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Theories of Writing

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A Denver, Colorado Original: Chipotle Mexican Grill

1644 West Evans – a Denver, Colorado landmark. 1644 West Evans is a one-story brick building that sits about five blocks from the University of Denver. The inside is small, but it doesn't need to be any bigger. It gets the job done. And isn't that what everyone is looking for - efficiency? Well, if it is. They came to the right place. 1644 West Evans is the location of the first Chipotle Mexican Grill: a fast-food chain that offers design-your-own burritos, tacos, and bowls. What first started as a small hole in the wall startup soon became a worldwide obsession for a tasty menu that delivers fast. But like every business, Chipotle's journey to success wasn't as simple as it may seem. The brainchild began in 1933 with a man who set out to create a concept the world had not seen in the restaurant industry. The goal? Simplicity and customization. Food with integrity.

So, who is the man behind the multimillion-dollar company? His name is Steve Ells. Ells was born in 1965 in Indianapolis to a family full of executives in the American business world. Some would call that the perfect set up to fulfill a goal of living the American Dream. Ells attended Boulder High School and continued with his academic career at the University of Colorado at Boulder. A change from your typical story, he didn't study business. Nope, instead, he majored in Art and Art History. After graduating, Steve's followed his gut and began to unravel his interest in the food world. What a brave soul.

Ells enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York – a massive adjustment from laidback Colorado, but he seemed to enjoy the fast-paced life of the big city. He couldn't get enough. His first job out of school was as a line cook at Stars in San Francisco, California. A landmark restaurant in the city and known as the birthplace of California and New American cuisine. A fantastic place for Ells to learn and absorb the restaurant and food world, and that is what he did.

Ells used his natural human instincts to observe and judge the world around him. The San Francisco Mission District was and still is known for the overflow of taquerias and burrito joints. Lines wrap around city blocks during lunchtime rush hours and dinner time pickups. Ells knew the market needed something different. Something new. Something fast. So, as the smart entrepreneur he was, Ells went to his father, an American executive with loads of knowledge on business startups and strategies, and told him his dream of starting a casual, fast-food Mexican joint. Ells's father was intrigued. He wanted to support his sons' vision, as all fathers should, and gave Ells an \$85,000 loan. But that wasn't all. His father was not just going to hand his son such a large amount of money and leave him on his own – Ells had never taken a business class in his life. Ever. Instead, Ells's father worked with Steve to create and calculate a smart and fast-growing business plan that would generate cash flow.

Together, the family-duo calculated the first store would need to sell 107 burritos a day to do well. And that meant Ells had to start practicing his burrito construction skills immediately. A month later, the first Chipotle joint was selling 1,000 burritos a day. Ells got what he wanted. But he couldn't stop at one store – he was doing too well. His business plan shifted, and he no longer wanted to focus on fine dining. Ells had no problem receiving the funding to do it either. Ells received loads of money from investors like his father and McDonalds. People believed in him,

and he believed in himself. The potential for something as unique and original as a burrito bar was unmatched. Now, there are around 2,300 locations in the United States and Europe that sell hundreds and thousands of meals every day.

The original Chipotle continues to be a hotspot, even when it is right next door to a Colorado-based competitor, Illegal Pete's. But that does not affect the line that trickles out the door all day long. Hundreds of people walk in and out of the small brick building every day, holding a paper bag full of chips and their customized meal. Chipotle lovers can't get enough of their guacamole fix (remember, Guac is extra) or beautifully wrapped burritos containing nutritious ingredients that are naturally sourced and socially responsible. The original Chipotle gives Denver natives a point of pride that will last forever. It is hard not to feel something special when you walk through the doors of 1644 West Evans and eye the plaque, reminding people where the journey started.