

The Pivot Generation: Confusing Our Parents One Online Gig at a Time”

At first, I didn't know I was living out something Charles Handy had written about. He called it the Second Curve — that moment when the current path of growth is nearing its peak, and instead of waiting for decline, you pivot to something new. Handy argued that we shouldn't cling to what worked in the past, but instead jump to a new curve while the old one still feels “good enough.” That's exactly what being Gen Z feels like. We're not waiting for the world to give us permission to pivot — we're already leaping. Traditional jobs? They might work for some. But I realized early on that the rules that shaped our parents' success don't fit our world anymore.

After high school, I stood at that confusing place between society's expectations and my own instincts. While many of my peers were focused on joining the best universities or chasing prestigious careers, I was staring at my cracked phone screen watching a guy on YouTube make thousands of dollars dropshipping dog sweaters. It was ridiculous — but it was real. And that's where I realized my first curve was already ending. The old path — go to school, get a degree, find a job — felt increasingly outdated for someone like me, an 18-year-old in Kenya with a decent WiFi connection and an overactive imagination.

I started freelancing. Anything that paid in dollars and didn't involve wearing a tie was on the table. I wrote articles, designed logos using Canva and zero design experience, managed social media pages for strangers in countries I couldn't even spell. Some gigs paid well, others paid in “exposure,” which is a nice word for nothing. Still, I was excited. I was hustling. My mother, bless her, had no idea what I was doing. She just kept asking, “Are you still jobless?” I told her I was a digital entrepreneur. She told me to go outside and get some sun.

To her, success was about structure — a real job, a real office, and a retirement plan. She came from a generation that respected titles and uniforms. Nurses. Teachers. Accountants. Respectable things. Not someone who earns money by writing tweets for a crypto startup in

Argentina. So I stopped trying to explain. It's hard to describe the Second Curve to someone still fully rooted in the first. To her, I looked lost. But in truth, I had never been more focused.

I tried everything — freelancing, dropshipping, affiliate marketing, virtual assistance. One week I was designing digital planners for productivity; the next, I was reading about forex like I was prepping for a PhD. Some mornings I woke up feeling like a future millionaire. Other days, I questioned if I was just an ambitious clown with a ring light. I believed in the Law of Attraction for a while. Wrote “MILLIONAIRE” in big block letters above my bed, whispered affirmations, and visualized my dream laptop. The laptop didn't come, but self-awareness did. That counts, right?

Through all this, I came face to face with the real meaning of Handy's Second Curve. It's not just about career shifts or new ventures — it's about the courage to stop pretending something still works when you know deep down it doesn't. I had to abandon some hustles I was emotionally attached to. My dropshipping store? Beautiful website, zero customers. My academic writing gig? It paid, but drained my soul. I was making choices not just based on money, but on meaning. That shift — from desperate to intentional — was my true pivot point.

But I'd be lying if I said it was easy. From the outside, it looks like confidence. From the inside, it feels like chaos. There's a quiet kind of loneliness in going against the current — especially when that current is reinforced by your entire community. “Why don't you just apply for a bank job like everyone else?” one uncle asked. I smiled politely and considered writing him into a short story titled “How to Kill a Dream in One Sentence.”

The generational clash wasn't just funny — it was philosophical. My mum's generation believed in safety. Ours believes in speed. They trust institutions. We trust algorithms. They want to climb ladders. We want to build trampolines. And that's not disrespect. It's evolution. Charles Handy predicted it. We're not broken. We're just early adapters.

I started reading Stoic philosophy around the same time I gave up on

making \$10k a month from TikTok automation. Marcus Aurelius wrote, “The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way.” It hit me like a motivational meme that actually makes sense. When clients ghosted me or ideas flopped, I stopped panicking. I started paying attention. Every failure taught me a new skill. Every silence taught me patience. Every gig that didn’t work out pushed me toward the one that eventually did.

Eventually, I built a rhythm. I landed recurring clients, created systems, tracked income, learned taxes (well, sort of). My mum stopped worrying. Mostly because I started paying the WiFi bill. But also because she saw something real emerging — not just money, but stability. The kind of stability that isn’t attached to a company name or a monthly salary, but to competence and confidence. I wasn’t chasing side hustles anymore. I was building a portfolio, a path, a future.

But more than anything, I was building resilience. The kind of resilience that Handy writes about — the ability to start again before it’s too late. The awareness to know when comfort is actually a trap. The courage to pivot when people are still clapping for your old performance. That’s the essence of the Second Curve. Not waiting for collapse to change — but choosing growth while you still have strength.

The world is moving fast. AI is replacing jobs that didn’t exist ten years ago. Climate change, economic shifts, pandemics — we’re not in an era of slow decline. We’re in an age of constant pivots. And that’s why Handy’s ideas feel more urgent than ever. We all need to become comfortable with reinvention. With failing forward. With betting on ourselves, even when the odds look ridiculous.

Being 18 in this world isn’t easy. You’re supposed to know what you want, impress on social media, and have a monetized YouTube channel by lunch. But it’s also a gift. Because the earlier you start learning to adapt, the less attached you become to things that don’t serve you. I’m grateful I learned the Second Curve young. I’ll probably need to pivot a dozen more times in my life. But now, I’m not afraid. I know how to leap.

Sometimes I imagine explaining all this to Charles Handy. He was a philosopher, sure, but I think he'd enjoy a good story. I'd tell him about the boy who learned to freelance from YouTube and faced cultural expectations with a smile. About the nights I cried after rejections and the mornings I got back up anyway. I'd tell him about the young people in Africa who are building entire careers from their phones. Not waiting for the world to change — but changing it, one gig at a time.

He might chuckle. Or nod. Or say something deep like, "The second curve begins when you stop pretending the first one is enough." And I'd agree.

So here I am, living out my Second Curve. No office. No titles. Just a dream, a laptop, and WiFi stable enough to stream my future. My story isn't about instant success. It's about intentional evolution. And if I ever do become a millionaire, I'll make sure to write it in big letters above my bed again — just for the nostalgia.

And if Charles Handy were still here, I think he'd smile. Because somewhere between pet food emails, forex losses, and freelance wins, a young person dared to change early — and that, perhaps, is the real beginning of any worthwhile beginning a future.

And maybe that's the real beauty of the Second Curve — it doesn't always announce itself with certainty. Sometimes, it's just a hunch, a whisper in your gut, a meme that hits too close to home, or a mother asking if "Googling for dollars" is a real job. But we leap anyway.

Charles Handy once wrote that "we can only understand life backwards, but we must live it forwards." I didn't know I was riding my Second Curve when I opened my first freelance gig or watched forex charts flicker on a cracked screen in a shared room. But now I see it: I was rewriting my future before the old one even began.

Charles gave us a map for moments like these — not a rigid path, but a dare. A challenge to be bold before we are ready, to change course while the road is still smooth, and to trust that a new curve awaits just past the edge of comfort.

So, here's to the curves we choose. The stumbles we survive. The lessons we carry. And to Charles Handy — who taught us not to fear the pivot, but to dance through it.