

*A series
profiling
your fellow
Routematchers.*

by Laura Lee Huttenbach

Juan Carbonell

Managing Director, ANZ

When Juan Carbonell was a little boy in Miami, riding around in the backseat of his parents' car, he would ask his father to turn the radio to the pop songs on Power 96. Instead, his father would slide in a cassette tape of motivational speakers like Zig Ziglar or Tony Robbins. "I listened to them over and over and over again," recalls Juan. "My father would always tell me, 'Don't let anyone steal your dreams.' And I would be like, 'I don't even know what my dreams are yet! I just want Legos.'" To his parents, who were both political refugees from Cuba, the concept of having and pursuing dreams was not something to take for granted. They taught Juan from a very young age to appreciate basic liberties like freedom of speech, education, and the opportunity to better oneself. "Being the direct descendent of immigrants, you get this awesome look at life that everything you have was not free," says Juan. "Everything you have was fought for." >



People

Q&A with Juan

Q. What subjects were you drawn to when you were younger?

A. I always loved business and IT. My father was a bit of a nerd. He had one of the first personal computers, back when it was called the 8088. I remember seeing the first version of Windows. And playing the first-ever 3D game, Wolfenstein 3D. Using the first-ever sound card instead of just blips and bleeps. When it came time for university, I did computer information systems with a bachelor's in business administration.

Q. What did you like to do in your free time?

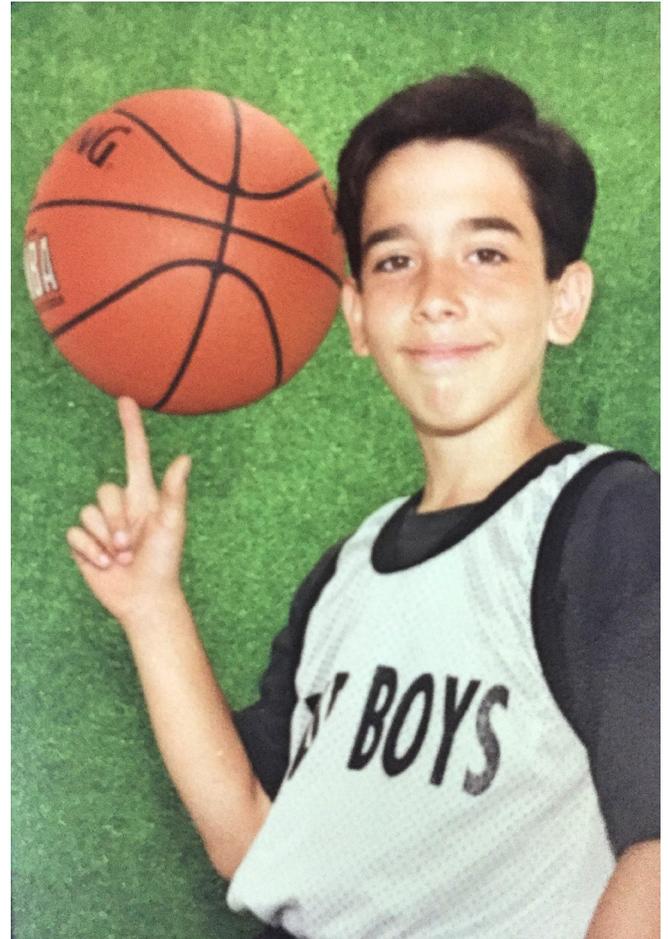
A. I did a lot of sports. Basketball and Kempo, which is martial arts.

Q. What did you learn from Kempo?

A. Discipline. I learned to manage adrenaline. When your body goes into fight or flight, you have to learn how not to let fear overpower you. That kind of stuff is important. It plays into everything now, from public speaking to stepping into a big sales meeting. I try to keep a cool head.

Q. How did you come to live in Sydney?

A. After university, I wanted to get out and see the world. In 2004, I moved to London. It was only supposed to be a few months, but I stayed in England for about three and a half years. In 2007, I moved back to Miami for a year and had my own IT consulting business. Then I went to Japan for a few months. I thought I was going to live in Tokyo, but I decided not to. Then I heard Australia was giving out work visas pretty easily for people under thirty, so I moved here. I promised my parents I'd be back in six months, but I've been here for nine years now.



Q. How did you start working at Routematch?

A. I did my master's in business strategy at the University of New South Wales. Then I started working for the public transport authority out here, called Transport for New South Wales. I worked for them for five years doing business change and solution delivery. When I thought I was going to be leaving here, I got headhunted for this role [as Managing Director of RouteMatch in Australia].

Q. How is public transit different in Australia?

A. In Australia, there is no stigma with public transit. The cost of fuel is higher. It's more expensive to own



a vehicle. In cities, transit is the most efficient way to get from A to B. When I grew up in Miami, there was a stigma against using public transit. You only used public transit if you couldn't afford a car. But in Australia, public transit is for the public. Everyone agrees it's better for the environment and makes the city work better.

Q. Do you take public transit?

A. Yes. My apartment is about a ten-minute walk from the train station.

Q. What's Sydney like?

A. Sydney is one of the most stunning cities in the world. People are nice. The quality of life is high. The crime rate is low. They just finished a three-week festival of lights called Vivid, where they light up the bridge with LED lights and put on a show at the Opera House. And if you like to travel, like me, it's a nice base to see more of the Asian Pacific and another side of the world.

Q. Where are some of your favorite places to travel?

A. One of the coolest places that no one's heard about here is called Vanuatu. In World War II, it was an American military base. It has this wonderful Pacific Island vibe and has some of the best undiscovered wreck diving in the world. I was blown away by how cool that place was. On my birthday, I'm going to Ningaloo Reef, where you can go swimming with whale sharks. It's like the unknown Great Barrier Reef. Then about an eight-hour drive from there is Kirjini National Park. It's the poster child of Outback Australia. You have this beautiful red earth, and waterfalls that cut through the sandstone. It's incredible. It looks like a Gaudi painting.

Q. What is the Routematch office in Sydney like?

A. Right now there are three of us on the team here. We're looking to hire a fourth. I don't want to make peo-

ple jealous, but we mostly work from home. We have a virtual office where we'll meet in person about once a week. Also, in Australia, it's the law that you have twenty days of holiday. So you work about eleven months and take a month off.

Q. How do you like to relax after a long day of work?

A. I play basketball. And I'm into photography. My work has been published on a site called Australian Photography and in a few newspapers. Some of pictures I took in Cuba were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Q: You went back to Cuba? What did your parents think?

A: What is it called—the seven stages of grief? At first they said, “How dare you! Your grandfather will be turning over in his grave.” But I explained why I wanted to go and eventually they started asking questions, and it was a good thing. I went there to do a marathon, which I failed miserably at due to injuries, but I still got a medal.

Q: What do you miss about being in the States?

A: My family. And the Cuban desserts—the flan and tres leches.

Q: What's one thing you'd like to tell your colleagues working in different countries?

A: Come and visit!



Writer Laura Lee Huttenbach is the author of “The Boy is Gone” and “Running with Raven” (Kensington Press, May 2017). Her website is www.LLHuttenbach.com.
