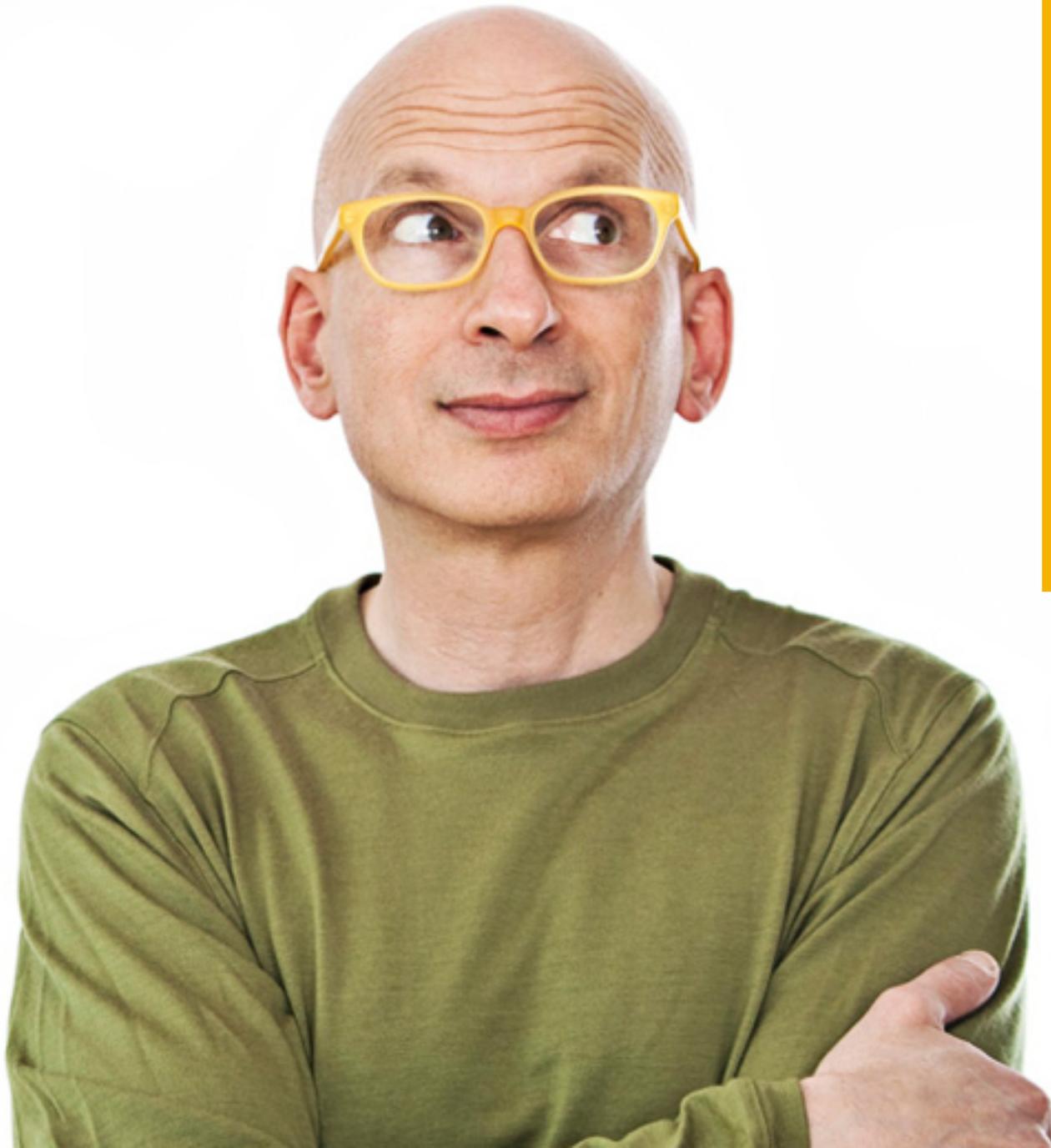


THE UNOFFICIAL
GUIDE TO:

The
BEST of
SETH
GODIN'S
BLOG
2012



SETH GODIN has written fourteen books that have been translated into more than thirty languages. Every one has been a bestseller. He writes about the post-industrial revolution, the way ideas spread, marketing, quitting, leadership and most of all, changing everything.

American Way Magazine calls him, "**America's Greatest Marketer,**" and his blog is perhaps the most popular in the world written by a single individual. His latest book, **We Are All Weird**, calls for end of mass and for the beginning of offering people more choices, more interests and giving them more authority to operate in ways that reflect their own unique values, and Seth once again breaks the traditional publishing model by releasing it through **The Domino Project**. His recent **Kickstarter** for his newest book (The Icarus Deception out in January 2013) broke records for its size and the speed that it reached its goal.

As an entrepreneur, he has founded dozens of companies, most of which failed. Yoyodyne, his first internet company, was funded by Flatiron and Softbank and acquired by Yahoo! in 1998. It pioneered the use of ethical direct mail online, something Seth calls Permission Marketing. He was VP of Direct Marketing at Yahoo! for a year.

His latest company, **Squidoo.com**, is ranked among the top 125 sites in the US (by traffic) by Quantcast. It allows anyone (even you) to build a page about any topic you're passionate about. The site raises money for charity and pays royalties to its million plus members.

Table of Contents

- **MARKETING** 4
- **LINCHPIN - WHY YOU MATER** 14
- **MORE - DOING MORE : BEING MORE** 21
- **GETTING THERE** 34
- **PEOPLE (DEALING WITH)** 43
- **TIME** 50

MARKETING

Who is your customer?

Rule one: You can [build](#) a business on the foundation of great customer service.

Rule two: The only way to do great customer service is to [treat different customer differently](#).

The question: ***Who is your customer?***

It's not obvious.

Zappos is a classic customer service company, and their customer is the person who buys the shoes.

Nike, on the other hand, doesn't care very much at all about the people who buy the shoes, or even the retailers. They care about the athletes (often famous) that wear the shoes, sometimes for money. They name buildings after these athletes, court them, erect [statues...](#)

Columbia Records has no idea who buys their music and never has. On the other hand, they understand that their customer is the musician, and they have an entire department devoted to keeping that 'customer' happy. (Their other customer was the program director at the radio station, but we know where that's going...)

Many manufacturers have retailers as their customer. If Wal-Mart is happy, they're happy.

Apple had just one customer. He passed away last year.

And some companies and politicians choose the media as their customer.

If you can only build one statue, who is it going to be a statue of?

Persuade vs. convince

Persuade vs. convince

An anonymous copyeditor working on my new book unilaterally changed each usage of "persuade" to "convince."

I had to change them all back.

Marketers don't convince. Engineers convince. **Marketers persuade.** Persuasion appeals to the emotions and to fear and to the imagination. Convincing requires a spreadsheet or some other rational device.

It's much easier to persuade someone if they're already convinced, if they already know the facts. But it's impossible to change someone's mind merely by convincing them of your point.

If you're spending a lot of your time trying to **convince** people, it's no wonder it's not working.

More [here](#).

#1 in a small market

is way more interesting, more fruitful and more fun than being number three in a larger market.

When you're the market leader, you set the agenda, you attract the leading customers and you are the one who gets targeted, picked on and singled out. The stakes are higher and so is your impact.

The easiest way to become #1 is to redefine your focus and the way you serve your customers sufficiently that you redefine the market. Harley Davidson isn't #1 in the market for motorcycles, but they are certainly #1 in the market for the kind of motorcycle that they sell. The other bikes may have two wheels, but they're for different customers with different needs.

Mass ennui is defeated by focused passion every time.

The simple power of one a day

There are at least 200 working days a year. If you commit to doing a simple marketing item just once each day, at the end of the year you've built a mountain. **Here are some things you might try (don't do them all, just one of these once a day would change things for you):**

Send a handwritten and personal thank you note to a customer

Read the first three chapters of a business or other how-to book

Change something on your website and record how it changes interactions

Write a blog post about how someone is using your product or service

Record a video that teaches your customers how to do something

Help a non-profit in a significant way (make fundraising call, do outreach)

Research and post a short article about how something in your industry works

Teach at least one of your employees a new skill

Write or substantially edit a Wikipedia article

Introduce one colleague to another in a significant way that benefits both of them

Go for a ten minute walk and come back with at least five written ideas on how to improve what you offer the world

Find out something you didn't know about one of your employees or customers or co-workers

Enough molehills is all you need to have a mountain.

Free coffee, next exit

That's the most effective billboard one can imagine, particularly if it's typeset properly and if the coffee is good.

Most billboards aren't nearly as useful, because the wrong service is promoted, or, more likely, because someone saw all that space and worked hard to fill it up.

The same thing is true of most websites. You know so well the why's and how's of what you built and how terrific it is, and the thought of using just a few words when a bunch will do is frightening indeed.

No, your solution doesn't have to be simple or obvious. But the story about what it accomplishes does.

The goal of a marketing interaction isn't to close the sale, any more than the goal of a first date is to get married. **No, the opportunity is to move forward, to earn attention and trust and curiosity and conversation.**

Simple, clear and actionable.

No one ever bought anything on an elevator

If your elevator pitch is a hyper-compressed two-minute overview of your hopes, dreams and the thing you've been building for the last three years, you're doing everyone a disservice. I'll never be able to see the future through your eyes this quickly, and worse, **if you've told me what I need to know to be able to easily say no, I'll say no.**

The best elevator pitch doesn't pitch your project. **It pitches the meeting about your project. The best elevator pitch is true, stunning, brief and it leaves the listener eager (no, desperate) to hear the rest of it.** It's not a practiced, polished turd of prose that pleases everyone on the board and your marketing team, it's a little fractal of the entire story, something real.

"I quit my job as an Emmy-winning actress to do this because..." or "Our company is profitable and has grown 10% per week, every week, since July," or "The King of Spain called me last week about the new project we just launched."

More conversations and fewer announcements.

The best way to learn marketing

...is to do marketing.

Do it on the weekends. Volunteer and do it for a non-profit. Fundraise. Run a business online. Market a kid's lemonade stand.

When you put your ideas in the world, then, and only then, do you know if they're real.

Not expensive, merely frightening.

Art fears business fears art

The artist says, "that sounds like business, and I want nothing to do with it. It will corrupt me and make me think small."

The businessperson says, "art is frightening, unpredictable and won't pay."

Because the artist fears business, she hesitates to think as big as she could, to imagine the impact she might be able to make, to envision the leverage that's available to her.

And because the businessperson fears art, she holds back, looks for a map, follows the existing path and works hard to fit in, never understanding just how vivid her new ideas might be and how powerful her art could make her.

There's often a route, a way to combine the original, human and connected work you want to do with a market-based solution that will enable it to scale. **Once you see it, it's easier to call your bluff and make what you're capable of.**

Seven marketing sins

Impatient...

great marketing takes time. Doing it wrong (and rushed) ten times costs much more and takes longer than doing it slowly, but right, over the same period of time.

Selfish...

we have a choice, and if we sense that this is all about you, not us, our choice will be to go somewhere else.

Self-absorbed...

you don't buy from you, others buy from you. They don't care about your business and your troubles nearly as much as you do.

Deceitful...

see selfish, above. If you don't tell us the truth, it's probably because you're selfish. How urgent can your needs be that you would sacrifice your future to get something now?

Inconsistent...

we're not paying that much attention, but when we do, it helps if you are similar to the voice we heard from last time.

Angry...

at us? Why are you angry at us? It's not something we want to be part of, thanks.

Jealous...

is someone doing better than you? Of course they are. There's always someone doing better than you. But if you let your jealousy change your products or your attitude or your story, we're going to leave.

Of course, they're not marketing sins, they're human failings.

Humility, empathy, generosity, patience and kindness, combined with the arrogance of the brilliant inventor, are a potent alternative.

Take this simple marketing quiz

Not so simple, actually, and about more than just classical marketing:

There are a hundred people in a room, perhaps a trade show or a small theatre. **What's your choice:**

1. Sit in the back, watch, listen and learn.
2. Cajole your way onstage so you can make a slick presentation that gets everyone on their feet, buzzing and excited, eager to do business with you or hire you.
3. Set up a booth in the lobby that energizes and engages 12 of the people enough that they tell their friends, while it disturbs or mystifies two of the others and is ignored by the rest.
4. Provide a service (like cookies and juice in a box at the exit) that many of the people there are appreciative of but few remember or talk about.

Most people say they choose #2. In fact, most marketers actually do #1 or #4, and **it's only #3 that gives you the best chance**--create a remarkable product or service, don't depend on getting picked to have a lucky break on stage, and gradually spread your purple cow among people who are truly interested.

Apple and Nike and Starbucks are trotted out again and again as marketing gold standards, because they are beloved by many and ignored or distrusted by few. But these are the outliers, the .0001% that don't represent what actually happens when successful ideas reach the marketplace.

The mass market is no longer. There is almost no room left for the next Procter & Gamble or Google. Instead, you are far more likely to do your best work if you are willing to delight a few as opposed to soothe the masses.

The circles of marketing

Most amateurs and citizens believe that marketing is the outer circle.

Marketing = advertising, it seems. The job of marketing in this circle is to take what the factory/system/boss gives you and hype it, promote it and yell about it. This is what so many charities, politicians, insurance companies, financial advisors, computer makers and well, just about everyone does.

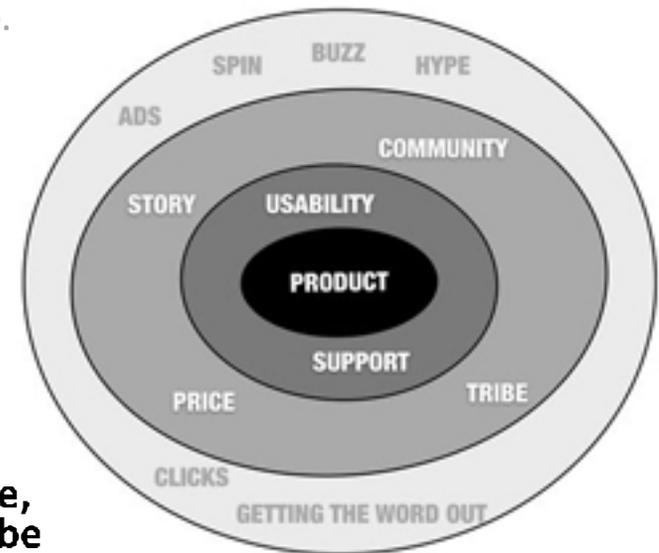
The next circle in has so much more leverage. This is the circle of telling a story that resonates with a tribe. This is the act of creating alignment, of understanding worldviews, of embracing and elevating the weird. **Smart marketers in this circle acknowledge that their product or service isn't for everyone, but bend over backwards to be sure that some people will be able to fall in love with it.**

The next circle in is easily overlooked. **This is the act of changing what surrounds the actual product or service, adding enough usability and support and atmosphere that the perception of the product itself changes.** Zappos did this for shoes. Ikea almost willfully goes in the other direction with its furniture assembly and delivery approach. When you go to an expensive restaurant, you're buying far more than what the chef cooked. Products and services are only commodities if you treat them that way.

And the innermost circle is the product or service itself. When the thing you sell has communication built in, when it is remarkable and worth talking about, when it changes the game--marketing seems a lot easier. Of course, that's because you did the marketing when you invented the thing, saving you the expense and trouble of yelling about it.

When in doubt, when your marketing isn't working, the answer is easy: go one circle in.

Jeff sent over this much slicker PDF version: [Download Circles of Mktg](#)



When should we add marketing?

In the Mad Men era, we added marketing last. Marketing and advertising were the same thing, and the job was to promote what was made.

In the connection era, the marketing is the product, the service and most of all the conversations it causes and the connections it makes.

Marketing is the *first* thing we do, not the last. **Build virality and connection and remarkability into your product or service from the start and then the end gets a lot easier.** Build it into your app, your book, your movie, your insurance policy, and the red soles of your shoes.

What if the product is boring, someone asks...

Well, you get to decide what you make. **If you're entering a competitive field and you intend to grow, the best plan is to revisit your starting assumption and make something else.**

LINCHPIN

WHY YOU MATTER

Don't expect applause

Accept applause, sure, please do.

But when you expect applause, when you do your work in order (and because of) applause, you have sold yourself short. **That's because your work is depending on something out of your control.** You have given away part of your art. If your work is filled with the hope and longing for applause, it's no longer your work--the dependence on approval has corrupted it, turned it into a process where you are striving for ever more approval.

Who decides if your work is good? When you are at your best, you do. If the work doesn't deliver on its purpose, if the pot you made leaks or the hammer you forged breaks, then you should learn to make a better one. But we don't blame the nail for breaking the hammer or the water for leaking from the pot. They are part of the system, just as the market embracing your product is part of marketing.

"Here, here it is, it's finished."

If it's finished, the applause, the thanks, the gratitude are something else. Something extra and not part of what you created. To play a beautiful song for two people or a thousand is the same song, and the amount of thanks you receive isn't part of that song.

Is everyone entitled to their opinion?

Perhaps, but that doesn't mean we need to pay the slightest bit of attention.

There are two things that disqualify someone from being listened to:

1. Lack of Standing. If you are not a customer, a stakeholder or someone with significant leverage in spreading the word, we will ignore you. And we should.

When you walk up to an artist and tell her you don't like her painting style, you should probably be ignored. If you've never purchased expensive original art, don't own a gallery and don't write an influential column in ArtNews, then by all means, you must be ignored.

If you're working in Accounts Payable and you hate the company's new logo, the people who created it should and must ignore your opinion. It just doesn't matter to anyone but you.

I'm being deliberately harsh here for a reason. If we're going to do great work, it means that some people aren't going to like it. And if the people who don't like it don't have an impact on what happens to the work after it's complete, the only recourse of someone doing great work is to ignore their opinion.

2. No Credibility. An opinion needs to be based on experience and expertise. I know you don't like cilantro, but whether or not you like it is not extensible to the population at large. On the other hand, if you have a track record of matching the taste sensibility of my target market, then I very much want to hear what you think.

People with a history of bad judgment, people who are quick to jump to conclusions or believe in unicorns or who have limited experience in the market—these people are entitled to opinions, but it's not clear that the creator of the work needs to hear them. They've disqualified themselves because the method they use for forming opinions about how the market will respond is suspect. The scientific method works, and if you're willing to suspend it at will and just go with your angry gut, we don't need to hear from you.

If these two standards sound like precisely the opposite of what gets you on talk radio or active in anonymous chat rooms, you're right. Running your business or your campaign or your non-profit or your sports team based on what you hear on talk radio is nuts.



If your happiness is based on always getting a little more than you've got. . .

then you've handed control over your happiness to the gatekeepers, built a system that doesn't scale and prevented yourself from the brave work that leads to a quantum leap.

The industrial system (and the marketing regime) adore the mindset of 'a little bit more, please', because it furthers their power. A slightly higher paycheck, a slightly more famous college, an incrementally better car--it's easy to be seduced by this safe, stepwise progress, and if marketers and bosses can make you feel dissatisfied at every step along the way, even better for them.

Their rules, their increments, and you are always on atreadmill, unhappy today, imagining that the answer lies just over the next hill...

All the data shows us that the people on that hill are just as frustrated as the people on your hill. It demonstrates that the people at that college are just as envious as the people at this college. **The never ending cycle (no surprise) never ends.**

An alternative is to be happy wherever you are, with whatever you've got, but always hungry for the thrill of creating art, of being missed if you're gone and most of all, doing important work.

Effortless

When John Coltrane plays the melody early in the track *Harmonique*, you can hear some of the notes crack.

Of course, Coltrane was completely capable of playing these notes the traditional way. And yet he didn't.

It's this effort and humanity that touches us about his solo, not just the melody.

Sometimes, "never let them see you sweat," is truly bad advice. **The work of an individual who cares often exposes the grit and determination and effort that it takes to be present.**

Perfecting your talk, refining your essay and polishing your service until all elements of you disappear might be obvious tactics, **but they remove the thing we were looking for: you.**

Association

Who you hang out with determines what you dream about and what you collide with.

And the collisions and the dreams lead to your changes.

And the changes are what you become.

Change the outcome by changing your circle..

The end of should

Banks should close at 4, books should be 200 pages long, CEOs should go to college, blogs should have comments, businessmen should be men, big deals should be done by lawyers, good food should be processed, surgeons should never advertise, hit musicians should be Americans, good employees should work at the same company for years...

Find your should and make it go away.

The easiest way to thrive as an outlier

...is to avoid being one. At least among your most treasured peers.

Surround yourself with people in at least as much of a hurry, at least as inquisitive, at least as focused as you are. **Surround yourself by people who encourage and experience productive failure, and who are driven to make a difference.**

What's contagious: standards, ethics, culture, expectations and most of all, the bar for achievement.

The crowd has more influence on us than we have on the crowd. It's not an accident that breakthroughs in music, architecture, software, athletics, fashion and cuisine come in bunches, often geographic. If you need to move, move. At least change how and where you exchange your electrons and your ideas.

We all need leaders who challenge the tribe. We benefit even more when our leaders have peers who push them to be even better.

Fear, scarcity and value

The things we fear are probably feared by others, and when we avoid them, we're doing what others are doing as well.

Which is why there's a scarcity of whatever work it is we're avoiding.

And of course, scarcity often creates value.

The shortcut is simple: if you're afraid of something, of putting yourself out there, of creating a kind of connection or a promise, that's a clue that you're on the right track. **Go, do that.**

You will be judged (or you will be ignored)

Those are pretty much the only two choices.

Being judged is uncomfortable. Snap judgments, prejudices, misinformation... all of these, combined with not enough time (how could there be) to truly know you, means that you will inevitably be misjudged, underestimated (or overestimated) and unfairly rejected.

The alternative, of course, is much safer. To be ignored.

Up to you.

I was wrong

In 1993, I saw the web coming. I was hired to write the cover story for a now defunct computer magazine about the internet, and dismissed the new Mosaic browser in a single paragraph.

I figured the web was just like Prodigy, but slower, harder to use and without a business model.

About as expensive a wrong analysis as a single entrepreneur with an email company could make in 1993.

The reason it was an insanely valuable lesson: I got better at announcing that I was wrong, learning from it and doing the next thing.

Politicians, of course, are terrible at this. They are never wrong, apparently, and when they are, spin instead of admitting it. Which not only hurts their trustworthiness, it prevents them from learning anything.

Two elements of successful leadership: a willingness to be wrong and an eagerness to admit it.

MORE

DOING MORE : BEING MORE

How to Succeed

You don't need all of these, and some are mutually exclusive (while others are not). And most don't work, don't scale or can't be arranged:

1. Be very focused on your goal and work on it daily
2. Go to college with someone who makes it big and then hires you
3. Be born with significant and unique talent
4. Practice every day
5. Network your way to the top by inviting yourself from one lunch to another, trading favors as you go
6. Quietly do your job day in and day out until someone notices you and gives you the promotion you deserve
7. Do the emotional labor of working on things that others fear
8. Notice things, turn them into insights and then relentlessly turn those insights into projects that resonate
9. Hire a great PR firm and get a lot of publicity
10. Work the informational interview angle
11. Perform outrageous acts and say obnoxious things
12. Inherit
13. Redefine your version of success as: whatever I have right now
14. Flit from project to project until you alight on something that works out very quickly and well
15. Be the best-looking person in the room
16. Flirt
17. Tell stories that people care about and spread
18. Contribute more than is expected
19. Give credit to others
20. Take responsibility

21. Aggrandize, preferably self
22. Be a jerk and win through intimidation
23. Be a doormat and refuse to speak up or stand up
24. Never hesitate to share a kind word when it's deserved
25. Sue people
26. Treat every gig as an opportunity to create art
27. Cut corners
28. Focus on defeating the competition
29. When dealing with employees, act like Steve. It worked for him, apparently.
30. Persist, always surviving to ship something tomorrow
31. When in doubt, throw a tantrum
32. Have the ability to work harder and more directly than anyone else when the situation demands it
33. Don't rock the boat
34. Rock the boat
35. Don't rock the boat, baby
36. Resort to black hat tactics to get more than your share
37. Work to pay more taxes
38. Work to evade taxes
39. Find typos

A Simple Antidote to a corporatized, unfeeling, profit-maximizing world

Care.

Care more than you need to, more often than expected, more completely than the other guy.

No one reports liking Steve Jobs very much, yet he was as embraced as any businessperson since Walt Disney. Because he cared. He cared deeply about what he was making and how it would be used. Of course, he didn't just care in a general, amorphous, whiny way, **he cared and then actually delivered.**

Politicians are held in astonishingly low esteem. Congress in particular is setting record lows, but it's an endemic problem. The reason? They consistently act as if they don't care. They don't care about their peers, certainly, and by their actions, apparently, they don't care about us. Money first.

Many salespeople face a similar problem--perhaps because for years they've used a shallow version of caring as a marketing technique to boost their commissions. One report by the National Association of Realtors found that more than 90% of all homeowners are never again contacted by their real estate agent after the contracts for the home are signed. Why bother... there's no money in it, just the possibility of complaints. Well, the reason is obvious--you'd come by with cookies and intros to the neighbors if you cared.

Economists tell us that the reason to care is that it increases customer retention, profitability and brand value. For me, though, that's beside the point (and even counter to the real goal). Caring gives you a compass, a direction to head and most of all, a reason to do the work you do in the first place.

Care More.

It's only two words, but it's hard to think of a better mantra for the organization that is smart enough to understand the core underpinning of their business, as well as one in search of a reason for being. No need to get all tied up in subcycles of this leads to this which leads to that so therefore I care... **Instead, there's the opportunity to follow the direct and difficult road of someone who truly cares about what's being made and who it is for.**

We say we want a revolution. . .

Of course, what we say doesn't matter so much. **What we do is what matters**, and we have far more influence that we'd like to confess.

We say we want local merchants to offer great service, deep selection and community values, but we cross the street to the big box store to save \$3.

We say we want companies to honor their promises and act transparently, but one new product or big discount from a business that has deceived us in the past and we come right back for more.

We say we're disgusted with Congress, but almost all of us vote to re-elect the dufus we sent there in the first place.

We say we hate spam, but we send it. And sometimes buy from it.

We say we'd like people to think first and act later, but we get cut off in traffic and all bets are off.

We say we love art, the brave work that touches us, but we listen to oldies and rarely head out to hear live music or visit a cutting edge gallery.

**Hypocrisy may be an epidemic, but the problem isn't in what we say.
It's what we do.**

The best way to get unstuck

Don't wait for the right answer and the golden path to present themselves.

This is precisely why you're stuck. Starting without seeing the end is difficult, so we often wait until we see the end, scanning relentlessly for the right way, the best way and the perfect way.

The way to get unstuck is to start down the wrong path, right now.

Step by step, page by page, interaction by interaction. As you start moving, you can't help but improve, can't help but incrementally find yourself getting back toward your north star.

You might not end up with perfect, but it's significantly more valuable than being stuck.

Don't just start. Continue. Ship. Repeat.

The false choice of mediocrity

Too often, we're presented with choices that don't please us. We can pick one lousy alternative or the other. **And too often, we pick one.**

I was struck by Apple's choice to put a glass screen on the original iPhone. Just six weeks before it was announced, Steve Jobs decided he wanted a scratchproof glass screen. The thing is, this wasn't an option. It wasn't possible, reliable, feasible or appropriately priced. It couldn't be done with certainty, and almost any other organization would have taken it off the list of appropriate choices.

It was unreasonable.

And that's the key. Remarkable work is *always* not on the list, because if it was, it would be commonplace, not remarkable.

How to make money online

- 1.** The first step is to stop Googling things like, "how to make money online." Not because you shouldn't want to make money online, but because the stuff you're going to find by doing that is going to help you lose money online. Sort of like asking a casino owner how to make money in Vegas...
- 2.** Don't pay anyone for simple and proven instructions on how to achieve this goal. In particular, don't pay anyone to teach you how to write or sell manuals or ebooks about how to make money online.
- 3. Get rich slow.**
- 4.** Focus on the scarce resource online: attention. If you try to invent a way to take cheap attention and turn it into cash, you will fail. The attention you want isn't cheap, it's difficult to get via SEO and it rarely scales. Instead, figure out how to earn expensive attention.
- 5.** In addition to attention, focus on trust. Trust is even more scarce than attention.
- 6.** Don't worry so much about the 'online' part. Instead, figure out how to create value. The online part will take care of itself.
- 7.** Don't quit your day job. Start evenings and weekends and figure it out with small failures.
- 8.** Build a public reputation. A good one, and be sure that you deserve it, and that it will hold up to scrutiny.
- 9.** Obsessively specialize. No niche is too small if it's yours.
- 10.** Connect the disconnected.
- 11. Lead.**

12. Build an online legacy that increases in value daily.

14. Become the best in the world at something that people value. Easier said than done, worth more than you might think.

13. Make money offline. If you can figure out how to create value face to face, it's a lot easier to figure out how to do the same digitally. The web isn't magic, it's merely efficient.

15. Hang out with people who aren't looking for shortcuts. Learn from them.

16. Fail. Fail often and fail cheaply. This is the very best gift the web has given to people who want to bootstrap their way into a new business.

17. Make money in the small and then relentlessly scale.

18. Don't chase yesterday's online fad.

19. Think big, act with intention and don't get bogged down in personalities. If it's not on your agenda, why are you wasting time on it?

20. Learn. Ceaselessly. Learn to code, to write persuasively, to understand new technologies, to bring out the best in your team, to find underused resources and to spot patterns.

21. This is not a zero sum game. The more you add to your community, the bigger your piece gets.

A few years ago I put my book *The Bootstrapper's Bible* online for free. You can find it [here](#).

Getting over ourselves

In the face of billions of dollars of destruction, of the loss of life, of families disrupted, it's easy to wonder what we were so hung up on just a few days ago. Many just went face to face with an epic natural disaster, and millions are still recovering. Writer's block or a delayed shipment or an unreturned phone call seem sort of trivial now.

We're good at creating drama, at avoiding emotional labor and most of all, at thinking small. Maybe we don't need another meeting, a longer coffee break or another hour whittling away at our stuckness.

There's never been a better opportunity to step up and make an impact, while we've got the chance. **This generation, this decade, right now, there are more opportunities to connect and do art than ever before. Maybe even today.**

It's pretty easy to decide to roll with the punches, to look at the enormity of natural disaster and choose to hunker down and do less. It's more important than ever, I think, to persist and make a dent in the universe instead.

We've all been offered access to so many tools, so many valuable connections, so many committed people. **What an opportunity.**

Do the (extra) work

Do the extra work not because you have to but because it's a privilege.

Get in early.

Sweep the floor without being asked.

Especially when it's not your turn.

Not because you want credit or reward.

Because you can.

The industrialist wants to suck everything out of you. Doing extra work as a cog in an industrial system is a fool's errand.

For the rest of us, the artist and the freelancer and the creator, we know that the privilege of doing the extra work is the work itself.

The habit of doing more than is necessary can only be earned through practice. **And the habit is priceless.**

Crash diets and good habits

Crash diets don't work.

They don't work for losing weight, they don't work for making sales quota and they don't work for getting and keeping a job.

The reason they don't work has nothing to do with what's on the list of things to be done (or consumed).

No, the reason they don't work is that they don't change habits, and habits are where our lives and careers and bodies are made.

If you want to get in shape, don't sign up for fancy diet this or Crossthat the other thing. No, the way to get in shape is to go to the gym every single day, change your clothes and take a shower. If you can do that every single day for a month, pretty soon you'll start doing something while you're there...

If you want to make sales quota, get in the habit of making more sales calls, learning more about your market and generally showing up. If you show up, with right intent, you'll start making sales. The secret isn't a great new pitch or a new pair of shoes. The secret is showing up.

Your audacious life goals are fabulous. We're proud of you for having them. But it's possible that those goals are designed to distract you from the thing that's really frightening you--**the shift in daily habits that would mean a re-invention of how you see yourself.**

Organizations can always benefit from better habits. **Every day. Do that first.**

This or that?

Don't follow, lead.
Don't copy, create.
Don't start, finish.

or even,

Don't sit still, move.
Don't fit in, stand out.
Don't sit quietly, speak up.

**Not all the time, sure, but
more often.**

On making a ruckus in your industry

**Bring forward a new idea or technology
that disrupts and demands a response**

Change pricing dramatically

Redefine a service as a product (or vice versa)

Organize the disorganized, connect the disconnected

Alter the speed to market radically

Change the infrastructure, the rules or the flow of
information

Give away what used to be expensive and charge
for something else

Cater to the weird, bypassing the masses

Take the lead on ethics

**(Or you could just wait for someone to tell you what they
want you to do)**

Understanding stuck

Is there a human being alive who is capable of getting to an airplane who doesn't know how to buckle his seatbelt?

Given that we have 100% seatbelt understanding among the flying population, why do flight attendants repeat the instructions literally millions of times a year? (Low and flat across the waist...)

It's stuck.

Like so many policies, beliefs and procedures in our organizations, this is a ritual that's stuck. To get unstuck, organizations need two things:

- a. a vacuum and,**
- b. a willingness to ignore dissent**

Change gets made by people who care, who have some sort of authority and are willing to take responsibility. Often, though, finding all three is tough, particularly when faced with the immovable object of the stuck organization.

One approach to getting unstuck is the clean sheet of paper. Dictate that the speech before flight is going to change, that the menu will be redone, that the qualifications are going to start over, from zero.

Now, instead of needing an unanimous vote to **remove** something, merely demand that you need a passionate voice to add something.

For years, the Yahoo home page was stuck, with literally hundreds of links on it. No one could take a link off the page, because unanimous consent was impossible. Once Google decided to start with a completely blank page, a different approach was possible.

Move your team across the street, open a new location, completely rewrite the employee handbook, throw out the standard sales script--**by creating a vacuum, you give your team permission to invent.**

Making big decisions about money

We're bad at it. And marketers know this.

Consider: you're buying a \$30,000 car and you have the option of upgrading the stereo to the 18 speaker, 100 watt version for just \$500 more. Should you?

Or perhaps you're considering two jobs, one that you love and one that pays \$2,000 more. Which to choose?

Or...

You are lucky enough to be able to choose between two colleges. One, the one with the nice campus and slightly more **famous** name, will cost your parents (and your long-term debt) about \$200,000 for four years, and the other ("lesser" school) has offered you a **full** scholarship.

Which should you take?

In a surprisingly large number of cases, we take the stereo, even though we'd never buy a nice stereo at home, or we choose to "go with our heart because college is so important" and pick the expensive college. (This is, of course, a good choice to have to make, as most people can't possibly find the money).

Here's one reason we mess up: Money is just a number.

Comparing dreams of a great stereo (four years of driving long distances, listening to great music!) compared with the daily reminder of our cheapness makes picking the better stereo feel easier. After all, we're not giving up anything but a number.

The college case is even more clear. \$200,000 is a number that's big, sure, but it doesn't have much substance. It's not a number we play with or encounter very often. The feeling about the story of compromise involving something tied up in our self-esteem, though, that feeling is something we deal with daily.

Here's how to undo the self-marketing. ***Stop using numbers.***

You can have the stereo if you give up going to Starbucks every workday for the next year and a half. Worth it?

If you go to the free school, you can drive there in a brand new Mini convertible, and every summer you can spend \$25,000 on a top-of-the-line internship/ experience, and you can create a jazz series and pay your favorite musicians to come to campus to play for you and your fifty coolest friends, and you can have Herbie Hancock give you piano lesson and you can still have enough money left over to live without debt for a year after you graduate while you look for the perfect gig...

Suddenly, you're not comparing "this is my dream," with a number that means very little. **You're comparing one version of your dream with another version.**

GETTING THERE

Hard work on the right things

I don't think winners beat the competition because they work harder. And it's not even clear that they win because they have more creativity. **The secret, I think, is in understanding what matters.**

It's not obvious, and it changes. It changes by culture, by buyer, by product and even by the day of the week. **But those that manage to capture the imagination, make sales and grow are doing it by perfecting the things that matter and ignoring the rest.**

Both parts are difficult, particularly when you are surrounded by people who insist on fretting about and working on the stuff that makes no difference at all.

The curious imperative

Now that information is ubiquitous, the obligation changes. **It's no longer okay to not know.**

If you don't know what a word means, look it up.

If you're meeting with someone, check them out in advance.

If it sounds too good to be true, Google it before you forward it.

If you don't know what questions to ask your doctor, find them before your appointment.

If it's important, do your homework.

I confess that I'm amazed when I meet hard-working, smart people who are completely clueless about how their industry works, how their tools work...

It never made sense to be proud of being ignorant, but we're in a new era now. **Look it up.**

If you want to get paid for your freelance work

...then access to tools is no longer sufficient. Everyone you compete with has access to a camera, a keyboard, a guitar. Just because you know how to use a piece of software or a device doesn't mean that there isn't an amateur who's willing to do it for free, or an up and comer who's willing to do it for less.

...then saying "how dare you" is no longer a useful way to cajole the bride away from asking her friend to take pictures at the wedding, or the local non-profit to have a supporter typeset the gala's flyer or to keep a rock star from inviting volunteers on stage.

...then you ought to find and lead a tribe, build a base of people who want you, and only you, and are willing to pay for it.

...then you need to develop both skills and a reputation for those skills that make it clear to (enough) people that an amateur solution isn't nearly good enough, because you're that much better and worth that much more.

...then you should pick yourself and book yourself and publish yourself and stand up and do your work, and do it in a way for which there are no substitutes.

It's true, if someone wants professional work, then he will need to hire professionals. But it's also true that as amateurs are happy to do the work that professionals used to charge for, the best (and only) path to getting paid is to redefine the very nature of professional work.

Scarcity is a great thing for those that possess something that's scarce. But when scarcity goes away, you'll need more than that.

The wishing/doing gap

It would be great to be picked, to win the random lottery, to have a dream come true.

But when we rely on a wish to get where we want to go, we often sacrifice the effort that might make it more likely that we get what we actually need.

Waiting for the prince to show up is a waste of valuable time, and the waiting distracts us from and devalues the hard work we might be doing instead.

If you can influence the outcome, do the work.

If you can't influence the outcome, ignore the possibility. It's merely a distraction.

What to obsess over

They use stopwatches at McDonald's. They know, to the second, how long it should take to make a batch of fries. And they use spreadsheets, too, to whittle the price of each fry down by a hundredth of a cent if they can. **They're big and it matters.**

Small businesspeople often act like direct marketers. They pick a number and they obsess over it. In direct mail, of course, it's the open rate or the conversion rate. For a freelancer or small business person, it might be your bank balance or the growth in weekly sales.

I think for most businesses that want to grow, it's way too soon to act like a direct marketer and pick a single number to obsess about.

The reason is that these numbers demand that you start tweaking. You can tweak a website or tweak an accounts payable policy and make numbers go up, which is great, but it's not going to fundamentally change your business.

I'd have you obsess about things that are a lot more difficult to measure. Things like the level of joy or relief or gratitude your best customers feel. How much risk your team is willing to take with new product launches. How many people recommended you to a friend today...

What are you tracking? If you track concepts, your concepts are going to get better. If you track open rates or click-through, then your subject lines are going to get better. **Up to you.**

The tyranny of low price

If you build your business around being the lowest-cost provider, that's all you've got. Everything you do has to be a race in that direction, because if you veer toward anything else (service, workforce, impact, design, etc.) then a competitor with a more single-minded focus will sell your commodity cheaper than you.

Cheapest price is the refuge for the marketer with no ideas left or no guts to implement the ideas she has.

Everyone needs to sell at a fair price. But unless you've found a commodity that must remain a commodity, a fair price is not always the lowest price. Not when you understand that price is just one of the many tools available.

A short version of this riff: The low-price leader really doesn't need someone with your skills.

Tattoo thinking

A tattoo is **basically** forever.

You should think pretty hard before you get one, because it's largely an **irreversible decision**.

Just about every choice you make with your project and your career, though, doesn't last forever. **And the benefit of taking a risk is significantly higher than it is with a tattoo.** A landing page, a pricing move, a bit of copy--they don't last much more than a day, never mind a lifetime. Higher benefits, lower risk, what are you waiting for?

So go ahead and act as if your decisions are temporary. Because they are. **Be bold, make mistakes, learn a lesson and fix what doesn't work.** No sweat, no need to hyperventilate.

Risk, fear and worry

They're not the same.

Risk is all around us. When we encounter potential points of failure, we're face to face with risk. And nothing courts risk more than art, the desire to do something for the first time--to make a difference.

Fear is a natural reaction to risk. While risk is real and external, fear exists only in our imagination. Fear is the workout we give ourselves imagining what will happen if things don't work out.

And worry? **Worry is the hard work of actively (and mentally) working against the fear.** Worry is our effort to imagine every possible way to avoid the outcome that is causing us fear, and failing that, to survive the thing that we fear if it comes to fruition.

If you've persuaded yourself that risk is sufficient cause for fear, and that fear is sufficient cause for worry, you're in for some long nights and soon you'll abandon your art out of exhaustion. On the other hand, you can choose to see the three as completely separate phenomena, and realize that it's possible to have risk (a good thing) without debilitating fear or its best friend, obsessive worry.

Separate first, eliminate false causation, then go ahead and do your best work.

The race to the bottom

Let's not race to the bottom.

We know that industrialists seek to squeeze every penny out of every market. We know that competitors want to drive their costs to zero so that they will be the obvious commodity choice. And we know that many that seek to unearth natural resources want all of it, **fast and cheap and now.**

We can eliminate rules protecting clean water or consumer safety. We can extort workers to show up and work harder for less, in order to underbid a competitor. We can take advantage of less sophisticated consumers and trick them into consuming items for short-term satisfaction and long-term pain. These might be painful outcomes, but they're an direct path to follow. We know how to do this.

In our connected world, commodity producers are under intense pressure. The price of anything that's made to a spec, or that responds to an RFP, is instantly known by all buyers. That means that there's an argument made by big corporations for each country to charge corporations the lowest possible tax rate, to loosen environmental regulations down to zero, and to eliminate employee protections. All so that a country's commodity producers can be the cheapest ones.

I know we can do that. There's always the opportunity to cut a corner, sacrifice lifestyle quality and suck it up as we race to grab a little more market share.

But the problem with the race to the bottom is that you might win.

You might make a few more bucks for now, but not for long and not with pride. Someone will always find a way to be cheaper or more brutal than you.

The race to the top makes more sense to me. The race to the top is focused on design and respect and dignity and guts and innovation and sustainability and yes, generosity when it might be easier to be selfish. It's also risky, filled with difficult technical and emotional hurdles, and requires patience and effort and insight. The race to the top is the long-term path with the desirable outcome.

Sign me up.

How to run a problem solving meeting

This is a special sort of get together, similar to the meeting where you organize people to figure out the best way to take advantage of an opportunity. In both cases, amateurs usually run the meetings, and the group often fails to do their best work.

Ignore these rules at your peril:

- 1** Only the minimum number of people should participate. Don't invite anyone for political reasons. Don't invite anyone to socialize them on the solution because they were part of inventing it--people don't need to be in the kitchen to enjoy the meal at the restaurant.
- 2** No one participating by conference call... it changes the tone of the proceedings.
- 3** A very structured agenda to prevent conversation creep. You are only here to do one thing.
- 4** All the needed data provided to all attendees, in advance, in writing.
- 5** At least one person, perhaps the host, should have a point of view about what the best course is, but anyone who comes should only be invited if they are willing to change their position.
- 6** Agree on the structure of a deliverable solution before you start.
- 7** Deliver on that structure when you finish.

Strategy matters more than ever

When everyone is playing the same game, your execution is critical.

Your store is like their store, your bread is like their bread, so we care very much about the care and skill you put into your product or service.

Of course, that still matters, but the revolution of the web means that the way you go to market, the structure of your offering, the model of your business--these are sufficient to cause you to lose, regardless of how you play the game. (And able to give you a huge post if you plan right).

Sam Walton was a huge success, largely because he developed a new retail strategy, not because he was better at running a store than anyone else. Local bookstores are in trouble, not because they don't work hard or care a lot, but because they are saddled with expenses that used to be smart (rent for a local storefront) in a world where they are merely ballast.

Running a business with the wrong strategy in the wrong place at the wrong time is possible, but it's an uphill battle. The alternative is to think very hard about your model, your costs and the benefits you offer to the people you'd like to serve.

You could change from a product to a service offering, from free to expensive, from low service to high service, from storefront to web, from large to small, from spam to permission, from acquiring new customers to delighting old ones, from wide open to invitation only, from dirty to green, from secret to transparent, from troll to benefactor, from custom to mass, or for any of these, vice versa.

Not changing your strategy merely because you're used to the one you have now is a lousy strategy.



Perfect and impossible

The definition of a revolution: it destroys the perfect and enables the impossible.

The music business was perfect. Radio, record chains, Rolling Stone magazine, the senior prom, limited access to recording studios, the replaceable nature of the LP, the baby boomers... it all added up to a business that seemed perfect, one that could run for ever and ever.

The digital revolution destroyed this perfect business while enabling the seemingly impossible: easy access to the market by new musicians, a cosmic jukebox of just about every song ever recorded, music as a social connector...

If you are in love with the perfect, prepare to see it swept away.
If you are able to dream of the impossible, it just might happen.

Don't give up (you're on the right track)

Wrestling with a puzzle, a project or a problem, the likeliest reason to give up is the belief that it can't be done. **What's the point of persevering if it's actually impossible to succeed?**

"It can't be done," we say, throwing up our hands. Not "I can't do it," or "It's not worth my time," but "It can't be done."

In the year after Roger Bannister broke the 4 minute mile, the record was broken again and again. Once people realized it could be done, it wasn't an impossible task any longer. And that's why there's a flood of tablets on the market, many from companies that had what they needed to build the first one, but didn't until Apple showed them the way.

Two things you might take away from this: **First**, there's solace in finding someone who has done it before, whatever "it" is you're trying to do. Knowing that it's possible and studying how it was done can't help but increase the chances you'll stick it out.

Second: huge value accrues to the few able to actually do a thing for the very first time.

PEOPLE (DEALING WITH)

The sad irony of selfishness

More often than not, the selfish person is insecure, fearful and filled with doubt. The selfishness springs from his belief that this is his only good idea, his last dollar, his one and only chance to avoid failure. "I need this, not you," he says, because he truly believes he's got nothing else going on, no other chance, no hope.

The irony, of course, is that selflessness (not selfishness, its opposite) is precisely the posture that leads to more success. The person with the confidence to support others and to share is repaid by getting more in return than his selfish counterpart.

The connection economy multiplies the value of what is contributed to it. It's based on abundance, not scarcity, and those that opt out, fall behind.

Sharing your money, your ideas, your insights, your confidence... **all of these things return to you.** Perhaps not in the way you expected, and certainly not with a guarantee, but again and again the miser falls behind.

(This is part of what Sasha's **generosity day** experiment is about.)

Do you have a people strategy?

Hard to imagine a consultant or investor asking the CMO, "so, what's your telephone strategy?"

We don't have a telephone strategy. The telephone is a tool, a simple medium, and it's only purpose is to connect us to interested human beings.

And then the internet comes along and it's mysterious and suddenly we need an email strategy and a social media strategy and a web strategy and a mobile strategy.

No, we don't.

It's still people. **We still have one and only one thing that matters, and it's people.**

All of these media are conduits, they are tools that human beings use to waste time or communicate or calculate or engage or learn. Behind each of the tools is a person. Do you have a story to tell that person? An engagement or a benefit to offer them?

Figure out the people part and the technology gets a whole lot simpler.

Who cares?

Unless someone does, things start to fray around the edges.

Often it's the CEO or the manager who sets a standard of caring about the details. Even better is a culture where everyone cares, and where each person reinforces that horizontally throughout the team.

You've probably been to the hotel that serves refrigerated tomatoes in January at their \$20 breakfast, that doesn't answer the phone when you call the front desk, that has a shower curtain that is falling off the rack and a slightly snarky concierge. This is in sharp relief to that hotel down the street, the one that costs just the same, but gets the details right.

It's obviously not about access to capital (doing it right doesn't cost more).

It's about caring enough to make an effort.

If we define good enough sufficiently low, we'll probably meet our standards. Caring involves raising that bar to the point where the team has to stretch.

Of course, the manager of the mediocre hotel who's reading this, the staff member of the mediocre restaurant who just got forwarded this note--they have a great excuse. Times are tough, money is tight, the team wasn't hired by me, nobody else cares, I'm only going to be doing this gig for a year, our customers are jerks... who cares?

Caring, it turns out, is a competitive advantage, and one that takes effort, not money.

Like most things that are worth doing, it's not easy at first and the one who cares isn't going to get a standing ovation from those that are merely phoning it in. I think it's this lack of early positive feedback that makes caring in service businesses so rare.

Which is precisely what makes it valuable.

The whiner's room

When my friend Elly taught in a middle school, he never hung out in the teacher's room. He told me he couldn't bear the badmouthing of students, the whining and the blaming.

Of course, not all teachers are like this. In fact, most of them aren't. And of course, trolling isn't reserved to the teacher's room. Just about every organization, every online service, every product and every element of our culture now has chat rooms and forums devoted to a few people looking for something to complain about. Some of them even do it on television.

The fascinating truth is this: the people in these forums aren't doing their best work. They rarely identify useful feedback or pinpoint elements that can be changed productively either. In fact, if you solved whatever problem they're whining about, they wouldn't suddenly become enthusiastic contributors. No, they're just wallowing in the negative ions, enjoying the support of a few others as they dish about what's holding them back.

It pays no dividends to go looking for useful insight from these folks. **Go make something great instead.**

The only purpose of 'customer service'...

is to change feelings. Not the facts, but the way your customer feels. The facts might be the price, or a return, or how long someone had to wait for service. Sometimes changing the facts is a shortcut to changing feelings, but not always, and changing the facts alone is not always sufficient anyway.

If a customer service protocol (your call center/complaints department/returns policy) is built around stall, deny, begrudge and finally, to the few who persist, acquiesce, then it might save money, but it is a **total failure**.

The customer who seeks out your help isn't often looking to deplete your bank account. He is usually seeking validation, support and a path to feeling the way he felt before you let him down.

The best measurement of customer support is whether, after the interaction, the customer would recommend you to a friend. Time on the line, refunds given or the facts of the case are irrelevant. The feelings are all that matter, and changing feelings takes humanity and connection, not cash.

The bell curve is moving (mass geekery)

We've got more nerds than ever before. **Rogers** famously described the ways products are adopted:

On the left, geeks and nerds and people who love stuff because the new is new and edgy and changes things. **All the way to the right**, the laggards, the ones who want to be the last to change. **And in the middle**, the masses, the ones who wait for the new idea to be proven, cheap and widely adopted. Most people are in the middle, and a few are on either edge. (Note that in every area of interest, different people put themselves into different segments. You might be a shoe geek but a movie laggard).



Marketers work to change the market. And for the last thirty years, marketers have been working to turn people into geeks, into people eager to try the new. And it's working.

There are more and more people lining up to buy the new gadget, more exploring the edges of the internet, more willing to engage in ways that were seen as too risky just a generation ago.

In addition to an ever increasing amount of media and advertising about what's new, the products and services themselves are designed to draw us in. It used to be that a car nerd would buy a new car every year while the laggard could wait a decade quite happily before upgrading. Today, because our software connects, the upgrade cycle is built in. Like it or not, the new version (or the new TOS or the new interaction style) is about to become part of your life.



The cultural implications here are significant. **We now live in a society with more people more willing to change more often.** And that means your customers are restless, and more likely to walk away if you don't treat them the way nerds want to be treated. **Amaze, delight and challenge...**

Unanimous is not an option

When you do important work, work that changes things and work that matters, it's inconceivable that the change you're trying to make will be met with complete approval.

Trying to please everyone will water down your efforts, frustrate your forward motion and ultimately fail.

The balancing act is to work to please precisely the right people, and just enough of them, to get your best work out the door.

Shun the non-believers.

Where does trust come from

Hint: it never comes from the good times and from the easy projects.

We trust people because they showed up when it wasn't convenient, because they told the truth when it was easier to lie and because they kept a promise when they could have gotten away with breaking it.

Every tough time and every pressured project is **another opportunity** to earn the trust of someone you care about.

The easiest way to get people to do what you want them to do...

is to start with people who want what you want.

Identify, organize and excite people who are already predisposed to achieve what you had in mind and you're much more likely to have the outcome you seek. It's far easier (but less compelling) than turning strangers or enemies into customers/voters/supporters/colleagues. Over time, an engaged and motivated base of followers is the single best way to earn more followers.

You used to be stuck with whoever walked in the door or opened your mail. **Today, you change minds indirectly, by building a tribe that influences via connections to others.**

When smart people work for big companies

A good employee says, "I know that this is a serious problem, it's hurting our customers and we can do better, but I can't do a thing about it because it's run by a different department."

A version of this might conclude with, "And I don't even know the name of the person who's responsible."

This is a sure sign of systemic failure as well as a CEO who is not doing the job she should be.

When smart people who care get frustrated, something is wrong.

This lack of responsibility/communication is not a feature or a benefit that helps customers or shareholders. This is a flaw in the system of the big company, a cost of having a larger organization. The very same system that allowed the organization to become big and powerful is showing serious cracks.

It doesn't have to be this way. But it will unless senior management hires, trains and organizes to avoid it. Is there a more important issue to be worked on?

Fifty is the new thirty

Baby boomers continue to redefine our culture, because there's just so many of us, **we're used to being the center of attention.**

Add into that the fact that we're living much longer and careers are becoming more flexible and it's pretty clear that in just about every cultural respect, fifty year olds are living, acting and looking more like thirty year olds every day.

This changes more than personal financial planning. **It changes the marketing of every service and product aimed at consumers**--and yet most traditional advertisers are stuck in the mindset that thirty is the end of your chance to find a new customer or build a new brand.

TIME

Dancing on the edge

Before, when your shift was done, you were finished. When the inbox was empty, when the forms were processed, you could stop.

Now, of course, there's always one more tweet to make, post to write, words with friends move to complete. There's one more bit of email, one more lens you can construct, one more comment you can respond to. **If you want to, you can be never finished.**

And that's the dance. Facing a sea of infinity, it's easy to despair, sure that you will never reach dry land, never have the sense of accomplishment of saying, "I'm done." **At the same time, to be finished, done, complete--this is a bit like being dead.** The silence and the feeling that maybe that's all.

For the marketer, the freelancer and the entrepreneur, the challenge is to level set, to be comfortable with the undone, with the cycle of never-ending. We were trained to finish our homework, our peas and our chores. Today, we're never finished, and that's okay.

It's a dance, not an endless grind.

Time doesn't scale

But bravery does.

The challenge of work-life balance is a relatively new one, and it is an artifact of a world where you get paid for showing up, paid for hours spent, paid for working.

In that world, it's clearly an advantage to have a team that spends more time than the competition. One way to get ahead as a freelancer or a factory worker of any kind (even a consultant at Deloitte) was simply to put in more hours. After all, that made you more productive, if we define productivity as output per dollar spent.

But people have discovered that after hour 24, there are no more hours left. Suddenly, you can't get ahead by out-working the other guy, because both of you are already working as hard as Newtonian physics will permit.

Just in time, the economy is now rewarding art and innovation and guts. It's rewarding brilliant ideas executed with singular direction by aligned teams on behalf of truly motivated customers. None of which is measured on the clock.

John Cage doesn't work more hours than you. Neither does Carole Greider. Work/life balance is a silly question, just as work/food balance or work/breathing balance is. It's not really up to you after a point. **Instead of sneaking around the edges, it might pay to cut your hours in half but take the intellectual risks and do the emotional labor you're capable of.**

The first thing you do when you sit down at the computer

Let me guess: check the incoming. Check email or traffic stats or messages from your boss. Check the tweets you follow or the FB status of friends.

You've just surrendered not only a block of time but your freshest, best chance to start something new.

If you're a tech company or a marketer, your goal is to be the first thing people do when they start their day. If you're an artist, a leader or someone seeking to make a difference, the first thing you do should be to lay tracks to accomplish your goals, **not** to hear how others have reacted/responded/insisted to what happened yesterday.

Hurrying almost always makes it take longer

If you don't have time to do it right, how will you find time to do it over?

(In Swahili: Haraka Haraka haina Baraka....)

PS stalling is even worse than hurrying.

The map has been replaced by the compass

The map keeps getting redrawn, because it's cheaper than ever to go offroad, to develop and innovate and remake what we thought was going to be next.

Technology keeps changing the routes we take to get our projects from here to there. It doesn't pay to memorize the route, because it's going to change soon.

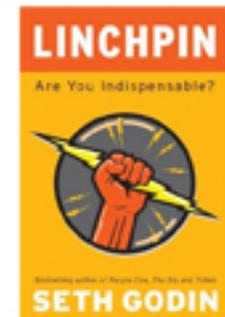
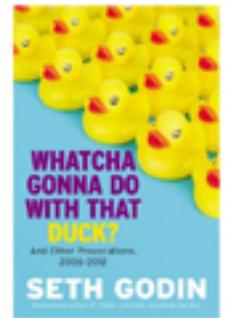
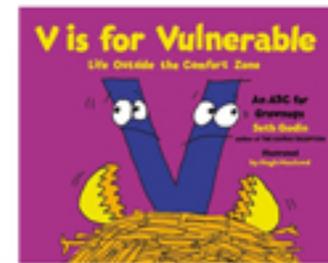
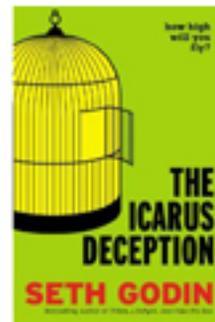
The compass, on the other hand, is more important than ever. If you don't know which direction you're going, how will you know when you're off course?

And yet...

And yet we spend most of our time learning (or teaching) the map, yesterday's map, while we're anxious and afraid to spend any time at all calibrating our compass.

Click on Seth's head to read his blog!

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