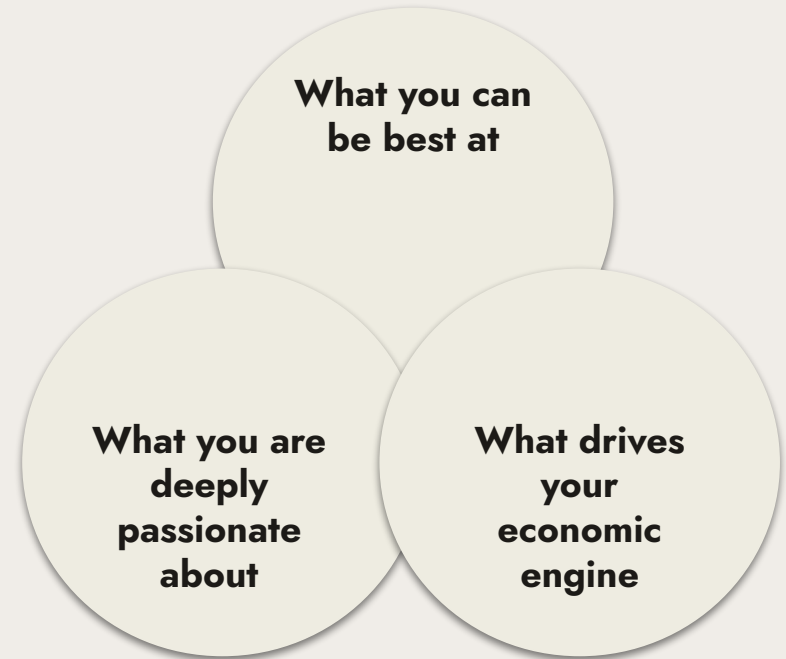
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You have paid  
your *dues*.

Medical school · Residency · Call nights · Board exams



THE COMMUNITY WAS ALREADY TELLING US

One of the highest pollen-load  
regions in the United States.

THE PIVOT

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### **2 Lencioni's four critical actions — every patient should feel:**

Cared for. Knowledgeable about their problem. That a solution was found. And willing to advocate for you.

FEEL

KNOW

FIND

SHARE

— BUILDING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

# Two ideas that changed everything.

**1 John Maxwell: "No one cares what you know until they know that you care."**

Most negative reviews in healthcare boil down to one thing: "I didn't feel heard." That is controllable.

— BUILDING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

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## **2 Chip & Dan Heath — the peak-end rule**

People don't remember their entire experience. They remember the peak and the end. This is Disney's proof concept. You can design those moments.



**B&B**  
BREATH & BREW

— SCALING UP

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### **3 If you're saying to yourself: "I would never do that."**

If that is your reaction to both stories — that is the red flag. Aversion to failure is aversion to growth.

## SECTION TWO

# The System That Produced Risk Aversion

— THE BEHAVIORAL GAP

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**3 This is a learned response. It can be unlearned.**

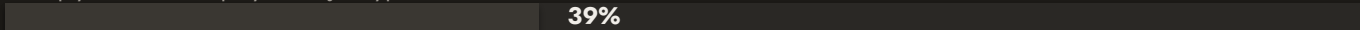
The same physician who masters complexity in the OR can master complexity outside of it.

# Unhappy enough to move. Not toward anything different.

Made some type of career change past 2 years



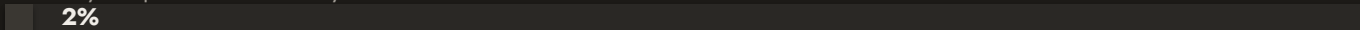
Simply switched employers or job type



Report feeling overworked



Actually left patient care entirely



*"They're rearranging inside the same system that made them miserable."*

“

*"... not fully conditioned and determined but rather determines himself whether he gives in to conditions or stands up to them."*

Viktor Frankl — *Man's Search for Meaning*

## The Training Problem

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**I Evidence-based practice. Protocols. Checklists. This is how medicine works — and it is correct.**

Compliance in clinical care is not a weakness. It is how patients survive surgery, avoid infection, and receive appropriate treatment.

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- I Evidence-based practice. Protocols. Checklists. This is how medicine works — and it is correct.**  
Compliance in clinical care is not a weakness. It is how patients survive surgery, avoid infection, and receive appropriate treatment.
- 2 In business, compliance is the enemy. Failure is the method.**  
Iteration is the engine. The willingness to be wrong — quickly, cheaply, and publicly — is the only way to find what works. This is antithetical to everything medical training rewarded.

— BEFORE THEY WERE LEGENDS

The ones we call great  
all had to fail first.



**J.K. Rowling**

Rejected by 12 publishers before a single copy of Harry Potter was printed. Living on welfare at the time.



**Michael Jordan**

Cut from his high school varsity basketball team. Went home and cried. Came back every day after that.



**Walt Disney**

Fired from a newspaper for "lacking imagination." First animation studio went bankrupt. Built the most recognized brand in the world anyway.



— THE GENERATIONAL SHIFT

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**3 The data doesn't say "risk averse."**

It just shows the behavior. You can decide what it means.



# III

SECTION THREE

## The Opportunity Is Now

## — THE INFRASTRUCTURE

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Here is what agentic AI actually is.

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### **4 This is infrastructure, not hype**

It is lowering the barrier to building faster than anything that has come before it.

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**2 That narrative is more wrong right now than at any point in the history of medicine.**





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# MyAllergyScore

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## **1 The problem: allergy test results meant nothing to patients**

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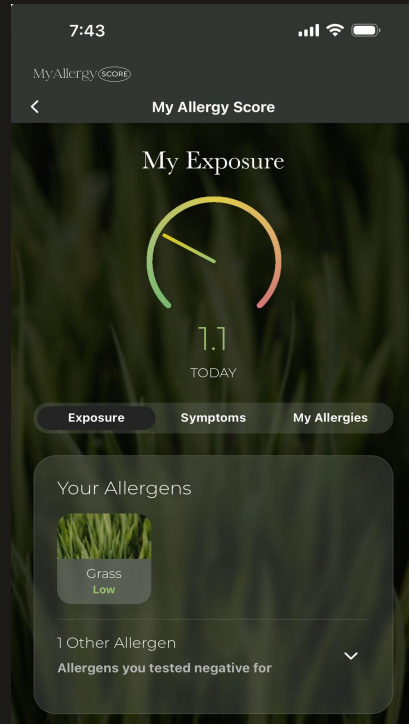
## **3 Built from practice. Useful to every allergy practice.**

The insight came from a decade of seeing patients in one of the highest pollen-load regions in the country.

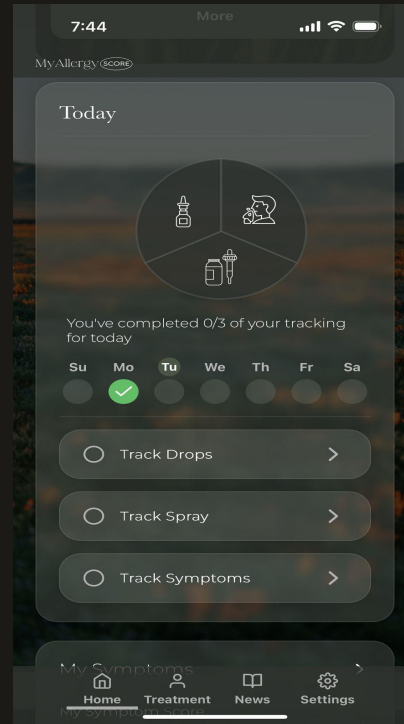
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Score



Exposure



Treatment



Allergies

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MyAllergyScore came from a clinical problem. So did every health-tech company acquired for nine figures.

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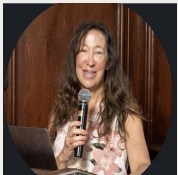
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## **4 A practice designed around your life — not the other way around**

Ownership is not just financial. It is the freedom to decide who you see and what your day actually looks like.

# Not unicorns. Physicians who made a decision.



PHYSICIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## Sharon McLaughlin, MD MBA

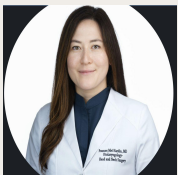
Built a physician entrepreneurial academy connecting doctors with resources and community to grow their sense of impact.



AI MEDICAL BILLING

## Rihan Javid, MD

Built an AI-powered medical billing platform — solving a problem he lived every day as a practicing physician.



AUTHOR & PODCAST HOST

## Frances Mei Hardin, MD

Author and podcast host who found deep fulfillment by practicing medicine entirely on her own terms.



LOCUM'S & UNDERSERVED CARE

## Joseph Pazona, MD

Built a locum's replacement service that now delivers specialist medical care to underserved communities.

“

*"The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head."*

William Osler — Aequanimitas, 1904

You didn't choose medicine because it was safe. You chose it because something in you wanted to matter — to be the person who shows up when it counts and actually knows what to do. That instinct didn't go away. It just got buried under debt and schedules and a system that needed you compliant.

The only thing standing between who you are right now and that version of you is the story you've been telling yourself.

*Dream big. Believe anything is possible. Look again.*

# Choose your *HARD.*

Residency was hard. Building is hard.  
Everything is hard. You get to choose which hard.