

# HASSAN HANKIR

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## COVER LETTER

On October 18, 2015, I became the richest homeless person in California. It is difficult to calculate the net worth of homeless people, so this might be hard to verify, but still safe to assume. Everything had started five months before, when my father was laid off. He tried finding another job, but his efforts were in vain. At that point, I became the household income provider, paying for rent, food, and tuition, which cost me every dollar I had made.

On September 1, 2015, I had \$200 I was able to make by selling my bed. It was my budget for the entire month, and I had to find a way to use it for my rent, food, and tuition payment plan. With no family members on this side of the ocean and no friends willing to let me sleep at their house even though I asked repeatedly, I had no choice but to live on the street. I became homeless. A year before this, I had lived in a \$3,000-a-month apartment, but now I couldn't afford to live anywhere; even the cheapest place for rent was unreachable. If only I had bought a car when I could have, I would at least have slept in the car, but who would have thought that things could go so wrong so fast?

Being a homeless person is extremely difficult, as expected, but not for the obvious reasons of hunger, cold, the pain of sleeping on the floor, or lack of hygiene. It is being mentally lost, not having a place to call home, a reference to go to when the day is over, a center to one's universe. Consequently, I wasn't able to focus on studying or working, no matter how hard I tried. After few days of being lost and trying desperately to get my focus back, I discovered what I needed: habits. When I formed daily habits of eating at the same place, studying at the same table in the public library, and sleeping in the same corner, I was able to get my focus back. In a way, I had made my own house out of public places. Also, I realized that social perception was a big part of surviving this period, so I kept wearing my Ralph Lauren shirt and Hugo Boss belt, and went regularly to the beach to shower.

I was back on track, got my grades back up, and found comfort in my new life. One problem was still not resolved, though: my father hadn't found a job yet. So how do you help your father who can't find a job anywhere? You create a company and get him a job there.

Therefore, I started reading books on successful business pitches, and composed a formula that predicts the success rate of a pitch using variables such as founders' education, marketing strategies, industry, innovation, etc. Then I tested my formula on a database I made from the 493 companies featured in the six seasons of the reality television series Shark Tank. The formula received 87.02% accuracy on the test and became the heart of the mathematical model that I used to build a business plan.

After many sleepless nights, I had a very detailed business plan ready, pitched it to investors, and waited. October 18, 2015, arrives, a date that will forever be engraved in my memory. At 7 a.m., drops of water on my face wake me up. It's raining. A smile shines on my face—after all, it only rains a few times a year in this city, and for that rain to happen when I am sleeping in the street, and at the perfect hour to wake me up . . . What a feeling. A few minutes later, I receive a call from one of the investors I pitched to. Good news, great news: I did it! I raised \$100,000 in exchange for shares of my company.

My philosophy of life was to "make the best out of the least." Now, my family and I have roofs to sleep under, and the rest is history.



After realizing how innovation has lifted my life in a way that nothing else could, I am determined today to work on innovative solutions that improve people's lives.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Wholeheartedly,

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