

## 6 READING & SPEAKING

# FROM THE STREETS TO SUCCESS!

John DeJoria, an American **billionaire** businessman, owns several companies, including John Paul Mitchell Systems, a successful **brand** of hair products. However, DeJoria was not always **wealthy**. He was the second son of immigrant parents and grew up in a very poor area of Los Angeles, California. Before forming his hair product company with only \$700, he was a street gang member for some of his youth, he then worked at **low-paying** jobs including encyclopedia **salesman**, janitor, and insurance salesman, and he was homeless twice. DeJoria's **selfmade** rise is an inspiring story.

### As a child, you were fairly entrepreneurial, weren't you?

My first job, at 9 years old, was selling Christmas cards door-to-door. At 10 years old, my brother and I had **paper routes**. We got up at 4 o'clock a.m., folded the papers, and delivered them, and then got ready for school.

### As you got older, you continued to work. Is that right?

The job that was one of the most influential experiences you can imagine was **door-to-door** selling encyclopedias. Doors literally slam in your face—maybe 30, 40 doors before the first **customer** will actually talk to you and let you in.

### You've been homeless, haven't you?

Twice. Once, when I was about 22 years old. The other time was when I started John Paul Mitchell Systems in 1980. I wasn't getting along with my wife at the time. So I had left and had given her all the money. We had a **backer** for John Paul Mitchell Systems **putting in a half-million dollars**. That money was supposed to arrive that day. I never got a penny. So I just slept in my car. And I slept in my car for the first two weeks when I started the company. So we started with humble beginnings.

### Do memories of the streets motivate you?

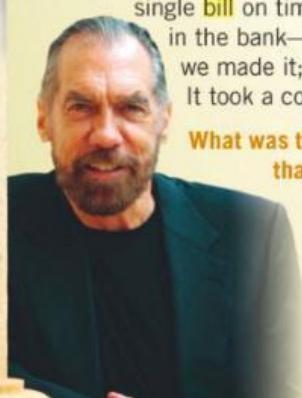
It sure makes you very appreciative of what you have in your life. Those who are homeless—like people with kids who are homeless—I really have a heart for. So I participate in a lot of charitable organizations that take the homeless off the streets.

### What are the biggest problems you've faced in business?

The biggest problem is **rejection**. Any business you start, be ready for it. The difference between successful people and unsuccessful people is that the successful people do all the things the unsuccessful people don't want to do. When 10 doors are slammed in your face, go to door number 11, with a smile.

### When did you know you had made it?

I was in business two years, and we were able to pay every single **bill** on time. We had a couple of thousand dollars in the bank—\$4,000, to be exact. And we said, "Man we made it; it's all downhill now." It was really hard. It took a couple years.



### What was the first thing you bought yourself at that point?

I went to a restaurant. This is the first time I said I'm going to order off the left side of the menu, not the right side. The right side is where the prices are. Carne asada, guacamole, whatever I wanted.

I didn't even look at the price. That to **ME**, was a pretty big deal.

**LIVE WORKSHEETS**