DOERS & DREAMERS

How to launch, lead, market and scale companies that impact the world

INSIGHTS FROM 150 IMPACT MAKERS

EDITED BY JONATHAN LØW & VIKTORIA STOYANOVA

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THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE CURIOUS

by Jonathan Løw, co-founder of JumpStory and co-editor of Doers & Dreamers

The world needs dreamers, and the world needs doers. But above all, the world needs dreamers who do.

This book is for the doers. It's an anthology written by 150 inspiring impact makers, who've turned ideas into reality and impact. It's an anthology that wants to contribute to …

LESS committees ... MORE commitment
LESS talking ... MORE tackling
LESS later ... MORE now.

Doers & Dreamers is a non-profit project supported by JumpStory. I co-founded JumpStory back in 2018 with my fellow Danish entrepreneur Anders Thiim, and the co-editor of this book, Viktoria Stoyanova, was our first employee. We're trying to transform the world of stock photos, but this is not a book about JumpStory. This is a book about you!

We hope to contribute to a future, where more potential changemakers like you turn into impact makers.

We know from many years of starting companies that ideas are great, but they're also a peculiar thing.

On the one hand they can be extremely powerful, because they can inspire other people to dream and motivate them to create change. On the other hand, ideas need doing and execution, so they don't turn into merely dreams.

Great innovators and entrepreneurs don't stop, when they have an idea. They follow it through, and they're aware that ideas can even be blocking potential impact, because in order to be truly innovative, we sometimes need to escape our old ideas and way of thinking.

Once we've realized this, we go through a process – both in our mind and in reality. We move from a dreaming phase, where we define the purpose of our idea, into a doing phase, when the idea is turned into something concrete. A service, a product, a movement.

These phases can overlap, and sometimes we move between them, but at the end of the day, the key is to be able to move from dreaming to doing.

Doers & Dreamers is published as an eBook. Any proceeds from the project are donated 100% to Red Cross in Denmark, where JumpStory is located.

Doers & Dreamers is not a one-topic publication, but hopefully a good friend that can help you in your pursuit to turn dreams into reality.

The book contains articles about both the idea phase; the development; the commercialization and the growth.

Some articles are hands-on with concrete tools and goals, whereas others share stories about what works, and what doesn't.

Without your actions, innovation is just an idea with a promise. Without you, visions remain useless words on a piece of paper.

Before you start diving deeper into the book, please remind yourself that you have a true potential to make a real impact. As human beings we sometimes feel small or bewildered, but when we insist on putting our focus on impact & action instead of only ideas & dreams, we take back the power.

With your power you can change lives no matter your age, ethnicity, education, gender or current job title. Jump on this inspiring journey from dreaming to doing, and if you – at some point - feel lost or small, repeat the words of the wonderful Body Shop-founder Anita Roddick:

If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito.

Best wishes,
Jonathan Løw.

TABLE OF CONTENT

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

MIKE SAUNDERS 16
Finding ideas with impact

CRAIG NEWMARK 20
Listen to what others suggest and refine the best of their ideas

BRENDAN KANE 22
Hook-worthy ideas

DAVID SCHONTHAL AND LORAN NORDGREN 24
A Fuel-based mindset – an idea thrust

ALF REHN 28
Let's kill innovation

MARTIN LINDSTRØM 30
Creativity is having an existential crisis

VIVEK WADHWA 34
Thriving through change

DAVIDE DATTOLI 36
In the face of the future

DRAGAN ŠOLAK 40
Our failures are integral part of our future success

STRING NGUYEN 44
Doing is a part of the process of being awesome

TYLER ANDERSON 46
How a business can innovate smart

TOMER SHARON 48
Should you create one user experience metric?

STARTUP

VASILIJ BRANDT 54
10 Entrepreneurial learnings to consider when building a new company

SOFIA NUNES 60
How to build a unicorn

GARETH I. JONES 62
Why do entrepreneurs need near-death experiences to get started?

ALEXANDER OSTERWALDER 64
Burn your business plan before it burns you

OVI NEGREAN 68
The Sell→ Service→ Scale Methodology – How to minimize risks and maximize profit when starting a business

MAYBRITT TOFT BISP 72
Infinite knowledge and inspiration

PETER ZIGLER 76
You never know if it's a dream, unless you do it

TEGAN SPINNER 78
Do you have the right motivations?

JAKOB NEUA NØRGAARD 80
Work hard for a while, but set up an organization fast

CHRISTIAN ARNSTEDT 84
Future companies need to be impact oriented

ANDERS FRANKEL 88
Shades and guts

ROBIN DANIELS 90
Are you tactical, strategic, or epic in your start-up marketing?

DAVID HOLMES 94
The benefits of doing things backwards

ANDRE SANTOS 96
People like to deal with people

PRERNA GUPTA 100
Your differences are your strength

NINA SHINI 104
Risk is not a bad thing

THORBJØRN FINK 108
Celebrate successes and failures!

HICHAME ASSI 112
Bringing creative ideas to life

JUNIOR BORNELI 116
The future is plural, everything is possible and probable

MOONIE ZHU 120
Be the change that you want to see

ANDREAS EHN 124
Only the market gives you the true answers

JOE PULIZZI 128
The creator economy: How to succeed

CHRIS KAUFMAN 132
Would you rather have a million dollars or a penny that doubles every day?

GROWTH

MIKA SALMI 138
When is the right time to expand?

BILL SCHMARZO 140
The business model revolution

SALIM ISMAIL 150
The ExO model and how to benefit from it

STEVE BLANK 154
Your company survival depends on a simple formula

MADS FOSSELIUS 162
The 48-hour rule of acquisition

GEOFFREY MOORE 166
What it means to 'cross the chasm'

SARA SCHØLER LASS 170
Going digital requires courage & a new mindset

TIMOTHY HUGHES 174
Sales and marketing for the digital age. What's changed?

JONAH BERGER 176
What makes things go viral?

JUSTIN WELSH 178
How can I stop the scroll?

TED RUBIN 182
The marketing impact 'of a ROR-mindset

MARCUS SHERIDAN 184
Teach Today, Sell Tomorrow

VITOR PEÇANHA 186
If you want your marketing to make an impact, your content should be like a parade, not a movie

ASTRID KRAMER 188
A good result can only be achieved with holistic work

MARK SCHAEFER 192
The essential and unexpected role of the executive brand in modern marketing

NATHAN CHAN 194
Freedom through entrepreneurship

CHRISTINE ALEMANY 198
How to build trust, win hearts (and boost profits)

BENJAMIN GUNDGAARD 200
Create IMPACT by including your customers

DEENA ZENYK & LIZ RICHARDSON 204
Advocacy 2.0: The right opportunity for the right customer at the right time

MADS PAASKESEN 206
The customer is not always right

MIKE KORBA 212
Data is new oil, especially in internet businesses

AVINASH KAUSHIK 216
Winning BIG with data

BERNIE BORGES 218
Impacting your audience

WIKTOR SCHMIDT 220
Getting up to speed quickly

HANS HARTMAN 222
That pesky disruption dilemma: replacing or complementing legacy behavior?

TOM MORE 226
Tenacity and adaptability: The dual forces behind impactful innovation

IMPACT

XENIA DUFFY 230
"WE ARE ALL PART OF THE PROBLEM": Six steps to growing your positive impact and regenerating our planet for future generations

DAVID AAKER 232
Make your firm a social purpose leader

KRISTINE NAGLE 234
Storytelling with Impact

SONIA ARRISON 236
You can do it, but should you do it?

JESPER JARLBÆK 240
Circular Economy - generational insights

MICHELLE TUNNO BUELOW 244
We can do more together

METTE FLØE NIELSEN 248
Making sustainable businesses with acceptable purpose

SIMON KOLLERUP 252
Modern and progressive business policy is about social responsibility

JUSTIN ROSENSTEIN 254
A shift from "me" to "we"

ANTHONY DAY 256
Sustainable action and impact accelerators

LEEN GORISSEN 260
Why Natural Intelligence (NI) should be at the forefront of business innovation

JEFFREY HOLLENDER 262
The Net Positive Effect - How prioritizing long-term value over short-term gain will save our economy

NILLE SKALTS 264
Impact trade as a key to ecosystem regeneration - How businesses become planetary stewards

PASCAL FINETTE 268
A wealth of new opportunities

LUBOMILA JORDANOVA 272
Driven by the fight against climate change

CHRISTINE SPITEN 276
The Ocean has been my playground

ISABEL AAGAARD 278
Disrupting the single-use industry

CIARA IMANI MAY 282
An industry not set up for the primary consumers

SHIRAN MLAMDOVSKY SOMECH 286
How Generative AI can be used to create social impact

MADHUBAN PANDEY 288
Social entrepreneurship and the livelihood impact

MEIK WIKING 292
Measuring impact through happiness

GABRIELE CARBONI 294
Caterpillar brands

SIGNE HARTVIG DAUGAARD 296
Disability is a market you do not want to miss!

BJORN LOMBORG 298
Better solutions for maternal health

NAVEEN JAIN 300
Is the glass worth filling?

LOUIS BOUCHARD 304
Making AI accessible

STEPHEN IBARAKI 308
Digital twins with XR (AR/VR/Mixed Reality) deeply impacting 8+ billion – exponential future reality

ABHISHEK VIJAYVARGIA 310
Generative AI: Ingesting AI in everyone's life

NANCY LUBLIN 312
Entrepreneurship: jumping off a cliff and building the plane on the way down

MINDSET

JASON FEIFER 316
The hustle playbook

WERNER VALEUR 320
Do you want to get the A PLAYER's six-pack?

SANNE WEVERS 322
Step up to the dream

STEVEN D'SOUZA 324
Start small and take an easy action rather than none

APRIL RINNE 328
No one can ever be a better you than you are

TIM FERRISS 332
In a world of dogmatic specialists, it's the generalist who ends up running the show

STEPHEN SHEDLETZKY 334
"I want a promotion."

CIAN MCLOUGHLIN 336
Sales is a life skill that we all need to develop

SHARON PEAKE 338
Accelerating gender equity

HENRIK FABRIN 342
Focus means saying no to things

AMIT ELISHA 346
The "Jiu Jitsu" of innovation

JONAS WARRER 350
You have to be passionate, and it needs to be fun

ZETA YARWOOD 354
Remove the comfort of staying put

TOMAS STASIUKEVIČIUS 358
It is not about starting the process, it is about finishing

GERMAINE MOODY 362
Discipline and desire lead me

BRIAN SCHULMAN..... 366
“Failure” gifts you with a lesson learned

PAULINE LAIGNEAU..... 370
Your vulnerability has impact

EDGAR H. SCHEIN 372
The benefits of presence

KASPER HOLST HANSEN 376
Incompetence awareness is a key ingredient for successful social impact entrepreneurs

DAVID HEINEMEIER HANSSON..... 380
Don’t embrace being a copy-pasta programmer

NIR EYAL..... 382
How external triggers affect you

FRASER DOHERTY 386
Our lives are so noisy

DR. TRAVIS BRADBERRY..... 388
How to keep stress under control

LOUIS BOUCHARD..... 394
Sleep is not a disposable luxury-it’s a non-negotiable biological necessity

DAVID COHEN..... 398
“My recurring dream”

STEVE BLAKEMAN..... 400
What your dog can teach you

LUCIEN ENGELEN..... 404
Success is nothing more than a ‘bus stop’ at one moment in time

THOMAS KOLSTER..... 406
Brand activism is a “hero trap”

MIKKO ALASAARELA..... 410
Algorithmic influence for impact

SUZANNE LAURITZEN..... 414
Inspiration by frustration

TERRY PAN 416
How an idea knock down the obstacle of COVID lockdown

SHYAMALA PRAYAGA 420
‘The future is spoken’ – AI voice technology and women in tech

MICHAEL LITMAN 424
NFTs - Find your own investment and engagement style

J.T. O’DONNELL..... 428
Don’t be a job seeker, be a job shopper

ADAM KATZ SINDING 432
Our desire to see reality

LARS TVEDE 434
Wouldn't it be cool if I could get...?

PETER LAURITSEN 436
My popcorn brain

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

MORTEN ALBÆK 440
Living in an economic and existential paradox

STINE BOSSE 446
Impact focus is at the core of modern leadership in large organisations

LOUISE HERPING ELLEGAARD 448
Impactful Leadership

JOHN AMAECHI 450
Creating an environment that no one wants to leave

WHITNEY JOHNSON 454
Inspire a movement of growth

BRUCE KASANOFF 458
Double your impact by not taking credit

JENNIFER DULSKI 460
Every person is a teacher, every experience is a lesson

DAVID SIMAS 464
Remember who you are and what you represent

PAYMAN TAEI 468
Finding damn good people

NEAL SCHAFFER 470
Is Fractional Capacity what your organization needs?

EILON RESHEF 474
The modern workplace - A mix of individuality and accountability

PASCAL BORNET 478
Your company needs decision intelligence

ANNE STAMPE OLESEN 482
The ability to prioritize

MATT MULLENWEG 486
The Five Levels of autonomy

CHESTER ELTON 490
When your culture works, everything works

BRIAN CHESKY 494
Culture is forever

KATHERINE SALISBURY 496
Having more skin in the game

PETER DOCKER 500
Good luck, bad luck, who knows?

JANNE MÜLLER-WIELAND 504
Key ingredients for high-performing teams

SETH GODIN 508
You don't need more time

BORIS VELDHUIJZEN VAN ZANTEN 510
Maximizing your impact and influence upon the people around you

JANNEKE NIESSEN 512
Solving the world's biggest challenges requires investing in diverse startups

BETH KANTER 514
Digital transformation and workplace wellbeing in non-profit organizations

ANTONIO GRASSO 518
Digital transformation is an effect not a cause

GIULIANO LIGUORI 522
AI is the future. Are you prepared to manage the risk?

LORRAINE K. LEE 528
Bad meetings - how to reinvent them

KIM NØHR SKIBSTED 532
Conformity kills all good ideas

DR. SARAH WOOD 534
5 Steps to accelerate, fulfill and exceed your leadership potential

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

CHAPTER 1

Finding ideas with impact

Author MIKE SAUNDERS

MIKE SAUNDERS *is an entrepreneur, the CEO of Digitlab, an international keynote speaker and author. A man who uses his frenetic energy and mischievous curiosity to process complexity and spell it out for us in actionable lessons. He's a thought leader and expert in business and marketing strategy for the digital economy.*

I'm an ideas man. I love brainstorming, out-the-box thinking, stringing together concepts and frameworks, finding opportunities and finding gems. It's who I am and my happy place – my safe place.

Being an ideas man has stood me well as an entrepreneur. I have always found it easy to navigate new ways around problems, but idea generation has a dark side.

Here's the hard, uninspiring truth about ideas. Most ideas never attribute to anything more than that. They fail. In my experience, the tragedy is not that most ideas don't see the light of day but that the good ones don't – and some of the worst ones made it through.

My big lesson as an ideas man – not all ideas are good – *most ideas are bad.*

Why ideas are bad for you:

Let's digest for a second why ideas are bad for you, and by 'you', I mean the person you want to make a real impact on the world.

Ideas are distracting

Ideas are massive culprits of distraction. They draw us away and intrigue us without offering any value. They are fun to think about, but they don't add anything to your life, but they beg for attention and resource because this is how they come to life. On its own, an idea is a conceptual solution and offers no actual impact on anyone.

Ideas are personal

When we come up with our own ideas, we want to see them succeed. In the right hands, this is a good thing. It will lead to great things for good people. In the wrong hands, this is a bad thing.

Many businesses have suffered grave consequences because leaders implemented their ideas *at all costs*, ultimately leading to the business's demise.

Ideas are plentiful but resource heavy
There are so many new ways we could do things: better, less harmfully, fancier, more conveniently, and more efficiently.

Each idea, though, takes time, money, energy and resources to unpack, ideate, plan, and execute – before you even know if it has value.

Ideas: Finding the good ones

I want to leave you with an image of a gear and three questions. I have used this analogy and these questions to assess ideas for years, which has helped me sift out the good from the bad.

Think of ideas as a gear
Gears transfer energy from one place to another. That's right, like bicycle gear. Thinking about our ideas as gears means that when we invest in them and assess them. We should evaluate them like we would a gear. We would determine the cost of the gear, the energy needed to run the gear, and the output of the gear. In innovation conversations, I prefer asking questions like this:

1) How much energy does it take to drive this idea?
2) How much does this idea cost me?
3) Where are we transferring the energy from this idea?

Returning to the bicycle, question one asks, "how much energy do I need to ride this bike?" Question two asks, "how much will it cost to make the bike? And question three asks, "where will I go with the bike and is the destination worth it?"

The first two questions are relatively easy to figure out, but the third is where I find most ideas fail. Using the gear analogy again, we put our energy into ideas and that idea transfers the energy... to where?

When I ask people this question, they are quickly stumped. The idea that we should not simply run with an idea for the sake of an idea seems implausible to most people.

Here are some examples I see every day:

The App Idea'list
He has many ideas for apps and they are all very cool. When assessing question three, he cannot find the business model, the right target market, or the key stakeholders to support the infrastructure necessary to build the app.

The Innovation Optimist
She believes that if she keeps innovating, she will eventually find the idea that will take their business to the next level. In assessing question three, it becomes apparent that you don't need a 'spray and pray' approach to innovation if you know where your energy will flow.

The Future Business Failure
They have an idea but are looking for a consultant to answer all three questions. In this case, the business will never succeed because owners and partners have no real active engagement. A lack of active engagement means that energy output from your ideas will never be assessed.

Energy output = impact

Where the energy ends up is the total sum of the impact this idea will make. We should treat ideas like gears, which have potential but have yet to show you what they are capable of creating.

Give them a firm foundation to succeed (this information will come from the answers in question one) but inspect closely to see if it is performing the way you hope. See the best in your ideas but withhold your total investment until they prove that they're worth it.

In business and life, your ideas should make life better. It should unlock what's important to you – and you should focus all your energy and resources on that.

From $200,000, 00 loss to ten-fold returns

I sunk $200 000, 00 into a bad idea a few years ago, it distracted me, and I chased so many pieces of shiny opportunity that I took on way too much risk for the reward. After two years, I had to decide to pull the plug and cancel the project.

The following year, I had another idea and decided to make it prove itself. I put the concept through its paces. Answering question three, I realised I could sell the idea before I built it. I took it to a prospective client and closed the first sale before I had spent any hard-earned cash on the project. That first sale covered all my development costs. I then spent $5000 developing the product and built a business that returned tenfold that its first year of business and only took about 80 hours of my time a year.

Your Ideas Should Work for You

When you over-invest in your ideas, they consume you, taking your attention away from what's important. You end up working for your idea.

Your ideas should always work for you. Make your ideas work for the attention it craves from you. Make it prove itself valuable of your time. Give it only enough to help it succeed, then let it stand independently. Once those good ideas are proven, invest heavily to give them as much opportunity to reach maximum impact.

Good ideas that deliver output will significantly impact your life, your business, and the lives of others.

On the plus side, while your ideas work hard to prove themselves, you'll have more time to focus on those ideas that are already working – giving you more time to make a more significant impact.

“

Here's the hard, uninspiring truth about ideas. Most ideas never attribute to anything more than that. They fail. In my experience, the tragedy is not that most ideas don't see the light of day but that the good ones don't – and some of the worst ones made it through.

My big lesson as an ideas man – not all ideas are good – most ideas are bad.

MIKE SAUNDERS
CEO at Digitlab

Photo: Stephanie Canciello, Unali Artists

Listen to what others suggest and refine the best of their ideas

Author CRAIG NEWMARK

Founder of craigslist and Craig Newmark Philanthropies **CRAIG NEWMARK** *is a philanthropist who gets stuff done. Most commonly known for founding the online classified ads service craigslist, Newmark creates and funds networks that work to protect the country and to help people out.*

Craig Newmark is the man behind craigslist – a website that today is among the 40 most-visited websites in the world, is found in 70 countries, and can best be compared with Exchange and Mart in the UK.

Craig started craigslist back in 1995, and today he is reportedly worth more than DKK 3 billion. However, the last impression you get when talking to him is that of a billionaire and entrepreneur guru. On the contrary, Craig is completely down to earth, something of a nerd (his word) and deeply passionate about using technology to make the world better.

He no longer heads craigslist, but has dedicated his life to the charitable project Craig Newmark Philanthropies, which has the objective of "supporting people to do a good job that makes a difference."

As editor of this book, I talked to Craig about his craigslist past and his Craig Newmark Philanthropies present…

1. You started craigslist back in the 90s. How did you get the idea?

Actually, I didn't. I had a number of ideas about how one could connect people and make a difference. I pitched them to my friends and my network, listened to their feedback and acted on what they told me. The first thing I did was to listen to what others suggested and then I refined the best of their ideas and input. That's actually precisely the same method I follow today: listen, act, repeat.

2. You often hear good advice given to entrepreneurs, that they must have a clear vision. It's vital that they also think about why they do what they do. But I read somewhere that you never had a vision for craigslist...
I certainly didn't have a single, clear vision with regard to transforming a single branch or the like. What drove me was a wish to build up communities, and that in fact turned out to be a very good vision.

3. At first glance craigslist seems to be quite simple to copy as a concept. What was it that made it so unique that it has been more successful than its competitors?

It was our clear community values and a clear public announcement that we weren't doing it for the money. That was something we also followed in practice and we also made craigslist's development – financially as well – quite transparent. At Sunday school I learned to assess when enough is enough and also that nobody needs a billion dollars.

4. Many young entrepreneurs probably find it difficult to visualise what it was like to be a tech entrepreneur in the 90s. How was it then compared to today?
There was quite clearly a greater consciousness of using technology to do something good for the community. Of course, there were also hard-as-nails capitalists, but there was another spirit, which for instance is apparent in projects such as Wikipedia.

5. One often sees people like you, who suddenly become very rich, begin to do a lot of philanthropy. Why is that?
I don't really see it that way. Craigslist helped and helps the average citizen get food on his table, get a table and find a roof to put the table under. That's not philanthropy, it's public service. My project with Craig Newmark Philanthropies is a direct extension of this public service mission.

6. Today you use most of your time on Craig Newmark Philanthropies. What is the idea behind this project?
I have always supported a great number of different charitable organisations and projects. There was a time when I discovered that the money, I used for this support was actually in something of a mess. I didn't know whom I supported or why. I therefore sought help to obtain a comprehensive view and then focus my efforts on the organisations I'm really fervent about helping.

On Craig Newmark Philanthropies I find people that are unbelievably effective and good at the things they do. They are honest, which unfortunately isn't always the case in the non-profit world. And the website also enables organizations and public charities to apply for grants.

7. What is a typical Craig day like?
Work and coffee.
Meetings at a local café.
Work at the office.
Coffee.
Maybe one more meeting.
Home to my wife, maybe watch some TV. I love TV.
Work.

8. I've read that you describe yourself as a non-practising, secular Jew. Unlike many Americans you don't get inspiration and values from your religion. Where do they come from then?
My rabbi is Leonard Cohen. He has been an influential poet and singer for almost 50 years, and he's my guru in the sense that he inspires me and gives me wisdom. It's Cohen's music that gets me through the day.

I can't run no more
With that lawless crowd,
Not while the killers
In high places
Say their prayers aloud.
But they've summoned
They've summoned
A big
Thundercloud.
They're going to hear from me.

Leonard Cohen

Hook-worthy ideas

Author Brendan Kane

Since 2005, **BRENDAN KANE** *has helped the largest brands and celebrities in the world reverse engineer how to make content go viral. Brendan and his team at Hook Point have built a proprietary content model that has been leveraged to generate over 60 billion views and 100+ million followers for the content they have worked on. Brendan authored best selling books One Million Followers: How I Built a Massive Social Audience in 30 Days and Hook Point: How to Stand out in a 3-Second World.*

What I'm about to say may come as a surprise to a lot of people.

There is no such thing as a boring industry.

And, there is no industry that is too boring to succeed on digital platforms.

Don't get me wrong, there are definitely a lot of cool and exciting industries that do great on digital platforms because they're cool and exciting. Sports, music, travel, recreation, to name a few.

But, it's always possible, no matter what you do, to make your business exciting to customers.

All it takes is a good Hook Point supported with research and analysis to understand what is working and why.

The YouTube channel Veritasium is a great example. A lot of people consider science to be mundane, yet this channel about science is one of the most popular in the world, with millions of subscribers and views.

One of its videos has 62 million views compared to 7.8 million subscribers. What is that telling us?

That people who have no idea who this person is or what this channel is about are clicking and watching this content, and they're probably watching a lot of it.

Why is this happening?

Because Veritasium understands how to use Hook Points to bring people into the subject matter of science, and make science hook-worthy.

Here's a look at a few of its video titles:

Why are 96 million black balls in this reservoir?
World's roundest object
Anti-gravity wheel
I waterproofed myself with Aerogelf

All have over 20 million views!

We like to say "always be clever," when referring to content that stands out.

Veritasium has cleverly packaged its content for a general audience who might not be looking for specific scientific content, but are nonetheless drawn in by their content.

Where most scientists turn people off is that they get too heavy with the subject matter, or they get too scientific right away. By wrapping the scientific content in language that connects through fun, facts, and feelings, Veritasium is effectively reaching 70% of the audience in the communication style they prefer.

In addition to carefully chosen language for the layperson, Veritasium is also clever in its choice of titles, images, scripts, and engaging graphics.

Veritasium is successful because it understands how to make science interesting to someone that doesn't care about science. The host's great insight and personality takes it from there.

Success on digital platforms doesn't always mean you've got to have an exciting topic. You just need to know how to make the subject matter you offer interesting, and that's your Hook Point. And when you back that up with the insights gleaned from research and analysis, you have a winning formula.

If you can get an audience that may not care about a topic to take notice, you'll be sure to get those who are passionate about it. That's what we do: study the data behind viral content that people are passionate about and reverse engineer how to replicate that success.

A Fuel-based mindset – an idea thrust

Author DAVID SCHONTHAL AND LORAN NORDGREN

DAVID SCHONTHAL, *entrepreneurship professor at Kellogg School of Management and co-author of the WSJ bestseller The Human Element: Overcoming the Resistance that Awaits New Ideas.*

Most marketers, innovators, executives, activists, or anyone else in the business of creating change, operate on a deep assumption. It's a view of the world so deeply ingrained in our thinking that we rarely see its influence or question its value. It is the belief that the best (and perhaps only) way to convince people to embrace a new idea is to heighten the appeal of the idea itself. We instinctively believe that if we add enough value, people will say "yes." This reflex leads us down a path of adding features and benefits to the idea or increasing the sizzle of the messaging – all in the hope of propelling people to get on board.

We refer to strategies designed to give an idea thrust as "Fuel." Fuel is what heightens the appeal of an idea and incites our desire to change. The job of Fuel is to enlighten the intended audience on all of the positive attributes and benefits associated with the "new way." The need for Fuel is so well established that we have built entire industries around generating it (advertising, public relations and product design, to name a few). While Fuel may be necessary for an innovation to take hold, it has critical limitations. Understanding these limitations is the first step to breaking out of a Fuel-based mindset.

Limitation # 1: Bad is Stronger than Good

A doctor asks, "I have good news and bad news: which do you want to hear first?" What would you say? A majority of people (78% in a recent study) pick the bad news. This is because, for the human mind, bad is stronger than good. If you've ever gone through a performance review, you'll know what we are talking about. One negative comment can instantly wash away all the positive observations that preceded it. Psychologists call this the negativity bias.

Our bias for bad affects how we see almost everything. We remember negative events more intensely than positive events. We process negative information faster than posi-

tive information. People are quick to spot an angry face in a crowd, but are much slower to find a smile. This is because the amygdala, the region of the brain responsible for recognizing facial emotion, devotes considerably more neurons to processing danger. A threatening image can trigger our fight or flight response in milliseconds, but positive events produce much slower reactions. You can jump back from a snake much faster than you can jump toward your favorite snack.

When people hesitate to embrace a new idea, there are two broad explanations. Either the idea lacks appeal (insufficient Fuel), or a Friction is blocking progress. Negativity bias has a clear implication – focus on the Frictions. This shift in mindset can be seen in Bob Sutton's wonderful book, The No Asshole Rule, which tackles a problem that plagues many companies: low workplace morale. The conventional response to a disengaged workforce is to – this will sound familiar – add benefits. Crank up the positive in hopes of drowning out the bad. What Sutton proposes instead is fearless intolerance for bad people and bad behavior. The Negativity bias leads to the realization that benefits and perks will rarely overcome a toxic culture.

The parallels with innovation are striking. When we sell an idea, our focus is on the benefits the idea offers. We implicitly ask ourselves, "How will we seduce people into saying yes?" And when our message is ignored or outright rejected, our response is to crank up the perks. Fuel is important, of course. But Fuel isn't the mind's first priority.

Limitation # 2: Fuel is Costly

Fuel can propel an idea and do so powerfully. But there's a catch: Fuel is costly. Let's take Fuel's most common currency, money. Money moves people. And innovators often use it to get people to embrace change. Black Friday – where American shoppers wait in lines for hours to get deeply discounted goods – illustrates the influence of money quite well. But it comes at a cost.

Like shoppers, employees respond to money. But it takes a lot of money to move the needle. One recent study asked the simple question: how much of an increase in base salary does one need to improve performance? For the average employee, it was about 8 percent. Paying anything less than that did nothing. This means that if someone makes $150,000 a year, you need to promise them at least a $12,000 bonus to see an uptick in performance. Findings like this led the Behavioral Economist Ury Gneezy to conclude, when it comes to incentives, "either pay a lot or don't pay at all."

Limitation # 3: Fuel is often Self-Evident

Many good ideas are self-evident. The value is there on the surface, for everyone to see. Take the military. A stint in the military has a number of obvious and psychologically powerful benefits. The military provides excitement. It's a chance to see the world, experience new cultures, and go on daring missions. The military offers camaraderie. People describe the service as joining a family. The military is a membership into a life-long community. People don't just want to be part of a community. They want to be respected by that community. And the military immediately gives you that, too. We honor and recognize those who serve. The military also gives purpose. People want to see how their lives contribute to something bigger. Patriotism gives you that. And finally, there are big financial incentives. Serving in the military is many people's path to college and upward mobility.

Does this description of the many benefits military life has to offer tell you anything you didn't already know? We suspect not. The value proposition of joining the military

isn't hidden. Through cultural osmosis, American citizens learn about the benefits and opportunities that come with joining the military.

The US Army relies heavily on TV ads to Fuel recruitment. The ads use powerful imagery to bring all the value of the military to life. One ad opens with a soldier on a daring mission with his Special Forces team (excitement and camaraderie). We then see that same soldier coming home to be honored in his hometown parade (respect and patriotism). Finally, the commercial ends with the now former solider applying the technical skills he learned in the military to a high paying career.

It turns out (according to recruiters we've spoken with), a lot of kids that dream of joining the military never do because a powerful set of Emotional Frictions holds them back. One reason many would-be soldiers never enlist is because… they are afraid to tell mom. They don't know how to start the conversation. They are afraid she will be beyond upset at the thought of her child going off to war. Despite all the value that Fuels the idea of enlisting, many just can't overcome the emotional hurdle. Notice how ineffective these TV spots are for these would-be recruits. It is telling them what they already know without solving the problem they really have.

Most good ideas have obvious benefits. When people aren't receptive to our message, our instinct is to highlight the benefits or find ways on the margins to sweeten the deal. This approach would make sense if the benefits needed to be discovered, but they often don't.

Limitation # 4: Fuel Amplifies Friction

In the physical world, applying force to an object has an opposite and equal effect – it increases Friction. The same is true of ideas. Applying Fuel can, quite unintentionally, amplify resistance to the idea.

A former student of ours worked at a large environmental non-profit. The organization had just brought in a new CEO with bold ambitions. Although he inherited an experienced workforce – many employees had been with the organization for their entire career – he feared many had grown complacent. He wanted his team to "live the mission" and he didn't see that commitment from them. So, to boost engagement, he created a bold initiative: the 20-for-20 campaign. The goal was to raise 20 million dollars in 2020. This was a lofty goal. 2017 had been their best ever year, raising a little over 17 million. But much of that was due to a once-in-a-lifetime gift. They had raised just 14 million in 2019, so 20-for-20 was truly ambitious.

The CEO kicked-off the campaign with a celebration. He spoke about his dedication to the mission. Employees were brought on stage to share their success stories and receive applause and accolades.

A retired farmer gave an emotional speech about how, without the help of the non-profit, the community would have been damaged beyond repair. And then, to close out the celebration, came the big reveal: the CEO challenged them to hit the 20 million mark in the upcoming year. His closing line was reportedly, "I am blessed to work with such an amazing group of people. You have done so much for this cause. But I believe we can all do better. We've seen tonight how our cause matters – there are literally lives on the line. So, I ask you all to commit to the 20-in-20 challenge – raising 20 million dollars in the next year. I believe you can do it. I know you can do it." That year, they raised just 12 million dollars, two million less than the previous year. And they recorded their highest rate of turnover in memory.

The 20-in-20 challenge was meant to give employees the added Fuel they needed to achieve new fundraising heights. Instead, the initiative created strong Emotional Friction. It backfired, we suspect, because employees didn't believe the goal was realistic. They were trying their very best already. And now they were being asked to do even more with the same amount of resources. The CEO was saying, "I believe in you." But what they heard was "This guy doesn't think we are trying hard enough." They left the celebration feeling insulted, not energized.

These examples illustrate another important consequence of not accounting for Friction. It isn't just that the idea that suffers. The innovator suffers too. The CEO invested heavily in his vision, and put his reputation on the line, only to watch it fail. What does the CEO learn from this experience? Many learn to lose faith in those around them. They learn the "it's impossible to get anything done around here" mentality. Frictions are usually hidden from plain sight. If we don't understand the forces of resistance, we end up placing the blame on the people and institutions that reject our ideas and not the dark forces that undermine them.

Let's kill innovation

Author ALF REHN

ALF REHN *is the professor of innovation, design, and management at the University of Southern Denmark, as well as a writer, a keynote speaker, and a strategic advisor. His work focuses on critical analyses of innovation and creativity, and has been presented both in top academic journals, bestselling popular books, and in over 1000 keynotes – in venues ranging from top international business conferences to audiences in North Korea.*

Photo: Henry Harrison

We've never talked about innovation as much as we do today. And at the same time, the concept needs to die. In a statistic I never get tired of repeating, I did the research to find out that as a global community we are publishing 100+ books on innovation and creativity *a month*, and yet we fail to answer the real questions about it all. We have LinkedIn groups, Twitter feeds, an endless array of innovation conferences, and webinars, and yet… real innovation can sometimes feel further away than ever before. A virus closed us down for years, brutal war made a comeback in Europe, and the folly of real estate booms is coming back for more. Innovation, shminnovation. Sure, we have better apps for sharing pictures of kittens, or selfies with kitten filters, than ever before, but many of the world's real, vexing problems remain steadfastly unsolved.

So, in a paradoxical way, we need to talk both a lot less and a lot more about innovation. We need to do a lot less evangelizing about innovation, talking about it as this one true thing, something that will solve all our problems as long as we keep up the incantations. On the other hand, we need to have a lot more hard and harsh conversations about innovation, talks in which we're prepared to say "My name is CEO, and I'm an innovation-holic.". Our conversation about innovation has tended to be inane and trivial, a buzzword-rich verbal diarrhea that never truly addressed the real issues with innovation. The fact is we can spend however much we wish on it, but without proper direction, it will be yet another bonfire of creative vanities.

Innovation, for all the ways it has been defiled and abused by a never-ending army of so-called innovation consultants and the likes, is still our one best way of creating value and the solutions to the complex, vexing, and wicked problems that plague our world. We need innovation in the same way that we need weapons – both can be misused,

and both can be used in a way that ensures peace, democracy, and prosperity. Yet just as we need global gun control, we need innovation control. Just like a weapon, innovation can be used for all the wrong reasons.

What we need is a global embargo on innovation bullshit, AKA harsh sanctions on spouting innovation nonsense. What this would include would be punishments for using the clichés, the buzzwords, and the tired slogans. With hefty prison sentences for everyone who suggests that "we should think outside the box on this one", we might just get around to actually ***innovating*** rather than just endlessly talking about it. This, what our current obsession with endless innovation talk has created, is not a land of endless wonders, but organizations that have started to doubt that there is any meaning in talking about innovation.

So, let's stop. Let's retire the word, forget about the theories, discard the old phase-gate model. Let's bury the rotting corpse of innovation management and start anew. We can think of other words, better words, and focus less on whether something in 'incremental', 'radical', or, god forbid, 'disruptive' and instead talk about whether it works and whether anyone cares. Let's close down the clunky processes, fire the evangelists and ninjas, and get back to trying to make things. Better things. Nicer things, without a care in the world about whether or not they are an I-word or not.

Let's get back to creating, rather than obsessing about just what kind of creation we're on about. Let's get back to making things and trying things out, rather than talking about how we might categorize and optimize those things. Let's kill innovation, for it is in the way of making new things, creating value, and changing the world.

Creativity is having an existential crisis

Author MARTIN LINDSTRØM

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"Creativity is to have courage in the sea of data irrelevance"

At 11 p.m., I found myself staring at a Word document on the screen. It was only five words long. Over the last 19 days, I'd massaged, changed, and rewritten those five words hundreds of times. Not enough words, for sure, to impress my editor.

In 2021 Inc Magazine wrote that creativity is thriving in these times of COVID-19. In contrast, I think exactly the opposite. Creativity is having an existential crisis now in the aftermath of Covid-19.

This first dawned on me when I spoke with a friend of mine, the global chief marketing officer of Burger King, Fernando Machado, known for the Andy Warhol prime-time Superbowl commercial, the KFC campaign, and the "moldy Whopper" concept. He told me that nearly everyone he knows in the creative field is at a breaking point. Most members of creative teams, he told me, see psychologists on a regular basis. They're simply losing their creativity.

In a time when travel is a memory, long-winded meetings at the office have disappeared, and we have more time than ever at home, why is creativity taking a plunge?

Nearly three decades ago, while working with LEGO®, I conducted a highly unusual experiment, not only to understand creativity, but also to understand how those "new things" (Donkey Kong handheld gaming devices) were impacting kids' creativity. LEGO's destiny was in play, so to speak, as they witnessed their sales being cannibalized by this new global craze. Waving had conducted a similar

experiment just a couple of years earlier, but the changes in just two years were astonishing and horrifying. Kids had lost the ability to twirl a pen without dropping it. Simple motor skills were disappearing. And, as kids' play moved from the playground to the screen, creativity had drained from pre-teens' brains.

As time went by, working with creative teams across the world, I noticed that in certain situations, creativity actually seemed to thrive on-screen. But in other situations, it seemed like someone had pressed a writer's block button.

Thoroughly intrigued, I began mapping my own creativity levels, the good days along with the bad, creative moments and the "not so very much," my predictable patterns of ups-and-downs. It turned out that my most creative moments didn't happen while I was sitting down at a desk, and certainly not while I was staring into a screen. Rather, they occurred in a weightless environment, where the effects of gravity were negligible: in the pool. Transferring this observation into the real world wasn't a straightforward task, of course. For one thing, how was I supposed to take notes while swimming laps? How could I ignore the perplexed stares of my fellow swimmers?

But I did discover that I was able to solve challenging problems in the water, draft that difficult-to-phrase letter, and brainstorm baffling concepts. I could tackle these challenges on dry land, but I'm sure I wouldn't bring the same level of creative elegance to them. I discovered I wasn't alone in this. When I shared my "water moment" insight with other creative types over a late-night drink, they shared with me, half-disbelieving and half-wondering, that they'd come to exactly the same self-realization.

As my thinking evolved, so did my obsession with rescuing my creative mind. I learned that certain types of screen-based interactions not only killed creativity in an instant, but also had a prolonged negative impact for hours after I'd switched off the screen. As I plotted out my lows and highs, a consistent pattern emerged. It surprised me, to say the least. The ultimate creativity killer? My phone.

Most people would argue that the phone has become an essential tool of survival. It's an extended hand, occupying our thoughts and putting our brains on overdrive — even while sometimes paralyzing our minds. I wondered: Could that tool, containing the answer to every imaginable question, offering every source of inspiration, really represent the death of creativity?

On January 1, 2017, I switched off my phone, as a one-man-experiment into the phone's impact on creativity. I meant the experiment to last for just one year. Along the way, I gained some profound insight (and, almost nearly four years later, I still haven't turned my phone back on).
I started seeing things in ways I'd never done before, I re-discovered the joys of silence, and I began meeting new people. In those old days, whenever I found myself at a momentary loose end, I pulled out my phone and did something — anything at all — in order to avoid strangers thinking I'm the sort of lonely loser who's been stood up by a date or a business associate.

However, the biggest surprise to me wasn't what I began to see, but what I began to feel. In the old phone-infused days, I would fill every silent moment with "productive screen time." This was the case on the way to the airport, waiting in the airport lounge, while meeting with clients, at dinner, in the bathroom. The last thing I did before turning off the light at bedtime was to switch off my phone, and first thing in the morning, I'd switch it on again.

If I had a spare minute, I justified the pause by hammering off quick, machinegun instructions to my PA, flicking through hundreds of emails, responding to my staff's 500-word-long, carefully crafted emails with five-word replies. I was on a roll, for sure. By the end of these jackhammer sessions, my squeaky-clean inbox would leave me with me a sense of relief and contribution. And then I'd repeat the process, as all 250 people replied to my replies. Without being aware of it, I kept going back to the future, in the best Groundhog Day style. Common sense, for sure, didn't prevail.

Only after turning off my phone for a year did I realize I was never bored.

As months went by without my phone, boredom returned — and with it, time for reflection.

It wasn't easy. Sometimes I suffered withdrawal, like an addict in search of his fix. But with nothing to do — just silence — I found myself combining thoughts in new, unusual, unexpected ways. I spotted details I'd never noticed before. I vacuumed inspiration out of my everyday observations in ways unimaginable when YouTube served as my legal smoking break, tempting me the moment boredom threatened. Did I need a quick fix of self-assurance? LinkedIn lent me a helping hand, while squashing the faintest hint of boredom.

What I began to realize was that boredom, in fact, is the foundation for creativity. I hadn't allowed myself a moment's boredom for decades. Now I endured boredom — and I was more creative than ever.

Recently, as screens replaced face-to-face meetings, the semi-obligatory Friday afternoon beer has morphed into a digital phenomenon. The stroll to the meeting room, the watercooler chat, those casual conversations in the canteen over lunch — moments that management considers "unproductive," "lost hours" that finance tries desperately (and unsuccessfully, I might add) to capture on timesheets — all those moments have disappeared. One by one, they've been converted into a never-ending stream of back-to-back Zoom calls. Something unusual has happened. Productivity has soared. Some measures value increased productivity at billions, if not trillions, of dollars. And, simultaneously, creativity has collapsed.

If you pause for more than a few seconds on a call, someone out there in the dark is sure to say, "Martin, your mic must be muted." Those silent moments of reflection have vanished.

Forget about breaks, even to use the toilet. We've become expert at pretending we're still on the call while doing our business. After all, who would dare reveal needing to go in front of 23 stamp-sized images (though you can bet they're all harboring the same secret desire to hit the loo)?

And aren't we all pretending to be giving this meeting our absolute full attention, despite simultaneously hammering away on a PowerPoint presentation for the Zoom call that's scheduled to kick off 20 minutes from now?

One recent day, after ten exhausting hours, I collected my notes from their 11 open Word files, the results of the day's 11 Zoom calls, and threw myself on the couch — only to realize that my genuine, productive work, actually thinking and reflecting, was only now beginning — at 8 p.m.

It was then, in front of a blank Word document, that I recalled the feeling I had more than three years ago when

I put my phone on the shelf. Those mini breaks, those thoughtful pauses, those deep breaths had all but vanished. I was still physically present, of course, locked in front of my screen, but it wasn't really me. It was the robotic, autopilot Martin saying "Yeah, I agree with Ivonne." I'd become the "Send me your deck, Dick," the "You're on mute, Mike," the "I have to jump off for another Zoom" Martin.

We've been seduced into thinking that translating our physical life to a digital lifestyle is a linear process. Not so. Those officially unproductive pauses, those stimulating thoughts, those creative connections, those moments benefiting from a carefully created company culture — all have been lost in translation. Yes, sure: A few industries, like the electronic dance music industry, are indeed thriving. One of the leading DJs, Martin Garrix, recently said, "We've never been more creative than now." His explanation? This creative tidal wave stems from the fact that they aren't on the road with no time to think and reflect. The draining concert tours, the jetlag, and the endless late hours have been replaced by a "normal lifestyle," spiced up with frequent visits to their home studios. Connecting with fellow DJs around the world, they can ideate and compose remotely.

But remember, these industries are built on creativity. Their fuel is sound, not back-to-back Zoom meetings, PowerPoint presentations, and Excel files.

Recently I began skipping every second Zoom call. I prioritized personal meetings. I shut down my PC after half a day in front of the screen, blocked my calendar, and allowed myself to think. I reintroduced thinking time on dry land as well as in the pool. I reduced those 30-minute-long Zoom calls to 25 minutes each, reserving those 5 minutes for a natural break. Once I leave my office, I avoid the screen.

The writing you're reading right now is the one that began with those five lonely words on the screen — those five words I'd been struggling with for 19 days. When I began to take time away from my screen, the words came back to me.

I'll let you in on a secret that may surprise you: I'm still alive.

Cutting down on it all didn't cause me to drop dead on the floor. No one noticed that I was less accessible. No one commented that my stamp-sized photo was missing from the mouse trap of calls. What they did notice was that the Martin they once knew for his creativity had surprisingly returned. No one knew why … and no one bothered to ask, as they were all too busy jumping on their next Zoom call.

Thriving through change

Author VIVEK WADHWA

VIVEK WADHWA *is an academic, entrepreneur, and author of five bestselling books. He has been a globally syndicated columnist for The Washington Post and has held appointments as Distinguished Fellow at Harvard Law School's Labor and Worklife Program, Carnegie Mellon University, and Emory University; adjunct professor at Carnegie Mellon and Duke University; fellow at Stanford Law School and UC Berkeley; and head of faculty at Singularity University.*

The global COVID-19 pandemic has almost shut down entire industries, forcing companies of all sizes to adapt and evolve. It has also done incredible things for a pivot to innovation.

Safety has had to come first. And for many, that meant changing how they worked, using technology to power a shift to remote work and servicing of customers. For some, like retailers, restaurants and manufacturers, it meant shutting down key services or production lines and pivoting to new offerings or entering new markets just to survive and stay relevant. Others, rather than just close doors, have repurposed their assets to contribute to the collective effort to fight the crises.

When commercial flights were shut down, airlines like Virgin Atlantic, Lufthansa, and American Airlines switched to cargo-only flights. In the UK, healthy fast-food chain Leon announced it was turning its 65 restaurants into shops, selling meals via both click-and-collect and delivery. Hotels started offering day rates for remote workers. And multiple manufacturers, like Scottish craft beer specialists BrewDog, converted their plants to produce hand sanitiser.

What does it take to shift this fast successfully? And is this kind of progress sustainable?

The reality is that it is not essential that we be thrown into crisis before this kind of change can take place.

With the enforced change in human movement and behaviour came a change in customer demand. Businesses had to think and act fast to repurpose assets, talent, resources, distribution channels, offerings. Minus the crisis, it's what successful businesses do every day.

SPACEX'S GIANT STEP

On 11 April 2019 – before we knew what 2020 would bring – a Falcon Heavy rocket was launched Cape Canaveral, Florida, making history. It was the first in a new generation of space exploration: a rocket that would not only be able to pilot its way through space, but be able to navigate and return to Earth for re-use, radically reducing the cost of space travel.

To achieve this, SpaceX combined radical and creative funding systems, brilliant talent, and perhaps most importantly, vision. But the question at the heart of this isn't – 'how did SpaceX achieve this'; the question is why the incumbents didn't? How has innovation and creativity become so stifled in large, established organisations that it takes a new kid on the block to go, quite literally, where no-one has gone before?

It's about culture, leadership, and some very practical steps that enable businesses to be their own catalysts for change, rather than relying on a crisis to spark exponential change.

THE DNA OF ORGANISATIONS THAT THRIVE THROUGH CHANGE

'From Incremental to Exponential', a book I have co-authored with Ismail Amla, looks at what it takes to drive exponential change in an enterprise. In it, we examine five common components that make up the DNA of organisations that thrive through change.

- Firstly, **speed**. Leading companies just operate faster – from reviewing strategies to allocating resources. McKinsey research indicates that these companies relocate talent and capital four times more quickly than their less nimble peers.
- Secondly, **being ready to invent**. While business need to maintain the profitable elements of what they do, operating at business as usual is dangerous. Leading businesses are investing as much in upgrading the core as they are on innovation.
- Thirdly, **being all-in**. These companies aren't just making decisions faster, the decisions themselves are bolder, braver and further outside of the box.
- Fourthly, **making data-driven decisions**. Data is providing the fuel to power better and faster decision making. High-performing organisations are three-times more likely to say that data and analytics initiatives contribute at least 20 percent to EBIT. Which is profound.
- And finally, **following the customer**. Top companies that sustain a comprehensive focus on the customer (in addition to operational improvements) have been shown to reap economic gains ranging from 20 to 50 percent of the cost base.

In the face of the future

Author DAVIDE DATTOLI

DAVIDE DATTOLI *is the founder and Executive Chairman of Talent Garden, the largest Europe-based EduTech company. He's a selected member of a global 5% top Endeavor Entrepreneurs movement. He holds Forbes 30 Under 30 technology list in Europe, WIRED nomination as one of the TOP 5 innovators in Italy. Davide is also an advisory board member of Iliad, Digital Magics and Be. He invests in many start-ups across Europe like Will Media, WeRoad, Bending Spoons.*

1. You're the founder of Talent Garden, Europe's leading digital education provider, and co-working space. What made you start the Garden back in 2011?
I founded the company in 2011. I was 21 years old and my desire was to connect people and help them to grow professionally and personally.

I looked around me and saw on one hand a lot of young digital professionals very passionate and on the other hand companies that were looking for them. So, I thought that they need a physical (and digital) space to connect. The first campus was in Brescia, my hometown, a small city in the north of Italy, not far from Milan.

Talent Garden is now the largest European coworking network with twelve countries.We create local, vibrant campuses for digital tech communities, and then connect them globally. Open 24/7, our campuses are designed to provide start-up teams, freelance and corporates with a physical base to grow together but also a school for professional learning with more than 1500 students every year, events, open innovation projects with corporates, and all that help tech talents to be empowered.

2. One of the key drivers in Talent Garden seems to be digital innovation. Why is digital innovation so important in the future?
In these two years that were stranger than fiction, the tech community has a lot to celebrate.

"Even after this pandemic ends, it's clear that much of the digitization it brought on is here to stay. The last two years have led to monumental leaps forward in how we use technology, accelerating changes that would've taken years – if not a decade or longer – otherwise. We've seen the creation of new innovations that I think only represent the tip of the

iceberg of what's to come in the years ahead.

All this digitization is here to stay, and the technologies we're using will continue to get better over time. We're just at the start of how software will enable innovation. The more we use digital tools, the more feedback we get about how to make them better... It'll take at least a decade to understand the full scope of the pandemic's impact on digitization, but I predict one of the biggest will be on education."

Those are some of the words from the Bill Gates' letter of this year that I feel reflect very well my thinking. What's clear is that while the health concern of this years will pass, sooner or later, the impact on people and on our society will remain forever. This exponential development in digitalization that has just started is really exciting like Metaverse, Web 3.0, and many other digital trends that have emerged in recent months and years. The worrying part is that these new developments will change our society sooner rather than later, and we as humans are not quite ready for them yet.

Digital innovation helps the organisation to keep up with emerging customer demands and therefore survive in the face of the future. It allows companies to compete better in an economic environment that is constantly changing in response to technology evolutions.

Never in history has a revolution been so quick, neither the agricultural nor the industrial revolution. Our society is changing rapidly with the digital revolution, separating more and more people who possess skills and mindsets from those who do not.

3. Apart from providing digital education the core of Talent Garden is your co-working spaces. What are your predictions for how coworking will change after the pandemic? What will be the new normal of space organization, office management, flow of people, social distancing, etc.?

Of course, it would be nice to have a crystal ball, but I think it is very clear how crises have always drawn new patterns of consumption and priorities on consumers and companies.

This crisis will be no less. I believe that this great leap will help to develop new sectors, products and solutions for the new world that we will explore. I believe that we are showing how innovation and the start-up ecosystem are fundamental for our countries. We have not stopped, despite the challenges, fear and anxiety that keeps us all awake at night. I don't know what the future holds for us, but I do know that, by supporting each other, we will be able to face it, as a single community.

Especially as far as we are concerned, for example, the way we live spaces will surely change, for example at the entrance of all our campuses we now have sensors that detect body temperature, new ways of living our community. The same thing on social distance between tables, air settings, etc. We have invested a lot into safe. We believe that Talent Garden has to be the safest place to work possible also if we believe that is impossible to be 100% safe even in our house.

This will disrupt many business practices, from regular on-site meetings to business travel. But we believe that coworking will growth a lot, people love remote working but also, they need of flexibility. We totally understood in these last two years the importance of human connections. Even if a dose of remote working is desirable, physical offices hold firm as a beacon for innovation.

It's only in shared workplaces that we can establish those weak ties among casual acquaintances that are crucial to producing new ideas and strengthening company culture. These weak-tie relationships are at risk when we work alone, since we tend to get in contact remotely with those people we always collaborate with.

4. At 31, you already have a lot of entrepreneurial and leadership experience behind you. What kind of advice for crisis management would you give to young CEOs that are at an earlier stage of their entrepreneurial lives?
Try to build your company like your grandfather built his. Don't follow only the Silicon Valley model of focusing only on revenue or growth, and not enough on EBITDA. EBITDA is becoming way more important than before. Focus on building something that is long term, you have to have in mind not just your exit, but rather building something long term that can change society.

My piece of advice is:

1. Think long term
2. Try to act more and more quickly
3. Overinvest in people

5. You've said that digital education is the great social and economic challenge of our century. Can you please elaborate on that?
We believe that companies need to fully exploit the power of technology if they want to compete in the market. This has to be done in three ways:

1. Hiring tech-savvy profiles to upgrade their workforce agility;
2. Upskilling people and stimulating innovation (and entrepreneurship) across their workforce;
3. Reskilling the employees whose skillsets are outdated.

We help people, organizations, and governments prepare for the challenges posed by the digitization and the continuous technological evolution. This could be the biggest challenge of our century in the European economy and we want to contribute to avoid immense social and economic turbulence.

We believe that innovation and embracing technology digital skills are what will make people and companies more successful.

Society will be divided into three main groups:

Digital First: People who already work in the digital sector and have the right skills. They are the most sought after in the market. They have the highest salary and have the possibility to choose their own job and company. The 'big resignation' this year involved thousands of people deciding if, where, and when to work. They have skills that have become rare, so companies scout for them every day, trying to find the best talents.

While companies offer higher salaries and more opportunities, they are still lacking millions of tech professionals who could help them develop new products and services, so the few who are ready for the job can choose their own future. But, let's remember that also these skills are changing every week so keeping ourselves informed and continuing to upskill ourselves every day is key. I was discussing with some friends last week. They work on blockchain and Web3 and shared with me that the technology is moving so quickly that they feel frustrated after some weeks of holiday because they feel out of the 'next big technology'

potentially developed in the last days. This will also have an impact on people's lives and personal stability.

Digitally Enabled: people whose jobs use some technology but may not exist in a few years due to technological advancements. They don't realize it all the time, but here's where companies are investing more. This year in Talent Garden, we have seen the rise of the corporate digital academies, large-scale programs that involve redefining the company's mindset and upskilling thousands of employees. Corporations need these programs because the market is pressuring them to develop digital products and services. Attracting new talents is difficult but necessary, helping internal ones to upskill is key. Many visionary CEOs decide to invest long term to develop the biggest asset of their company: internal talents.

Any company today must teach data skills, UX mindset, product management, and cybersecurity basics to every employee. A lot of times, talents are already inside the company, and with the right upskilling program and innovative mindset, they can quickly contribute to building a digital-first group, with the benefit of knowing the company inside out. It's also important to keep in mind that individual commitments are key here. Everyone must ask himself how he can prepare myself for the future? Will I be qualified for my current job in three years? What did I learn this week?

Digital Reskills: In the next few years, many companies will go out of business and many people will lose their jobs because of this. In order to reskill people for the current market, corporations and governments need to make large investments. This has already been observed in Europe where education is one of the key areas for all the European Funds, as well as the COVID national recovery fund. Some big companies in the United States recently announced that they are investing $100 million in reskilling programs for their employees to help them adjust to a new job.

The splitting of every individual into one of the three categories will be very abrupt and could create big social issues. In order to avoid that, governments, corporations, and individuals will need to align from 2022 onward. During the next three years, it will be crucial to set up the right policies and programs that will assist billions of people in getting ready for the new world that we are entering.

However, everything begins with individuals and their growth, and there are two important elements: **skills and networks**. As a company, we provide these two elements across all stages of human work life, from 20th to 60th, mixing lifelong learning, working tools and innovation practices in order to help people and companies succeed.

Our failures are integral part of our future success

Author Dragan Šolak

DRAGAN ŠOLAK *is the founder and Chairman of the Advisory Board of United Group. Under his stewardship the company has grown from a green field investment in a small cable operator in Central Serbia to become a regional leader delivering broadband, mobile, and pay TV services to a market of more than 40 million people across eight countries, serving over 15 million subscribers. Now United Group is unique ecosystem of telecom, media, advertising, and technology companies.*

1. You were born in Serbia. How has that shaped you? What has your upbringing in Serbia meant for your success as a business man?

I wouldn't give my birthplace any special meaning. It could have been better but also much worse. I had a very happy childhood, was able to educate, do sports, have fun… there was nothing missing. Living in Yugoslavia was quite nice. Looking back as a businessman, it probably helped that my first economical education was about class differences, workers struggle, 'negative sides' of capitalism. It helped me later better understand both sides of the coin. Although United Group is an aggressive challenger, very often perceived as too aggressive, we are also very liberal, inclusive and our average employment term lasts over ten years.

2. When Yugoslavia disintegrated and the war in Bosnia began in 1992, you moved away. What was that decision like for you?

It was the only path I could follow. After considering Croats, Slovenians, Bosnians and all other Yugo nations, my brothers for all my life, I just couldn't embrace the idea of them being my mortal enemies all of a sudden. I couldn't change much, so I decided to leave. First stop was Ljubljana, Slovenia, but unfortunately, they didn't want me to stay. So, after a year, I moved to Prague. Czechs were enjoying long awaited freedom and it was very open society with a huge expats' community, where I found many friends and lived and worked happily for next three years.

3. You've created a number of companies – the biggest being United Group. For those of the readers of IMPACT who don't know United Group, it's the leading multi-play telecoms and media provider in Southeast Europe. Why did you got involved in this industry?

Well, my first business, and first startup was a film production and distribution company called VANS, which was

established with a group of friends and film enthusiasts. I left VANS when I moved out of Belgrade, but stayed involved in film and music production and distribution all over Eastern Europe. During one of the visits to LA independent film market, I was taken to see a new wireless cable technology in Yuma, Arizona. It was quite impressive to me that we could deliver content in variety of product packages directly to people's homes. Idea stayed with me for a while. When political changes in Serbia opened an opportunity to start building similar system there, I was ready to engage. Coming from the content industry, we were early to focus on quality and variety and exclusivity of original content, which made our cable operation in Serbia immediate success. That was the start of United Group.

4. What is the most important quality of a business leader?

Can't point out the most important one. I would say that among the crucial ones are:

- Ability to understand yourself and your qualities but more importantly your weaknesses and to make decisions and plans according to your real ability.

- To be able and willing to lead by example and to inspire people around you.

5. You've managed to turn ideas into impact, innovation and big companies. What can other people learn from your journey? Any specific methods or strategies behind how you work?

I am personally a strategist. That's how ideas start to formulate in me. If I don't see a clear strategy together with innovative part, I don't engage. Next step is discussing everything to a great detail with my trusted team. Team is hugely important, and very specifically one made of top minds with specific expertise. These people are usually very independent and outspoken thinkers, and very keen to progress their ideas, so discussion is always quite interesting. For outsiders we often look like we quarrel. If the idea survives these conversations, it becomes clean version of strategy with first operational step. Our method is actually very simple…

6. Prior to purchasing Southampton F.C., you almost never gave interviews and avoided public appearances. Now it seems like this has changed. How come?

There's no real change. I don't see myself giving regular interviews or public appearances. It was a short period of time during which huge spotlight turned my way due to enormous popularity of football, Premier League and Southampton and I seized to opportunity to tell the world about issues that are important to me. Unfortunately, there was a very limited impact of my public statements, so I am back to my old ways...

7. Speaking of becoming more active in the media, you've criticized the lack of media freedom in Serbia. Apart from this being an important area of your business (the media), why is this topic so important to you?

Serbia was a young and fragile democracy. Serbian people had very little experience of what real freedom and democracy look like. Democracy in Serbia was easy to corrupt and capture and practically turn Serbia into a dictatorship. Although a game is being played, elections are held, institutions are there and working, the reality is that there is no choice available for Serbs and their brains are being severely washed for more than six years now. I might not have lived there for years, but I was born there. My family and childhood friends are there and the quality of life in Serbia greatly matters to me. I would love to hope that Serbia will join EU and that people of Serbia will be able to live prosperous lives in clean and healthy environment. All of this

is impossible without freedom of speech and free press. I don't believe in happy and prosperous dictatorships. They can function well for a while, but they don't have a future and it always end in a bloody mess. Exactly what happened with Yugoslavia.

8. Some people describe you as public enemy number one in your birth country of Serbia. What does that feel like, and do you agree?
Obviously, I can't agree with being public enemy number one in Serbia. I could only be enemy number one of present Serbian dictator and his regime. If it's so, then with a huge pleasure and honor!

9. What would you say to the Dragan Šolak who was 10 years old and still in school? What would you like to have known back then that you know now?
I would give him a lot of tips about girls, would save him most of the 'suffering' later... but, maybe not even that. Remembering me as a boy, I wouldn't listen to my older self. My father told me many times to learn from books and words of wise people rather than from experience, it's much more efficient and less painful. Still, I didn't listen and went my own way. Even now, my firm belief is that all our failures are integral part of our future success. So, having taken them out of my life by wise advice given ahead of time, would probably change me for worse. Actually, the best advice would be, embrace your success and your failures. Take a deep dive in both. Don't suppress your feelings. Be happy and be sad. And most of all, learn from them.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
I always followed my passion and chased my dreams. While doing that, I have tried to have positive influence on people and society around me. Enabling yourself to do good, helping others fulfil their dreams, helping and enjoying success of people around you, trying to be productive part of the society, that's impact to me.

My father told me many times to learn from books and words of wise people rather than from experience, it's much more efficient and less painful. Still, I didn't listen and went my own way. Even now, my firm belief is that all our failures are integral part of our future success. So, having taken them out of my life by wise advice given ahead of time, would probably change me for worse.

DRAGAN ŠOLAK
Founder and Chairman of the
Advisory Board of United Group

Doing is a part of the process of being awesome

Author STRING NGUYEN

STRING NGUYEN, *is founder of The Trusted Voice, CEO of Chubbiverse and is 4x LinkedIn's Top Voice. On a personal note, String grew her presence online as she believed in the power of one's voice, from growing her LinkedIn account to 70k followers (including her LinkedIn newsletter), to building startups and product strategies.*

1. This book is all about doers and dreamers. Which one do you feel most as and why?
If I have to pick one, I'm a doer. Ideas are seeds. Dreams are often stuck inside our heads, but what's the fun in that? Even if we dream a brilliant idea, it will be wasted if it's never realized.

2. What inspires you, when you develop new ideas?
I love memes. A meme is a cultural heuristic. A good meme carries the topical or pop culture references of the day, and is enjoyed by many. They can be a static image or a GIF. An example of a meme is Michael Jackson eating popcorn. It's used to signify our amusement and being entertained. This makes them an easy and fast way of sharing cultural information.

If you understand how to leverage memes, it can be a powerful medium to use to acquire a community. Memes are part of everyday language in Web3 communities.

3. What advice would you give to others who want to move from dreaming to doing?
A common challenge for dreamers is paralysis analysis. We often over-analyze, over-think, over-engineer… that it stops us from moving forward. I want to let you know that everyone starts from 0. Even me. Even folks like MrBeast started with 0, and he now has 100 million YouTube followers. He started with one video and uploaded it to YouTube in 2013. Instead of expecting the ultimate end result, momentum is key.

Keep progressing forward and overtime you will improve your skills to excellence. Keep creating and improving, gain momentum; Doing is a part of the process of being awesome.

4. Have you had any role models or big influencers in your professional life, and what did you learn from them?
My mother is my biggest role model. As a single mother of 5 children, she couldn't afford childcare, but she was a

resourceful person. After school, we would wait for her at the local library. The library was the best place to fill my curiosity and I loved being surrounded by books. I would read Greek Mythology and hang out with Sigmund Freud. From a young age, my mother taught me the value of education and being resourceful. As I grew older, my go-to-attitude and willingness to learn helped me enter innovative and new technology spaces like social media marketing and cryptocurrency.

5. What are your three most important tools in your daily work?

My team works remotely and we use the following three tools daily:

1. Notion for our project management tool.
2. Discord (similar to Slack) for our community development and messaging tool.
3. Twitter is where the Web3 community hangs out and network.

6. How do you define success?

On a personal level, I like to wake up every day feeling like I'm growing. I aim to understand who I am as a person, and squish my triggers and traumas. What do I mean by triggers? I remember when I was buying a laptop, my heart was pounding like crazy. With reflection, I noticed that I would stress out at the checkout. I pinpointed this trigger to my childhood days, where my mum goes to the supermarket and sometimes, we couldn't afford to buy groceries.

On a career level, I think about this thought: "how can I build a legacy within Web3 for the next two decades?" This is what I'm exploring with my NFT brand, Chubbiverse. We're a Web3 brand with a Web2 appeal. Our stickers and Gif have generated 860 million views (as of August 2022) on Giphy.

7. What are you working on currently?

I'm working on an NFT brand, Chubbiverse. We are really cute. We care about spreading giggles and rainbow farts. Our most popular character is a Chubbicorn, they are derpy chubby unicorns. They have five other friends in the Chubbiverse. All they do is eat, giggle and fart rainbows.

8. Which technologies will fundamentally change the industry that you work in in the next 5-10 years?

NFT (non-fungible tokens), it's a blockchain-driven product.

9. How did you push through your biggest business doubts?

Here's a little hack to overcome your biggest business doubts, start a startup. The learning curve and self-awareness is deep. The lessons you learn from being and creating a startup is steep. But I think it's all worth it, it's better than paying for an MBA.

I joined a startup accelerator and I realized that my financial literacy was my weakness. I used to fear spreadsheets. Now I can read them and use spreadsheets to help me forecast business growth and runway.

Kids love them, and adults cannot help but smile when they see them.

10. This book is all about impact. What does impact mean to you?

Impact means leaving a digital legacy for others to succeed. When I hear stories of folks using LinkedIn or video to share their knowledge and stories, I am happy. The content I've created has opened doors for others to grow and expand their journey. Now I'm focusing on others with personal branding, and onboarding many leaders into the Web3 industry.

How a business can innovate smart

Author TYLER ANDERSON

Having worked with some of the largest companies in the world as an innovation partner, **TYLER** *drives Disruptive Edge globally and leads the way for the team, always making sure to keep things exciting, special and interesting, while staying ahead of the curve on tech and disruption models.*

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what Disruptive Edge is all about?
Disruptive Edge is an innovation partner focused on helping the disrupted to become disruptors. We have created innovation functions for many of the world's largest organizations. We do so by blending the top methodologies and customizing them to your organization's needs.

2. Does every business need innovation? What are your observations?
We are firm believers that every business model has an expiry date. With over 50% of Fortune 500's from the year 2000 now bankrupt or obsolete, the market and your company can change quickly - there are no organizations that are not susceptible to disruption in some way.

3. What is the best way to innovate? Where does a business start?
Always start with the customer, we cannot emphasize this enough. By understanding their real needs, pain points and jobs to be done, the best concepts are born here. In order to successfully do this, your organization needs to be properly set-up for innovation. Things like CEO buy-in and time dedication, and a separated and dedicated budget are foundational components to successful innovation.

4. You are discussing three types of innovation; Core, Adjacent and Disruptive. What is the difference between the three and should a company adapt all of them?
In order for a company to be successful at innovating, they need to invest across all 3 types of innovation. To make all 3 simple to understand, picture yourself as a cab driver looking to innovate:

- Core innovation would be to design a more fuel-efficient tire to save costs;
- Adjacent innovation would be to create a digital app

that accesses new customers and markets, something that competitors in other geographies have done before;
- Disruptive innovation would be to create Uber if it did not already exist, a completely new market that is not there today.

As you will see, each of the 3 have their own merit, core is usually the easiest, and what most companies today excel at, adjacent can be the lowest hanging fruit for new revenue growth and disruptive represents the biggest risk but also the biggest return.

Each company needs a mix of all 3, you can't jump straight to disruptive innovation while ignoring the company's core needs - it would leave the customer unsatisfied and would likely not have the right level of buy-in from across the organization.

5. It is a known fact that large corporations can't innovate or adapt quickly. How can this be changed?
The easiest way to change that is by hiring us! ;) Just kidding, innovation is not only about creative genius or imaginative thinking. There are processes designed and tested that we know work, they have been proven, and can be structured at any organization with the right foundation.

The foundation starts with your corporate strategy and ensuring innovation is enabling the strategy, this is key for the long-term success of any innovation team. The next step is ensuring you have buy-in from leadership and sponsors across the organization to open doors and facilitate processes that may otherwise take longer or be hampered by red tape. Once this is done the innovation team can move fast and break things, testing new business models and commercializing the ones that gain validation. Now you have an organization that can adapt like a startup.

6. Innovation is a good thing, but in some instances, it can also get out of control, meaning the employees can become "too innovative". How can an organization balance this?
Innovation Labs or teams can sometimes be labeled as Innovation Theaters or Dream Factories, and in many cases they are. They will be so unless their strategy and KPI's are properly connected to the corporate strategy and objectives.

Innovation needs to know why it is being created and what is expected of the function right from the beginning. Sounds basic, but something many organizations overlook crossing their fingers and hoping a unicorn comes out. It is also extremely important to measure innovation properly, which can be a difficult task.

7. What are the top 5 strategic questions an organization should ask to find ways for disruptive innovation?
a) If someone else was to offer my value proposition in a completely new way, what would it be?
b) If I didn't exist, how could this be done today?
c) What are my customers' key jobs to be done and how do I enable them in a better way?
d) How do I cannibalize my core business?
e) What could the UBER of my industry be?

8. Lastly, this book is all about IMPACT, what is impact to you?
Impact means solving real customer problems, and getting them off slide decks and into the market to drive meaningful change.

Should you create one user experience metric?

Author TOMER SHARON

TOMER SHARON, *is a leading voice on the topics of design thinking, user experience, and lean research methodology. He is co-founder & CXO (Chief Experience Officer) at anywell. He has mentored organizations on user research methodology, has given keynotes, and taught workshops in 13 countries and the UN. Tomer was Managing Director, Head of User Research & Metrics, at Goldman Sachs; Head of User Experience at WeWork; and Sr. User Experience Researcher at Google Search.*

Assuming a typical development lifecycle involves the four steps of having an idea, building it, launching it, and learning from users about it, below is how I generally organize the world of user research.

Generally speaking, the world of user research can be organized into three areas: tactical research, strategic research, and metrics.

• **Tactical:** Research that happens (or is at least most effective) between designing something and building it with a goal to identify strengths and weaknesses of the thing, iterating, and improving it. For example, asking four people to complete tasks with a prototype for a new app.

• **Strategic:** Research that happens at any point on the lifecycle of a product or service (yet is most meaningful prior to designing and building anything) with a goal to understand people, their behavior, and motivation, and uncover current their needs, problems, and workflows. For example, observing salespeople's interactions with potential clients to identify pain points and opportunities.

• **Metrics:** Quantitative research and data collection that happens after a product is launched with a goal to understand what is happening when people use it. For example, measuring user retention for core functionality of a product.

Discussion about the creation of an experience score for a product focuses on the metrics category and only refers to such research that happens after a product has launched. Important and relevant questions product teams have at that stage are:

- What is the experience we have created for our users? Is the experience good or bad?
- What are experience trends over time? Are we getting better or worse?
- How does the experience compare across a portfolio of products and services?

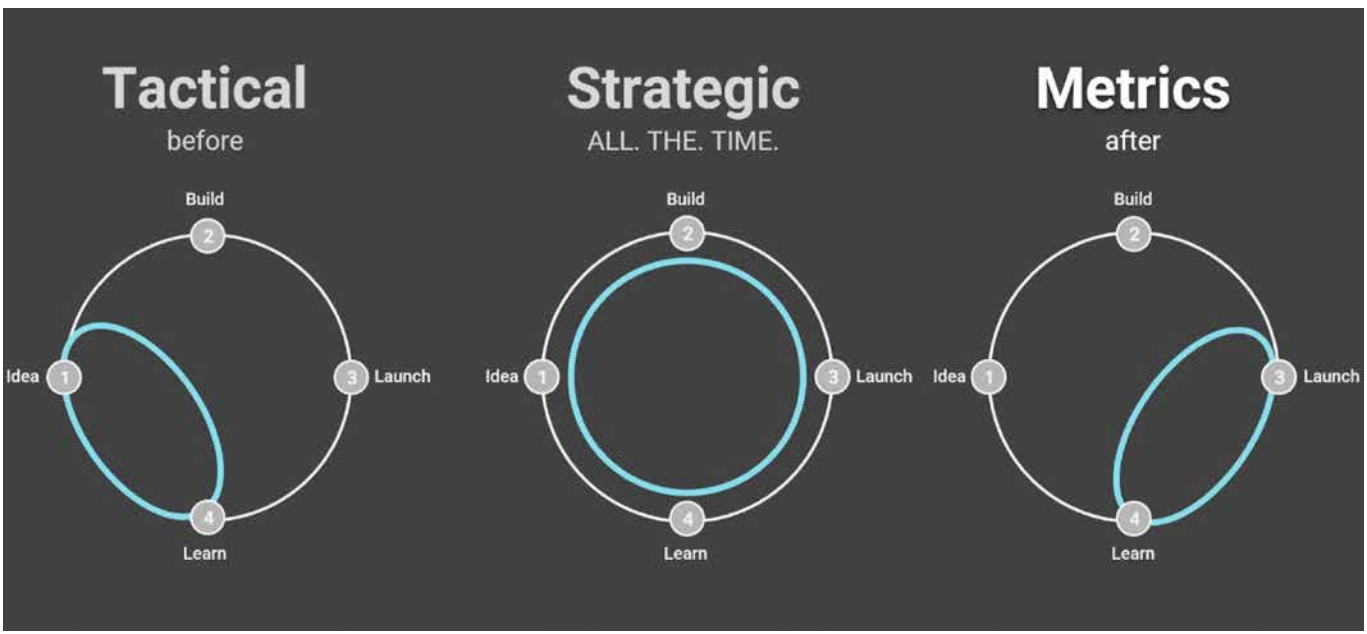
A common answer to all of these questions is creating an overall user experience metric. Since there is no one metric that provides a holistic understanding of the user experience, such score would be generated from multiple experience metrics using an agreed upon formula and weight per metric.

My experience throughout the years at Google, WeWork, Goldman Sachs, and in mentoring hundreds of startups globally has led me to a clear conclusion. So, should you create one user experience metric?

Yes

When I was Head of UX at WeWork I created such metric. We called it the Member Experience score, and we were eventually able to provide a consistently measured, ongoing experience score for every WeWork building, city, region, and even for all of WeWork.

It included measurements of dozens of different aspects of what created an experience at WeWork (physical spaces, digital products, human-to-human interaction) and we applied multiple experience metrics to measure these aspects and features.



General Managers, Community Managers, and executives alike had a score at the tip of their hands that allowed them to become more intelligent about their customers, understand trends in the experience, evaluate planned changes, and respond to meaningful changes. The experience we created for our users was visible.

Ideal, right?

No

You cannot suspect Google for lacking usage data. When I was working there as a researcher on Google Search, we didn't have an aggregated score. Instead, we had about 120 different metrics that told us a lot, and I mean a lot, about the user experience at any given point in time. For example, for search results we had two very telling metrics we called long and short clicks. Long clicks were clicks where search users clicked a result and stayed at that page for a long time or even never came back to the search results page. We thought that was a good thing because we believed users found what they wanted to find.

Short clicks were ones where a more erratic behavior was demonstrated. People quickly went back and forth between results page and the links we gave them. We thought of that as a bad thing since they couldn't find what they wanted to find hence kept looking. Later on, our qualitative research proved us completely wrong but that's for a different article.

Long and short clicks as well as many other numbers fed multiple fruitful discussions and led to making better product decisions. I can't remember that a single score was even considered and one can't argue with the success of Google and its search product.

Ideal, right?

Maybe

Nobody at WeWork cared about the member experience metric. Creating a single aggregated score people consider valid, reliable, and meaningful meant a lot of people needed to agree on the formula that created the score. Imagine the product that is WeWork. There were hundreds of big and small features and details that created that experience. Each might have been represented by a team that cared about it. Everyone had an opinion about the weight their feature should have gotten in the formula. When their feature didn't get that weight, teams didn't trust the entire score.

Discussions about the formula tended to be detailed and overly complicated which contributed to distrust and just fatigued people. Long story short, a single user experience metric sounded as a noble idea, yet reality brutally punched it in the face.

Not having such metric didn't bother anyone at Google as well. That said, with 120 different usage metrics, anyone could have picked a number that was either stable, increasing, or decreasing that day and make a point about it in their next meeting. Somewhat chaotic and definitely does not answer most of the questions I specified above.

That said, you don't hear about organizations developing and using a single user experience metric, do you? Do they do the same with other metrics such as KPIs? Have you ever heard of a single business score or maybe one operational or technical performance metric? Not really.
Where do we go from here?

My conclusion: A tight combination of a few metrics

My experience is that while there seems to be a strong need

to quantitatively compare the experience across multiple products, it is extremely difficult to reach agreement on a single experience metric. Instead, and this is something I am experimenting with these days, I've put out an assumption that there are four experience metric that matter more than the rest and I am providing data visualization that allows senior leadership to compare their products using these metrics. The four metrics I picked are:

- **Satisfaction score:** The mean user satisfaction with a product.

- **7-day active** (or any time unit that makes sense for a product): The ratio of users who used the product at least once in the last 7 days out of the total population of users.

- **Adoption rate:** The ratio of users who used the product for the first time (in a given time frame) out of the total number of users.

- **Retention rate:** The ratio of users who kept using the product in a given time frame out of the total number of users.

Note that all of these metrics are expressed in percentage as ratios to allow for a normalized cross-product comparison.

Creating a single or quadruple experience metric will make the experience any organization creates for its users visible. Yet, in order to track it over time, compare it across products, and most importantly, use it to drive positive change, one should heavily invest in establishing trust (in you and in the process of measurement), reach agreement, and gain buy-in and support. Otherwise, it doesn't really matter what, how, and when you measure.

STARTUP

CHAPTER 2

10 Entrepreneurial learnings to consider when building a new company

Author VASILIJ BRANDT

VASILIJ BRANDT *is a Danish E-Commerce enthusiast, digital entrepreneur and Forbes 30 Under 30 alumni who Co-Founded Blazar Capital and Nordgreen in the summer of 2017. Prior to co-founding Blazar Capital and Nordgreen, Vasilij was the Head of Growth at The Hut Group, which is a vertically integrated, digital-first consumer group, retailing its own brands within the health and beauty space.*

Building a company from scratch can be highly exciting and terrifying at the same time. The path of entrepreneurship is unique for everyone, and the journey from creation to success varies from individual to individual. However, based on all the entrepreneurial brand launches we've had at Blazar Capital (a Copenhagen based D2C brand incubator), and based on my own entrepreneurial journey with co-creating Blazar Capital as well as other brands, there are some determinants that I believe are of utmost importance in order to increase the probability of creating a successful business – regardless of whether you are a first time, second time or third time entrepreneur.

1 – Passion is everything

Being passionate about what you are doing determines whether you will succeed or not in your entrepreneurial endeavors. Period. For most, entrepreneurship is not a sprint, and it's not 'just' a marathon – it is an extreme sport. This means that if you don't have the necessary passion, drive and energy towards the project you're pursuing, the probability of your energy dissolving and you burning out will just become larger the further you get into the project.

There's no such thing as an easy path to entrepreneurial success, and I've rarely met any entrepreneurs who haven't faced major challenges and struggles along the way during some stages of their journey. This is where resilience, persistence, and relentlessness come into the picture – something which isn't easy to uphold if a genuine passion for the project isn't present. However, there must be a balance between your passion and the business opportunity you seek to capitalize on. Even if the passion is there, one must ask themselves whether entrepreneurship is the right thing to pursue in the first place, and whether the business idea itself is objectively justified by the business opportunity itself.

2 – Focus on the team

When commencing your entrepreneurial journey, it is essential that you have the right team and partners around you. If you are looking to build a startup together with others, it is important that you carefully select the right partners from the beginning. There's no doubt that it is always a good idea to find one or more co-founders who have a complementary skillset to yours, rather than co-founders who possess a similar or closely related skillset.

You have to remember that building a business from scratch requires a lot of interdisciplinary workstreams to be pursued, and in most cases, you won't have the skills and/or experience to do everything by yourself – especially not when the company starts to develop and grow in size. Hence, a team that complement each other's knowledge, skills and experience is important.

And don't forget, although entrepreneurship can be emotional and challenging, it is also one of the most engaging and fun endeavors you can experience – so make sure that you have people around that you'll have a great and memorable time with, both during and after working hours.

3 – Establish an execution culture

Continuous execution is paramount for building momentum in a startup – especially in the early phases of the journey. In order to build an effective and efficient organization from a cultural perspective, you must combine a continuous strong sense of urgency in the daily execution with a concurrent ability to prioritize adequately and give the important workstreams and decisions the right attention needed to derive the desired outcomes. Having a holistic overview of all activities in the business, while prioritizing and executing based on an 'impact-first' principle will make you operate more effectively and efficiently.

Perfection is, in my opinion, the true enemy of execution. So even though several workstreams and areas of focus need to be done in a 'thought through manner', where deep thinking and execution must go hand in hand, operating based on the 80/20 pareto principle is still of value in the early stages of a startup to ensure that the ball keeps rolling. Everything does not necessarily have to be 100% spot-on in a startup before you can execute the next important workstream or project.

4 – Understand your playing field

Believing that you have a good idea, while having a strong passion for that idea is as mentioned in point one of utmost importance; however, understanding the business opportunity itself is in my opinion of equal importance. Jumping into the life of entrepreneurship is a big step, so before taking the leap, make sure that you have conducted a comprehensive market analysis in relation to your idea, so you are sure that your idea and concept has a 'reason to be'.

If you are jumping into a market where there is little to no demand for your product or service, or where creating the marketing itself will be a highly comprehensive journey, then it might be healthy for you to take a step back to reflect and re-think the project you're about to pursue. What might have been a good idea during a brainstorming session or a eureka moment during your sleep might not be that fruitful of an idea after all once you understand the opportunity more objectively and quantitatively.

In my opinion, it is ideal to ensure that your idea is organized around a product or service that operates in a large and growing market, where you can position yourself as a unique alternative to your competitors. You can get an understanding of your market by reading different industry and market reports online, talking to industry experts,

or talking to some of your potential customers. Moreover, I believe that you have a strong advantage if your product or service solves a problem and has a high repeat purchase rate, regardless of which industry you operate in, and regardless of whether your idea is product or service-based.

5 – Establish a thought through business model

Make sure to establish a strong business model and strategy that you believe will create value for your customers based on your initial market analysis. Regardless of which type of company you are building, you must ensure that your business model is competitive and that you have a clear positioning relative to your competitors. Establishing a company has technically never been easer from a development point of view, but never been harder from a competitive point of view – so although you might have a smooth process in terms of going from nothing to something, and although you might have a clear plan of execution ready, the positioning and business model of your brand will be essential to gain a competitive advantage relative to other players in the industry.

6 – Create a clear sales and marketing strategy – and test

Establishing a comprehensive sales and marketing strategy helps you get a clearer picture of what it is you want to communicate to your potential customers and how you want to do it. It is always a good idea to test out many different marketing channels and sales strategies in the early stages of your business to understand where you get the highest return on your investments. Of course, the extent to which you can test different marketing strategies in the early phases of your journey depends on the capital that's available in the business. Try different channels both online and offline, and pursue a data-driven approach to get an understanding of where the performance is the highest based on your core metrics that you define in advance of your tests.

Some channels that can be tested out as part of your marketing strategy could be search engine optimization, pay per click marketing, programmatic display marketing, social media marketing (organic and paid, referral marketing, e-mail marketing, affiliate marketing, influencer marketing and ambassadorships, public relations, offline marketing (based on an out of home approach), and the like.

7 – Find the right investor for both capital, network and knowledge

If your objective is to establish a business, where external capital will be a core lever for your prospective growth, then it is highly recommended to spend a significant time on finding the right investor – not just from a capital allocation point of view, but also from a knowledge and competencies point of view. Make sure that the investors that you involve in your business are able to support and advise in core aspects of your business, and always work towards not selling off equity too cheap throughout the journey – keeping in mind the right balance between when to commence the fundraising process and when capital will run out. Pushing the fundraising process to the very last minute to maximize the share value can also back-fire as you might end up against a wall when time is running out. The longer you can bootstrap the business, the more value you can create over time to raise capital from the 'right' investor.

If you raise too much capital too quickly, you risk giving up a large share of your company's equity at a too early stage – which hence might reduce your control of the business.

The lost control can potentially be to the point where you no longer feel it's your business any longer. This will most likely impact your motivation negatively, thereby affecting the performance in a down spiraling trajectory. So, in general: Avoid raising capital too early, at too low valuation and from investors who you don't believe fit in the organizations. I've met many founders who made such mistakes in the past, and it can really tend to impact the motivation negatively, which is unhealthy in an entrepreneurial journey considering how hard and long such journey already is.

8 – Spend money as if you were one financing round earlier on your journey

Even though you might be raising a large amount of capital during some stages of your entrepreneurial journey, it is important not to burn more than what is necessary. It can be tempting – and easy – to simply start increasing your marketing spend, your branding budget, your product development budget, hiring more employees, etc. in order to see the topline grow in the short term.

However, doing this on the basis of a large continuous burn is simply just not sustainable, and neither is it acknowledged to the same extent to what we saw in the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using capital based on the mindset that you are one round earlier than what might be the case in reality is therefore something that I highly recommend. So, if you have raised a Series A, operate as if you had raised a seed round. If you have just raised a Series B, operate as if you had just raised a Series A. Deploy capital thoughtfully, in all avenues of the business.

9 – Drive your organization as if the time is running out

The time you have to drive and scale your organization is precious, which is why building a performance driven culture – in my opinion – is very valuable if you want to outrun your competitors. Developing a culture where people are working efficiently and almost are feeling as though "time is running out" can have a fruitful impact on the performance of the business. Of course, this is not meant in a way where people in the organization should feel as if they are under pressure – it is meant in a way where everyone in the organization runs as fast as they can because they genuinely want to win the game.

All value-adding customer-facing initiatives which drive growth should always be deployed as quickly as possible after the employee(s) responsible for the change are comfortable with it being released – there's no need to postpone such initiatives as it will just delay the launch of the next value-adding project. Of course, there will always be schedules in place, campaign plans to be followed, operational structures to consider, etc., but the mentality should always be that value-adding initiatives cannot get released too early.

10 – Build the right safety net before taking the entrepreneurial jump

This point is for first-time entrepreneurs. For the ones who are considering how to tackle their career from university and onwards. It's a point that will not be applicable for all, but something which I personally found important: Build an academic and professional safety net before taking the entrepreneurial jump.

Of course, neither education nor experience is a prerequisite for becoming a highly successful entrepreneur. We all know about the university dropouts who anyhow became billionaires and changed the world in one way or another. However, I do believe that having an education and some

professional experience gives you a strong advantage when jumping into the life of an entrepreneur. This is due to the following reasons:

1) You will be better equipped to establish and grow a startup due to the knowledge you bring from your education and/or your previous professional experience (assuming your experience has been relevant in regards to your entrepreneurial endeavor);

2) You will have more "ice in your stomach" as you will always have a safety net to fall back on in case your business fails (the worst-case scenario suddenly isn't that bad); and

3) You will be a "safer" choice for investors, business partners, and the like to work with, increasing your chances of success a bit further compared to if your academic and professional backpack were to be empty (this is of course mostly valid).

Moreover, I believe that the future of entrepreneurship to a large extent will become academic. Many of the highly demanded industries in which entrepreneurs are trying to build businesses are very complex – and hence require that you have a strong technical and professional background.

That is regardless of whether you are building a business within E-commerce, DeepTech, FinTech, Analytics, MarTech, or the like. The academic experience will not necessarily have to come from universities – we see more and more talented individuals who've built their knowledge through available content on the internet, online courses, coaches, mentors and the like.

Perfection is, in my opinion, the true enemy of execution. So even though several workstreams and areas of focus need to be done in a 'thought through manner', where deep thinking and execution must go hand in hand, operating based on the 80/20 pareto principle is still of value in the early stages of a startup to ensure that the ball keeps rolling. Everything does not necessarily have to be 100% spot-on in a startup before you can execute the next important workstream or project.

VASILIJ BRANDT
Co-Founder at Blazar Capital & Nordgreen

How to build a unicorn

Author SOFIA NUNES

SOFIA *is a coach and one of the co-founders of Mambu, a leading provider of cloud banking software. With a background in Psychology and a Master in Human-Computer Interaction, she used her passion for people and experience design to create an inspiring environment where Mambu's unique culture flourished from start-up to scaleup. In May 2022 she left her role at Mambu to focus on coaching purpose-driven leaders around the world.*

In the mythical world, unicorns are few and far between. But in the digital world, becoming a unicorn business (a private company valued at over $1B) is now a common aspiration for many startups. And for those with a great idea, and the right approach, anything is possible.

Born in the cloud, Mambu galloped its way from start-up to a $5.3 billion dollar business in just 10 years. Along the way, we've used our SaaS platform to magically transform old and stagnant legacy banking institutions and inspire smarter, leaner fintechs.

It's been an amazing journey, and I'd like to share seven key lessons we've learned from our experience.

1. Have an authentic vision

To keep your business focused, it pays to have a clear vision built on your own experiences. *In our case, Mambu began as a Master's project by three students - Eugene Danilkis, Frederik Pfisterer and myself. Working on an assignment on microfinance, we spent a month in Mozambique, talking to users, experts and people who were excluded from the traditional financial system.*

After many conversations, we realized it was banks' core platforms that were stifling innovation. So, our business vision evolved around "making it easy for financial institutions to make managing money better" – an important goal as, at that time, a third of the world was still financially excluded.

2. Be prepared to ask "why?"

"Why?" is a cornerstone for any business looking to innovate or adopt first principles thinking. Simon Sinek built a whole movement on 'why'. To break new ground, you must

always be ready to challenge the status quo - especially if the answer is some version of "because that's how it's always been done".

3. Seek those that share your passion

Starting a new business is scary. Surround yourself at the outset with an inner core of individuals who share your passion and a common goal to succeed. *If your friends come with a diverse set of skill sets – as mine did - even better. We were a Canadian technologist, a German operations and business specialist, and a Portuguese psychologist, but having a like-minded, driven team stopped us being overwhelmed or blinkered in our approach to tech, operations and culture.*

4. Get the right support at the right time

Once you have a business plan don't be tempted to try to get funding straight away. Venture capital is not easy to find for a half-baked proposition. Initially, you may need more than financial support - e.g., facilities, manpower, skills - to get your business off the ground.

When we founded Mambu, our most pressing need was software engineers. Luckily, we found backers willing to give us access to the tech-support we needed to create a viable solution. It really was a case of "If you build it, they will come" and just two years later, Mambu had 100 customers in 26 countries!

5. Be open and flexible

Few business journeys are totally linear, so be prepared to make mistakes, iterate, and evolve along the way. Avoid single vision and be prepared to pivot fast if new opportunities come along. *Mambu began by servicing microfinance institutions and fintech startups but is now a leader in cloud banking with a customer list that includes top tier banks and telcos.*

6. Know your strengths

It's normal for founding teams to multi-task, but as your business grows be prepared to let go. Relinquishing roles you love is hard but it's important to play to your own strengths – whether that's operational, financial or people. For me that meant nurturing people. My focus was on building a great culture that helped us retain and attract the extraordinary talent that powers Mambu's success.

7. Culture is everything

Finally, culture, the most important principle, and the lifeblood of your business. Culture is a living breathing organism; one you must constantly feed, with the right framework and processes, if you want it to thrive. *For 'Mambuvians', that means a 4-day working week for three months every year, continuous workplace feedback and measurement, and high-profile initiatives to recognise individual contribution.*

I hope this article inspires would-be unicorns as they grow. I wish you luck and remember, you don't have to wait for a billion-dollar valuation to appreciate all that you've already achieved.

Why do entrepreneurs need near-death experiences to get started?

Author GARETH I. JONES

GARETH I. JONES *is a founder at TownSq, a B Corp focused on building community-led coworking spaces across the UK. He has held a number of roles across the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the UK, from advising Prime Minister Theresa May on the Small Business, Scales Ups and Entrepreneurs Council, is an UnLtd Future Pioneer, B Corp Ambassador, Platform Places advisor, Insider Rising Star, and member of the IWA Future 30.*

Since I started working with entrepreneurs a decade ago, one thing has always struck me: how many of them have waited for near-death experiences to trigger them to take action.

I don't mean necessarily that they were waiting for this event to happen, but that when it happened it prompted them to do that thing they always wanted to do, but never got around to.

What is a near-death experience?

When I talk about near-death experiences, I'm referring to one of the following:

- Death of a career
- Death of a relationship
- Death of a lifestyle
- Death of a close friend/family member

I learnt recently that there's another name for these near-death experiences: lifeshocks. But they're a little different. The thing I find really interesting about near-death experiences is that the trigger is the "life's too short" moment that gets someone to do something they've always wanted to do, but that wasn't realistic or it was never the right time. When the near-death experience happens, everything goes into a new perspective and challenges that misconception.

When we hold a new Startup Club, and we go around the room for intros, most of the group have had one of the near-death experiences that led to this moment.

I feel like maybe I need to explain some of the near-death experiences in a bit more detail:

Death of a career might seem straightforward, losing your job, or being made redundant are the "done to you" scenar-

ios, but also realising that your career has no future, or certainly no future for you. This is incredibly challenging to the ego, as we all hold so much of our personal identity in our occupation, salary band, seniority, and career capital.

There is a high likelihood that this will increase as the climate emergency starts to put the squeeze on the necessity of certain jobs, and as automation eats away at algorithmic jobs - in the same way that digitisation has shaken things up in this millennium.

Death of a relationship is typically divorce or separation. This has another factor at play, whether the individual is the instigator of the break-up or it is being done to them, and how they react to that situation. This could involve the need to revert to supporting themselves alone, or having to provide for dependents independently.

Death of a lifestyle is less obvious - this normally is something like having kids, or additional care responsibilities that seismically change your lifestyle. Having kids creates an oxytocin spike that changes you forever, and one outcome of this appears to be the need to fend for yourself, or simply the need to work on a more flexible basis - on your terms - to balance work and care.

Death of a close friend/family member is obviously a deeply traumatic and challenging time. What happens here is the deep sense of life being too short, and being honest to ourselves, but this is sometimes enabled by other factors such as inheritance, or relieved from additional care requirements.

In the wonderful Happiness Advantage, Shawn Achor talks about *Falling Up* - the response to a crisis that could be perceived as being a negative falling down but taken as a new opportunity.

The research of Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun into post-traumatic *growth* was ground-breaking not because of its novelty, "what doesn't kill us makes us stronger", but a perspective when faced with stressful situations. The third way, as Shawn Achor describes it is not things staying the same, or things getting worse, but that things could get better from the crisis or adversity, something that we often don't believe when in the eye of the storm.
Not everything has to be objectively 'better' or 'worse', sometimes the 'different' can create a freedom from the way we've always done things.

Of course, since the start of 2020 we have all lived in a near-death experience, and I think this is why we have seen record breaking numbers of newly started businesses. There has likely been an element of necessity entrepreneurship driven by people needing to find new roles, but many others will have had things shift into focus.

My take on why it requires a near-death experience to make that change in life is because often it feels like you need to ditch everything to start something new. This is fundamentally not true, but is the way that entrepreneurship and the world of start-ups is portrayed. You need to go all in, you need to risk everything if you're serious.

I write a lot more about small experiments on www.50things.co.uk but unless we challenge this perception, I worry that more and more people will lose time in occupations that don't occupy their heart, just because they think it's the only option.

Burn your business plan before it burns you

Author ALEXANDER OSTERWALDER

***DR. ALEXANDER OSTERWALDER** is a leading author, entrepreneur, and in-demand speaker whose work has changed the way established companies do business and how new ventures get started. Together with Yves Pigneur, Osterwalder invented the Business Model Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas, and Business Portfolio Map and is ranked No. 4 of the top 50 management thinkers worldwide. His books include the international bestseller Business Model Generation, Value Proposition Design, Testing Business Ideas, The Invincible Company, and High-Impact Tools for Teams.*

The business plan is a great execution tool. Yet, requiring a business plan during the early stages of idea development might maximize the risk of failure. Large organizations in particular still require business plans. That is an error. In this post we outline three reasons why companies should drop business plans in favor of a more rapid and iterative approach.

While business plans are less and less common in the startup world, they persist in large corporations. In large companies it's not uncommon that a team of several people spends a couple of weeks developing a business plan. They will first spend time on market research. Then they will craft a detailed plan with an impressive financial spreadsheet looking 3-5 years ahead. Finally, all of this will be summarized in a beautiful slide deck to convince top leadership or investors of the brilliance of the idea.

Great business plans can look so good and have such convincing arguments that it becomes hard to doubt them. Unfortunately, this false illusion of security may also maximize the risk of failure (or waste time and money at the very least). No company wants that. Let's look at three reasons why requiring business plans is a bad idea.

1) Getting too granular too early = You risk wasting time

One of the dangers of writing a business plan is to spend too much time refining an idea before it is really proven. Unfortunately, "no business plan (however smart it looks) survives first contact with customers", as Steve Blank the initiator of the Lean Startup movement likes to say.

Rather than refining an idea at the early stages, you should

test it immediately and evolve it based on market feedback. Otherwise, you risk wasting time working on refining an idea that nobody cares about. The problem is that you'll only realize that much, much later.

TIP: Keep your early ideas very rough (e.g., on one page with the Business Model and/or Value Proposition Canvas) and immediately test them. Gradually refine your ideas with increasing evidence.

2) Selling an idea & plan to leadership or investors = You risk getting locked-in

Where it starts getting dangerous is when a team *sells* their top leadership or investors a polished and refined business plan - before rigorously testing the underlying business model and value proposition(s) in the market.

When leadership or investors *buy* and finance a plan, they expect that success is a mere execution problem. They expect that beautiful and detailed spreadsheet in the business plan to materialize exactly how you projected it. In other words, you just got locked into a plan that was entirely made up. You are forced to execute an idea that is yet to be proven. If you want to change direction later on, it will be difficult to convince leadership because you sold them something else.

TIP: Don't sell leadership a polished and refined business plan. Sell them an opportunity and a rigorous process that will turn your idea into an executable business model by producing market evidence. Show them how this approach will minimize the risk of failure, as opposed to a business plan which maximizes the risk of getting locked into one direction that is yet to be proven.

3) Hiring based on an idea & plan = You risk premature scaling

The biggest risk of business plans is that they may lead to premature scaling. This happens when you hire people and spend money on key resources based on a plan rather than market evidence. In other words, you get into "execution mode" before you fully finished the "search" for the right business model and value proposition(s). We wrote about this in a recent post on how Great Execution of Bad Ideas Kills Businesses.

This type of premature scaling of great looking business plans can lead to enormous financial losses. My "favorite" examples are Flo TV by Qualcomm ($1+ billion loss) or Better Place, a startup that aimed at getting people to use electric vehicles ($850 million loss).

TIP: Don't invest in execution until you have strong evidence that your idea will work. Otherwise, you risk premature scaling and running out of money.

Burn your Business Plan before it burns you

At Strategyzer, we are no enemies of business plans if they are used purely for execution purposes. Unfortunately, we've seen too much damage from business plans used during the early stages of idea development - particularly at large organizations.

There is no place for a business plan when you are still searching for the right business model and value proposition for your idea. It's simply the wrong tool for the task and it might even lead to maximizing your risk of failure. Business plans should be replaced by a more dynamic approach until you have sufficient evidence that your idea will work. Only then should you consider crafting a business plan. Until then, we suggest you burn your business plan before it burns you.

Business plans should be replaced by a more dynamic approach until you have sufficient evidence that your idea will work. Only then should you consider crafting a business plan. Until then, we suggest you burn your business plan before it burns you.

ALEXANDER OSTERWALDER
Leading Author, Entrepreneur
& In-demand Speaker

The Sell→ Service→ Scale Methodology – How to minimize risks and maximize profit when starting a business

Author OVI NEGREAN

OVI NEGREAN *is the co-founder & CEO of SocialBee (an all-in-one social media management tool for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and freelancers).*

Building a business shouldn't be a guessing game. You have to know without any doubt that your target audience is willing to pay for your products and services even before you build them (at least in their entirety).

Getting a new business idea is exciting and can be blinding for most entrepreneurs. They are so overwhelmingly passionate about their start-up that they fail (or willingly refuse) to consider possible negative outcomes that may quickly put an end to their venture.

Remember that even the most revolutionary concepts fail. That doesn't necessarily signify they are not good; it can just mean that people are not ready for them yet. Either way, it ends up the same way. Failure. Crushed ambitions. New lesson learned.

That is how it went for me until I applied the business structure that single-handedly helped me change the narrative and turn my previous failures into a success story: SocialBee.

Disclaimer: This is not a secret recipe. It's a real strategy that doesn't skip the hard work. In fact, it thrives on it, takes the guessing out of your business plan, and it leaves room for improvement.

The strategy I am going to talk about today has three simple steps:

1) Sell
2) Service
3) Scale

Let's start from the top!

Step 1: Sell it first, build it later

Why do most businesses fail? The answer is that they skip to the end.

Trust me I know. My first business venture, nugget, was an app that provided bite-sized quotes from business and personal development books. The audience loved the idea, but as it turns out, you can like an app and not be willing to pay for it. I learned this lesson the hard way after gambling on the idea that my product will be a hit.

So, if your plan is to start by building a product and then revealing it to the world, you might want to learn from my mistakes: sell it first, build it later.

So, what does this approach solve? First of all, you avoid wasting months or even years designing a product that your audience is not willing to pay for.

Secondly, you gain customer feedback, so by the time you start working on a final version, you will know exactly how to make it better and more appealing to your customers.

Lastly, by selling your product first, you will generate the resources you need to improve your products and services.

So, how did this initial stage look for SocialBee?

We built a simple landing page, sorted out our value proposition, and started getting in touch with prospects. We found customers by joining relevant communities and contacting new start-ups that needed a social media management tool to promote their business online.

After many cold email outreach campaigns and customer calls, we had what we needed: validation. If people were willing to pay for a concept, then we had a winning business idea on our hands.

Step 2: Service your customers

Once you sell your idea, it's time to deliver.

All you need is a minimum viable product (MVP) that sits in the sweet spot (a simple prototype for you to design but that should bring enough value to your customers).

Don't be afraid to outsource!

Use other third-party tools, virtual assistants, or even competitors to get the job done and gain the speed you need to deliver a product or service. During this stage, you have to be creative and be willing to put in the work that you will automate later on.

For instance, our product was a result of three elements: Buffer, Zapier, and a spreadsheet full of formulas. It was clanky, error-prone, and it required quite a lot of manual work, but people were happy to pay for our MVP because it was a viable solution to a significant customer problem (maintaining a consistent social media presence without wasting time creating and sharing content manually).

At this stage, you might not have the satisfaction of seeing your concept come to life, but it's a great way to learn how to make it, improve it, and let's face it it's good for the plot. Just imagine this part of your business life like a sped-up montage where you are putting in the effort and working your way to a happy ending.

Step 3: Scale your business

Instead of building everything at once, start small and build your way up. The vision always has to be there. The rest can wait.

Basically, you have to build your business like a franchise, with plenty of growth opportunities and procedures that

turn your company into a self-sustaining ecosystem.

In the beginning, we didn't have the resources to develop our social media tool fast enough to generate the revenue we needed, so we had to find a different way to scale — selling concierge services.

Things were clear, we couldn't make money with $10 subscriptions, but by adding social media specialist services on top we could charge more while offering more value.

But, scaling your business doesn't just refer to the process of building a more advanced product or service. It means expanding your team, improving your marketing efforts, and investing in tools that will allow you to grow faster and enhance your business strategy with ease.

Many entrepreneurs fail to see the power of automating processes and standardizing practices. What seems like a small task will actually end up taking hours/days/weeks out of your time when you look at it from a cumulative point of view.
Not to mention that training team members and passing on responsibilities will be more difficult and time-consuming without standard operating procedures (SOPs) in place.

With SocialBee, we started creating SOPs even when our team consisted of two people, me and my co-founder, Vlad. When the time came to hire, we were able to train our team fast and make our jobs easier by getting help from people that didn't rely on us to know how to do their jobs.

We scaled repetitive tasks using different tools, improved our social media management tool as we went, and became faster, better, and capable of servicing our growing customer base with ease.

Final Thoughts

The reason why I decided to share the Sell → Service → Scale strategy is that it leaves little room for error when starting a business. It ensures you offer a painkiller, not a vitamin. After all, you want to be a necessity, not a nice-to-have asset. This business perspective will allow you to build a business that stands the test of time and has the potential to become a powerhouse.

The best part about this strategy? You don't need substantial financial resources to get it started. Plus, it opens the way to an exciting business journey.

I'm curious to see how you can implement these ideas to create an impactful product for communities around the world. Good luck & enjoy the ride!

Remember that even the most revolutionary concepts fail. That doesn't necessarily signify they are not good; it can just mean that people are not ready for them yet. Either way, it ends up the same way. Failure. Crushed ambitions. New lesson learned.

OVI NEGREAN
Co-founder & CEO at SocialBee

Infinite knowledge and inspiration

Author MAYBRITT TOFT BISP

MAYBRITT TOFT BISP *(Denmark) is the co-founder of the platform Youandx, which connects validated experts, speakers, course providers, and agencies with customers in a transparent, clear, and inspiring way. Youandx was created based on Maybritt's many years of experience with the traditional speakers-industry approach and a burning desire to precisely transform the exclusionary, unapproachable, and opaque business model that this traditional approach offered the market.*

One evening, in 2016, I was meeting a number of good friends and new relations for dinner. My agency, Plan4U, at the time was a well-oiled business. Customers were loyal and the speakers, too. I had time and energy for most things, including my great enthusiasm for very competitive road cycling.

I lived with my lovely boyfriend, and we had lots of freedom to travel and cycle together. Together, we had four shared children from previous marriages. Everything was in perfect order.

During dinner, I was challenged by the gentleman to my right about the industry I was part of. The questions from him all circled around the conformity, stuffiness, and lack of opacity of the industry conventions at the time.
I could have shrugged it off and left it at that. But I did not. Because I couldn't! I went home all fired up. During the night, I drew up the blueprint for a completely new business plan and a completely new idea of our reason to be. And I also got a possible business partner in the form of the gentleman who had challenged me significantly!

This was the start of Youandx. A business that is currently in version 3.0 – and on its way to version 4.0 in less than five and a half years after that landmark dinner.

Along the way, Youandx, myself, and the team have pivoted the business three times. We have maintained and expanded our circle of investors. We have created a whole new generation of experts and speakers who, precisely because of our transparency and clarity, have been able to see themselves as providers of often unique knowledge. We have created twelve workplaces with a high degree of flexibility for our employees, where both young and mature have been able to see themselves as part of the journey. And not least, we have proven that the idea of a customer-friendly rethinking of market conventions offered decisive value for both suppliers – speakers, experts, and inspirators – and customers.

	Convention	Consequence
Typical industry conventions in the speaker's industry	The customer pays the full fee to the agency.	The customer tries to book a speaker getting around and excluding the agency.
	The customer uses a Google search to book a speaker.	The customer gets an unfiltered search result and has to spend a lot of time and resources to find the right match.
	The customer uses a recommendation from his or her network to make the booking.	The customer gets an unvalidated and unvarnished choice and perhaps buys the "cat in the sack".
	The customer pays the fee indicated by the agency without any negotiation.	The customer buys a speaker who is too expensive.
	The customer trusts the agency's recommendations and submits an inquiry form.	The customer spends a lot of time and resources without knowing whether the speaker actually is available or whether they are the right match for the job.
	The customer can only book speakers known from the media.	The customer does not achieve the right match and often buys an overly expensive match.

Pivots at Youandx

Version	Most significant changes
Youandx 1.0	MVP (Minimum Viable Product) built in WordPress.
Youandx 2.0	Redesign, front in React (dynamic), backend in WordPress – digitization of all booking processes.
Youandx 3.0	Pivoting from transaction-based to subscription-based business. A completely new platform built from the ground up in a scalable version.
Youandx 4.0	Login for Enterprise customers and course suppliers as well as course providers. Platform for lifelong learning including tools for mapping of the employee skills, talent, people and performance management.

My nine lessons for other entrepreneurs, start-ups, and leaders in general

What are the most important learnings from my journey with Youandx? Here, you will find the nine lessons that have proven to be the most valuable to me.

1. It's never too late! Use your experience

On that famous night in 2016, I was 42 years old and set in my life. So, I'm by no means a classic start-up/entrepreneur. But precisely that experience from my industry over more than 20 years enabled me to understand the extent of the confrontation with inappropriate market conventions, which my now co-founder pointed out.

2. It's always about the customers and the problems they're trying to solve. Never about the competitors.

If we had looked at the competitors, we would have looked into an echo chamber of our own existing solution; Plan4U. At best, we could have optimized our own solutions by a few percent. At what cost? At what value? We would have ended up like the old story from Henry Ford: "If we had looked at the competitors, we would have ended up with a faster horse!" We would not have arrived at the fundamental changes that Youandx has taken with the business model and approach to speakers and customers in the industry.

By making the customers/speakers and the problems, they are trying to solve the starting point for our analysis and strategy, we were able to identify a large number of needs that the target groups only partially or even poorly got solved.

This analysis formed the basis and continues to form the basis for our innovations and improvements.

3. Separate idea from solutions

Your idea must be based on something big. It must be based on the fact that there is something that you want to achieve with your business. Not just money. Money is the only means to create your idea. The idea is at its strongest when it wants to change something fundamentally wrong or something inappropriate in a market.

At Youandx, we go to work each day with the idea that we want to offer unlimited knowledge and inspiration. As we put it in our brand manifesto: "Youandx will fight for as many people as possible to be enriched by knowledge and inspiration. As simple, as easy, as accessible, convenient, and inspiring as possible...".

To realize this idea, we're constantly developing new solutions. We test them, we seek feedback, and we adapt. We're in constant motion when it comes to solutions because solutions come and go. The idea, on the other hand, is our guiding star and, therefore, our safe haven. It's the one that we never deviate from.

4. Trust – always

Trust is a main accelerator for identifying and developing the best ideas, businesses, and relationships. I have learned that the optimal way is to show trust, to instill trust, and to expect trust in all contexts. Period.

It's not that I'm naive and I know this trust is put to the test from time to time. But the opposite – living in distrust – drains you like a virus. I would rather accept that a failure of trust happens from time to time. We're only human after all.

5. Reach out

Every time you don't take the chance, every time you don't reach out to others who will be able to help are all the times

you miss the opportunity for enrichment. I'm not shy about reaching out to former prime ministers, top CEOs, etc. I have something on my mind, and I want their advice. It's amazing how much we want to help each other and share with each other! So don't be afraid to reach out. Even reach upwards. The worst-case scenario is that you get a no.

6. Get control of your brand - fast

As a start-up or entrepreneur, you have your head in your idea. 24/7! Your head is constantly filled with descriptions, new ideas, lack of approvals of bank receipts, etc. In this jungle, you can easily lose track of what's essential – your brand. Or rather, as we see our brand: "the promotional framework around our products that must provide competitiveness and ensure the company's growth".

When we were in the process of defining Youandx 3.0, we set aside time and brought in skilled experts to get our brand book under control. This has subsequently made it much easier to explain to others and ourselves about the core of our business. And it has made it far more efficient to run our go-to-market activities and create internal alignment.

7. Create a support crew – or several.

When I realized that I had to step away from the path that I was living at the age of 42, the first people I sought support from were my children and boyfriend. Because it was important that they knew (1) what I wanted, (2) why I wanted it, and (3) what consequences the changes could bring.

To this day, they are my #1 supporters. They are the ones I turn to when I am in doubt, need support, and need to share joys and sorrows. Without them, I couldn't have made Youandx work.

8. Be the "dumbest" at meetings

It might sound a little crazy. But if you want to become wiser and be able to make decisions on the most informed basis, it's not your own skills and perspectives that you should listen to, it's someone else's. Make sure that the people you invite into meetings get to optimize their output to you and to the other participants. I make a point in meetings with my team based on the motto that I'm the person around the table who knows the least about the topics we're discussing. It creates space and it allows the team members to be the best version of themselves. And together, we learn much more that we can use together more quickly for the common good.

9. Be humble

Your idea has potential. But it must be looked after and cared for. It must meet resistance. It must feel tailwind. If you approach the world around you, radiating that you are in complete control, have the answers to all of the questions, and that everything you have done and will do is perfect, you exclude others. And you are also lying to yourself.

Instead, be humble. Reach out, seek a response, engage, and learn. Only a fool does not fear their own arrogance. A professional, humble approach makes you and your company interesting for others to get involved in and invest in. To develop – together with you.

Carpe Diem/Maybritt

You never know if it's a dream, unless you do it

Author PETER ZIGLER

PETER ZIGLER *is the co-founder of Autobutler, a tech company that radically turned the automotive industry upside down and was acquired by PSA in 2017. Following the Autobutler adventure he is now the founder of Boon. At Boon, they are facilitating the individual becoming an enterprise by enabling them with tools to monetise their content and eventually be themselves for a living.*

1. You created a whole new marketplace for motorists and workshops and became the largest online marketplace for car repairs. What was that journey like?
In sum: great!

But also, tough, fun, demanding, fulfilling, emotionally challenging, etc. As any other start-up adventure, it was a true rollercoaster. 3 years grinding with limited traction, no founder salary etc.

Gradually, as the market matured, we gained traction and small steps led to solid national traction, which eventually led to international expansion.

2. I read that you started the company with your high-school friend, and that you had a massive interest after the launch, but also a lot of problems. Why was that?
We didn't have any major issues and/or problems. We started out as friends and are still the best of friends today. On the contrary, having a close partner in crime sharing ups and downs was a vital ingredient in establishing and keeping the stamina needed to ride the waves.

3. What advice would you give to others who want to move from dreaming to doing?
That you never know if it's a dream, unless you do it!
Ask yourself this: Have you ever met anyone who started up, who regretted it? Ever?

It doesn't exist. It's the same if you asked anyone ever completing a marathon. By human nature, 99% of the times, you can only regret what you don't do.

4. After you sold the marketplace Autobutler, you could probably have lived the rest of your life just with that money. How come you're not an entrepreneur again

with the startup Boon. You couldn't resist another hard journey, or?
No!

Because, to me, it's the best possible job. You decide what your future holds. You decide who to spend your life with. You are accountable.

5. What has been your biggest challenge so far with Boon?
Timing!
Timing accounts for +50% of start-up success.

And timing over the last 2-3 years has been unprecedentedly difficult, navigating in a market in constant motion.

6. Do you have any role models within entrepreneurship?
None, specific. But I believe that aspiration is the primary driving force for most of us. My aspiration comes predominantly from closer relations.

7. What motivated you, when you started your first company, and has that changed over the years?
The ambition to prove it was possible. To my peers and myself. Yes, slightly, as I've proved it already.

8. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
The ability to make a difference.
You don't have to save the world. Or blame yourself for not doing so entirely.

Impact also comes in smaller doses. By starting up companies you impact a lot of people directly and indirectly, and that's more than what most do.

Do you have the right motivations?

Author TEGAN SPINNER

TEGAN SPINNER *is an entrepreneur at heart who moved from Silicon Valley to Copenhagen in pursuit of happiness. His most valuable skill set is gathering people more intelligent than himself and motivating them towards a shared vision. He uses this to build projects fighting some of the world's most pressing issues, such as climate change. He is the CEO and Founder of Worthmore, a company created to redefine how we buy, recycle, and use our smartphones.*

Where to begin? Deciding this is often the most challenging part of any new venture, including the writing of this article, yet taking the time to lay a solid foundation is undoubtedly one of the keys to success.

One could begin by brainstorming, sketching, creating a business plan, or talking to a friend about an idea. However, the most critical step is defining your personal mission. This is easier said than done. Knowing what you want is often difficult to break down into words, and why you want it is an even more challenging question.

So many first-time founders want to launch their projects for the wrong reasons. After all, money, fame, independence, and freedom are the glorified dream of entrepreneurship. If you seek this, you are doomed to failure from the start. Because 90% of the time, you will fail at achieving any of these things, successful or not.

So, what are the right motivations? By now, I am sure you have heard the advice - love what you do. Steve Jobs, the CEO and founder of Apple says it best. "Your work will fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe - is great work - and the only way to do great work is to love what you do."

I love this quote and see it as his attempt to warn aspiring entrepreneurs they better love what they are doing because attempting to create a business will be one of the hardest things they do. Considering this, I believe the first step to becoming the founder of something successful is to break down why you love what you do and ask yourself if you genuinely love your motivations.

See, love is such a powerful emotion that can transcend almost all others... fear, doubt, excitement, anger, and the

entire cocktail you are bound to experience on the journey ahead. It will play an essential role in reminding yourself why you do what you do and providing the motivation you will need when it seems like everything is f****d. Remember, the only thing that can cause your startup to fail is your willingness to give up.

In your effort to become a "successful" founder, you will likely become a broke, introverted, and stressed-out workaholic. The simple fact is that ordinary people would be better off applying an ambitious work ethic to moving up the ladder at a steady, well-paid job. Living comfortably and not stressing about the bills, employee relations, taxes, raising money, accounting concerns, and all the other areas where a founder independently must learn to become an expert.

So, if you are beginning your entrepreneurship journey, maybe you have filled out a business model canvas or created a pitch deck, I ask you to revisit it from this angle.

Ask yourself if you love this idea and the thought of being known for bringing it to life. Is it your passion? I can promise you it is worth the effort, and if you complete this exercise honestly, you will have the answer to your motivation when you need it the most.

A few questions that can help kickstart your reflection process:

- Why do I want to be a founder?
- What do I personally want my company to achieve? Why?
- Who am I doing this for, and why do they matter to me?
- Who/what will I hurt if this idea becomes a Unicorn? Am I ok with this?
- Why am I the right person to pursue this idea?
- What would make me give up or quit on this idea? Why?

Personally, going through this exercise led me to focus on building a company that leaves the world a better place after I am gone and helped me define my personal legacy.

The knowledge that I am working on something bigger than myself, something that I love and want to be known for, wakes me up in the morning. It is the best advice I could give a first-time founder looking to get into the game.

Photo: Jonathan Søe

Work hard for a while, but set up an organization fast

Author JAKOB NEUA NØRGAARD

JAKOB *is a high school dropout who has been working with different tech start-ups since 2000. Jakob dedicates all his professional success to his wife without whom "he couldn't have created anything". He considers the publicly listed digital signature platform Penneo.com as his greatest professional achievement.*
At the moment, Jakob is involved in a proptech start-up called Estaldo with the ambition to change the world of selling and buying properties.

1. All over the world, there are popular TV shows about entrepreneurship at the moment. The most viewed ones are Shark Tank and Dragon's Den, and you've taken part in the last one on Danish television. Would you recommend doing the same to other entrepreneurs?
If you have a business with big potential using mass marketing, I would definitely go for it. It's a platform for ordinary people getting the vibe around the start-up scene and I believe it can make a business from day to day if you do it right.

2. What are the benefits and potential pitfalls in taking part in a startup-TV-show like that?
I am normally a very private person but taking part in a TV show like that means we have to use ourselves in our marketing that's a pitfall. For the business, you risk getting a bad valuation, so I would not recommend going in there unless you have a strong product, or if you are willing to sell cheap. We got the second largest investment in all seasons in Denmark, which we were happy with, but it was still more expensive for us than if we got the money from the private market without show business.

The benefit is to be honest a lot of publicity for the company, and if done right, you can go from unknown to household brand overnight.

3. You dropped out of the educational system in high school. How come, and have you ever regretted this decision?
I strongly believe you can educate yourselves within the fields you want to be smart in. I have always been curious and I have no recollection of my lack of education having

a negative impact on anything. On the contrary, I actually believe my lack of thinking inside boxes has had a great impact.

4. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact is when you see, hear, meet, or experience something so strongly that you want to tell it to people around you. Making an impact is about making a difference.

5. You've founded a company named Estaldo.com, which is already well known in Denmark, but not globally. However, I know that your ambitions are global. What impact does Estaldo.com have on its market, and why did you decide to launch it?
First off, the realtor market is pretty old school, but also really hard to understand for the average homeowner. That means people are getting ripped off, and I believe that alone is a reason to launch a competitive product. We aim to make selling and buying a home a lot more transparent and cheaper, and we're fighting on the side of the customers.

I believe Estaldo will make a big impact on the market, and we will see us as frontrunners to a whole new way of thinking home ownership.

6. You've previously founded a hugely successful company named Penneo. Penneo takes care of business processes online, and it's developed into a unicorn today. Which important lessons did this journey teach you that you would like to share with the readers of IMPACT?
In short: It. Takes. Time! And advisors will screw you over, so be careful taking advice from people who can benefit from your business. But my biggest lesson is you must take photos, document the journey, and celebrate the small wins. In the future, you might look back at this exact time as the time of your life, so enjoy it.

7. Today you can't really talk about entrepreneurship without also addressing the work-life balance challenges. I know that you have also considered this a lot. What is your opinion about starting up companies and still being able to lead a life outside of the startup-bubble?
I have hit the wall with stress hard, from which I was bedridden for three months and was not able to do anything. I'm still trying to learn to let go.

My opinion on the work-life-balance is that you probably have to work hard in the start of your company, but you should aim to get more people on board as soon as possible.

You can't do everything, and you will grow faster if you get more hands. More work without more people equals more money for you equals less time with your family, which equals stress. More work with more people equals more time with your family equals a lot more money for you in the future. In short, I believe in working hard for a while, but you need to set up an organization fast.

8. You've grown companies from a few people to a lot. What's the difference between being in a startup with e.g., 5, 25, or 50 people?
Culture is the big difference. If there are five people, everybody knows everything about everything. Fifteen people and you will start hearing people complaining about problems you had no idea the company is facing. 25 people and it gets crazy, and if you did not build a strong team, everything will explode.

I actually believe a team needs to be reminded about being happy, as human nature tends to fall into the pit of bitching about angry clients. If that doesn't work, and if it becomes normal to bitch and moan, it will affect people's everyday mood. My advice is to tell people to be happy, that way their lives will improve significantly.

9. You've written on social media that 'master teaching' has benefitted you a lot. What is important, when it comes to learning from others, and why is master teaching especially beneficial in your point of view?
I believe that people can learn much more from trying things out. That's why I have never looked at a résumé from any employee I hired. If you believe you can do the task, I believe you can. Picture a doctor who only read books, without a master teaching. I wouldn't like to visit his clinic.

10. I've read that you love processes and optimizing them. What is it with you and process optimization?
If you do the same thing more than three times, it can probably be automated. Ever since I worked at Mc Donald's, I have been crazy about understanding processes and seeing how you can take Jane and John Doe from the street and get them up to speed in 30 minutes.

What I find interesting in today's tech world is that in the old days, you would try to automate hardworking labor with machines. And with today's technology, you can automate human tasks on a computer that we never thought was possible ten years ago.

11. Which impact would you like to have made before you leave this earth?
That my kids grow up as kind, loving, and caring people who want to pay stuff forward and make a great impact in the future.

Impact is when you see, hear, meet, or experience something so strongly that you want to tell it to people around you. Making an impact is about making a difference.

JAKOB NEUA NØRGAARD
Co-founder & CEO at Estaldo

Future companies need to be impact oriented

Author CHRISTIAN ARNSTEDT

CHRISTIAN ARNSTEDT *is the Founder and CEO of Blazar Capital, a company that builds international B2C businesses. Before that, he had a 6-year career at McKinsey. He is a very famous investor from the popular Danish entrepreneurial program "Lion's Den". Christian is also a keynote speaker, who talks about start-ups, ecommerce, investing, company building, and entrepreneurship.*

1. When you hear the word 'impact' what does that mean to you?
The word 'impact' has different meanings to me. I think it has two main meanings; one is about sustainability, and another is about achieving or creating something.

So, if I take sustainability as the first one, it's about doing something that makes a difference in the world, changing the way some things are done, and thereby, hopefully, having a positive impact on the world around us.

Second, I think of impact as achieving something or doing something. It could be that you are doing something with your start-up, that you are moving something or changing the way something is done, and having an impact on the world in other ways.

2. IMPACT is a huge buzzword at the moment. How much does it influence your decisions to invest or become part of a company, whether this company for instance focuses on UN's Global Goals or not?
It has a lot of influence. Actually, I believe that thinking about ESG and CSR is increasingly important for several reasons. First and most importantly it is that it's the right thing to do and we all need to do it, but secondly, I also actually firmly believe that it's the right business decision. If you want to build companies for the future these companies need to be impact oriented.

3. How do you evaluate an investment?
To make it short I will boil it down to the 3 most critical things that I look for.

Number one and most importantly the founding team, who are they, why are they doing this, who are they as people and do we believe that they have the potential to realise this journey that they have set out. Are these founders

someone we would find it fun and exciting to work with for years to come?

Secondly, when we are looking at the idea, do we believe that the idea has merit, is it an idea that works well and is complimentary with some skillsets that we have and is it something that we feel we have an understanding of, so one can assess the idea and contribute throughout our ownership period.

And thirdly, we are looking at what has the traction been so far of the business since inception, onto where it is today. I would say these are the three main criteria, and they are prioritised in the sequence that I mentioned.

4. What would you advise entrepreneurs, when they first approach you? Do they need to have turnover before they start looking for investors?
I think that depends on what business you have and which investor you are reaching out to. You have different investors investing at different stages in the company's lifetime. Some investors prefer to go in earlier, and some investors invest later.

We are typically fairly early if we go into something and invite someone to be a part of our group. So, we are typically looking at companies that are at the seed stage, that do have revenue, but are not yet a big business. They are typically a small business with revenue.

But you can raise money in all stages. However, I typically tell people, if they have the possibility to get their product into the market and show revenue before raising the capital, that typically makes it easier. Because then you have taken some uncertainty out for potential investor by showing that you do have a functional product that somebody is willing to pay for.

5. What if you were to look at and analyse yourselves; when you go into a new business venture, how much rational evaluation is there, meaning due diligence and numbers and how much is irrational; gut-feeling, liking the individual?
I think we try to say that both things need to be there. We need to have the right gut feeling around the table and say okay we believe this is a founder team that is great and that we would like to work side by side with for the coming years, and if we can tick mark that and the numbers are also there, and we believe in the idea then we have a match.

6. This book is fully about inspiring people, inspiring them to go from impact to innovation and action. You've mentioned that some huge sports-stars have influenced you very much. Can you tell the readers more about this?
I think that one thing that impresses me about people in sport is their dedication to day by day working, to refine their skillset and become better at what they do. With a high degree of effort and discipline, and I think that's actually transferable in many ways into the workspace, that if you do your best on a continuous basis for a long period of time, then you will have a very good probability of success.

And even on the days when you feel less motivated and less energised, it's then keeping the consistency and doing what is needed anyways, on both the easy days and not so easy days, in order to keep yourself on improving trajectory, and working towards whatever goal you are trying to achieve. And there I think people in sports just have an edge because they have the capability and mindset to keep working in the same way and dedication every day. I think that's a good way of thinking about what it takes to build a company.

7. You're married, have just become a father, and have historically been working 70-80 hours per week. Is this possible in the long run, or how do you view this 'dilemma' between being super passionate about your work and then also having other priorities in life?
I am a very new father, so I will say so far, I have managed to carve out time for my son and wife, which is an important priority for me. It's been six weeks since I became a father and for those six weeks, I went from working most of the time to finding the time needed to be the parent that I want to be.

Finding the time for myself also will be the next step that I haven't accomplished yet. My own needs will have to be paused for now as my focus now is to fulfil my son's.

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But you can raise money in all stages. However, I typically tell people, if they have the possibility to get their product into the market and show revenue before raising the capital, that typically makes it easier.

CHRISTIAN ARNSTEDT
Founder & CEO at Blazer Capital and
an investor in the Danish TV programme "Lion’s Den"

Shades and guts

Author ANDERS FRANKEL

ANDERS FRANKEL *is an entrepreneur, investor and board member focusing on companies with solutions within sustainability. His background includes b2b SaaS companies and a sales/marketing specialization.*

Short version: Even if you are successful – don't become blind, stay paranoid. Dare to evolve what works.

A significant learning for me comes from building a successful, bootstrapped, fast-growing SaaS company that eventually slowed down.

We started out not unlike many other start-ups by saying "YES!" to way too many customer requests, making custom product development a part of who we were.

From following SaaS companies that are either bootstrapped or have limited funding, this is not an uncommon starting point. It provides funding when customers pay to get the features they envisioned, it brings learnings about their needs and credibility in the market based on customers being served. This can be a great start if the "custom" development has a good fit into the product roadmap, the customers pay well for this development and as long as the company realizes that this is not the long-term way of working (given that the target is to build a SaaS company).

The option is of course to have more patience, secure a longer runway and build the product until its ready and then launch. While this can absolutely make sense in some cases, there are absolutely things to be aware of. First of all is ensuring that what is being developed is aligned with customer needs and that it's possible to package, sell and deliver in an efficient way. Keeping customers close in the development and ensuring a market fit might sound obvious. However, product-focused founders are sometimes tempted to continue with product refinements instead of going to market. A sense of urgency is key here.

We were decent in getting away from custom projects after a while and got better at owning our roadmap, focus-

ing our resources on projects that were beneficial to most customers. Finally, our product team could work in more predictable way, making it easier to bring new features to market.

While we eventually got this right, we failed to see a shift in the market. As a very sales-focused company, we had a strong focus on growing ARR month by month wherever possible. The key phrase here is month by month. We grew well, every deal counted and was properly celebrated.

Initially, we had a super competitive mindset vs other suppliers and worked hard to win every deal. Our roadmap was our own. Based on customer needs, internal efficiency and innovation. This led to fantastic growth, profitability, and a market-leading position.

What we missed was how the market got chopped up into segments. What was for a long time one market eventually became many. We wanted to sell to everyone who could use our product and was prepared to pay. What was a great, fast-growing market turned out to also be a fast-changing market. When a focused competitor started selling a product deeply integrated with a specific CRM provider, we started losing out in that segment. When someone else focused on a specific industry and created additional value for them, we lost there as well.

The worst part?

In most customer cases we were actually really good and could serve the customer's needs better than the competitor. But that was not the key. The key was to really, really understand the needs of the customers, to be able to understand the challenges from their side of the table - to have the system or industry experience. Sales is about trust. Being able to truly understand all needs of a customer builds trust.

What I wish I would have done: Select two to three integrations or industries and set up laser focused teams for each segment. These would have been our targets for continued high growth. At the same time, we should have had another team taking care of customers that were not in any of the focused areas (since there was still a lot of money here).

I would have made sure that the people in each team had the relevant industry experience and the freedom to make decisions that enabled them to serve these customers best. A key here is scale. You can't build a focused team with one or two persons – especially if you have some scale to the general business. Four to five employees focusing on a specific segment (excluding development resources) is probably a minimum to create a team that can inspire each other and avoid being too dependent on individuals (yes, did that, had initial great traction, but lost the key employees).

Making the change and focusing on segments in the market would have been painful and would probably cost us 12 to 18 months of growth – but it would have put us in a better position for long term growth.

So, that's why you sometimes need to avoid getting blinded by your own success and the guts to make decisions that will slow you down a while but that puts you on the right long-term trajectory.

And… it's always about value for the customer.

Are you tactical, strategic, or epic in your start-up marketing?

Author ROBIN DANIELS

ROBIN DANIELS *is a transformational leader with over two decades of experience in leading companies, including Salesforce, Box, WeWork, LinkedIn, Matterport, and LMS365. His experience includes taking two companies public, delivering hyper growth, while inspiring teams to do the best work of their lives.*

I moved from Denmark to San Francisco on February 1st, 2000, right before the big dot-com crash happened. I was so eager to go work in Silicon Valley that it didn't scare me that I didn't have a job, a place to stay, or any money. I just knew that I was a nerd and that I wanted to be with all the other nerds of the world.

I even thought that at some point I'd start my own company and create something new that would change the world forever.

I was 21 at the time.

It's been a wild ride since then, full of incredible experiences and growth. During this ride I was lucky enough to work at some incredible companies, including **Salesforce**, ***Box***, **LinkedIn**, and now **WeWork**. And along the way I've picked up some key marketing lessons that you should keep in mind as you grow your own company.

Are you tactical, strategic, or epic?

As you think about going to market with your product and how to tell the story of who you are and why you're the best, always think about what operational level you're working on, and be honest with yourself. Every company needs a good amount of tactical execution to grow, however, no company in the history of the world becomes best in class by only focusing on tactical marketing. Yes, that blog post is important, so is that website update, and that competitive deck for your sales team. But they are all tactical things to keep the business running.

You should only be spending about 20% of your time on tactical work.

Strategic marketing execution is where it's at. When you're operating on the strategic level, you're thinking much further ahead, maybe 6–12 months, and creating marketing

campaigns that will have a much bigger impact on your company and on the market. Strategic projects are much harder to execute, and usually requires a good amount of planning, teamwork, and sometimes funding. But this is where it's at.

You should spend 60% of your time on strategic work.

Finally, you get to the epic level of projects. These are epic ideas that will take a lot of courage (you will have naysayers and doubters), persuasion, teamwork, determination, and belief. Epic ideas only come along a few times in a life time. When they do, you need to seize them because that's how you create a great company.

You need to give yourself and your team time to think about epic and unusual ideas that could have a 5–10x return for your business if executed well. Don't get me wrong, there's risk here too. But by going forward you can end up creating a category-defining company, or at least you can say you tried.

I always encourage anyone I work with to spend 20% of their time to come up with those epic ideas that could be game-changers for the business.

Don't just do what's always been done, and don't play it safe. Go out there and try some sh*t.

Here's an article I wrote about this a while back.

Use the marketing trifecta

The marketing trifecta is simple, but something to always keep in mind. The goal with the trifecta is to ensure you've covered all your bases when you're thinking about your marketing activities.

The first part of the trifecta is around awareness and evangelism.

It's pretty simple really, any good marketing plan needs to have a very clear vision for how you are going to share the story of who you are and why people should care.

This can happen in a number of different ways: through PR, events, advertising, you name it. In essence it's about transference of excitement.

Meaning, when someone has been in contact with someone from your company or your message, do they have a level of excitement around your message of vision? I have simple rule of thumb, and that is: whenever I talk to a customer, journalist, analyst, sales rep, if they leave with as much excitement as me, then that's a pretty fine job.

You can even scale this further to when people hear your message at events or in advertising, are you transferring excitement… and of course clarity?

The second part of the trifecta is around growth, and ensuring that all the excitement you have created in the market actually turns into growth. Meaning, at some point, your prospects will need to raise their hand and want to buy from you or else you'll never be successful. It's not enough to have excitement, you need customers too.

This happens through mapping out the customer journey, and finding great and creative ways to engage them once they're ready to be engaged. If you do it too soon, you'll turn off customers. If you do it too late, they might be going with a competitor. Data will help guide you to mapping out the content, messages, and journey needed to get prospects to convert.

It's marketing's job to ensure sales have what they need to be successful. It's not marketing's job to close deals.

Finally, and this is especially important within B2B and sometimes B2C: enabling and activating sales.

You can have an awesome message in the market, and an incredible journey, but if your sales team is not trained to engage with customers AND if they don't have the right assets, you will fail.

You need to make sure your sales team is knowledgeable, has the right pitch decks, competitive information, customer stories, market information, and pricing details. It's marketing's job to ensure sales have what they need to be successful. It's not marketing's job to close deals.

While in B2C, you might not have a sales team, you still need to ensure that it's easy for prospects to buy your product and that they have the right information to make informed choices.

It's all about aptitude, hunger, and dedication

Finally, a little bit about hiring. When you're growing a business, nothing is more important than the team you hire. They will literally be the difference between success or failure, mediocre growth and becoming a rocketship.

It starts with you having a clear vision of what you want to become, and then it's about hiring an amazing team.

I look for a lot of things, but I'm really into aptitude, hunger, and dedication. Aptitude is about finding hyper smart people who are quick learners and can play a multitude of roles, because having fixed employees is something that will slow you down. You need speed, agility, and a willingness to grow, learn, and always do whatever is needed to create greatness.

You also need someone who is hungry and willing to roll up their sleeves to make the mission a reality. You can figure this out by asking candidates about motivation, and if it's just about money, then you know that they are not for you. It has to be about something bigger than that.

And finally, dedication to make sh*t happen, no matter what it takes.

Let's be real, in a start-up and in a growth company, there are no 9–5 jobs, so is this person willing to dedicate themselves to making the business successful?

This doesn't mean you need to burn people out, and not focus on work life balance, but you also need people willing to go the extra mile when it's needed. And you should definitely reward people for the work, especially when they go above and beyond. You can do this with gifts, money, stock options, you name it.

> **It starts with you having a clear vision of what you want to become, and then it's about hiring an amazing team.**

ROBIN DANIELS
Transformational Leader

The benefits of doing things backwards

Author DAVID HOLMES

DAVE *is responsible for Socket Mobile's worldwide business development and marketing activities. He's one of the pioneers in the NFC and mobile payments industry with over 20 years of experience and is an ardent believer in the future of mobile and digital access, experience, and payments. Dave has worked with NFC industry leader NXP and Identive and his more recent experience was with UL's Cybersecurity division, where he had responsibility for their Global Strategic Accounts.*

On the face of it, Socket Mobile is a data capture company. We provide a software development kit (SDK) and barcode scanning and NFC reading hardware. But our position in the market is unique for one simple reason: We did things backwards.

When the company was founded in 1992, the PC Card industry – Personal Computer Memory Card International Association (PCMCIA), as the tortured acronym went – was the place to be. So, that was where we were: Building peripheral cards for laptops and other computing devices. Aside from drivers and other support software, it was a pure hardware play.

As ubiquitous cellular changed the face of mobile work, so too did the company change its focus and perform a dramatic transition. Today, Socket Mobile focuses exclusively on data capture using 1D and 2D barcodes and NFC with a so-called freemium model. This means we don't need an army of salespeople to maintain growth. In fact, we give our biggest product away for free.

The freemium business model gets a bad rap, in no small part thanks to its use – and, arguably, abuse – in the gaming industry. But, again, we did things backwards: We didn't start with a free product to draw in the crowds and then force monetization any way we could.

We didn't launch a software platform and then try to build a hardware business on top of it. We built the hardware business first, and the software business came later, building a much easier and more sustainable transition than doing things 'forwards'.

Launching the business 'backwards', from the perspective

of our competition, has been key to our success. Hardware scale-up is notoriously difficult, and history is littered with companies that tried and failed, particularly when branching out from a successful software business. Having cleared that hump early on, moving into software has been considerably easier. But even there, our approach is 'backwards' to conventional logic.

I mentioned our lack of salespeople, but that's only part of the story. Our 'backwards' approach means our customers are the people building data capture platforms, not the users. Providing a software development kit – completely free of charge, no strings attached – puts the onus of supporting data capture across numerous regularly-updated platforms on us rather than them, allowing us to stand out from the crowd.

We're not alone in doing things 'backwards'. Netflix, one of the biggest streaming companies, took a similar path: It was founded on the basis of shipping physical media by mail before branching out into a pure digital play. It has since announced plans to offer ad-supported streams to reduce its users' barrier to entry, something many of its rivals toyed with from the start – again, approaching the problem backwards.

Our own version of 'backwards' sometimes draws incredulity from competitors and customers alike. When told that our offering sounds too good to be true, we typically tell our users that it's simply because we want to see them succeed. A love for customers and our own success can mix, and we are proving there's a sustainable approach to be taken.

Around 78% of our users come to us from open-source or free-software alternatives. Our 'backwards' business model welcomes them with open arms at the free end while providing a clear upgrade path. This creates a massive opportunity for all.

Backwards won't work for everyone, however. Those at the startup stage will likely find that a more traditional forward approach offers a greater chance of success. For established businesses looking to broaden their horizons, pivot in a new direction, or transition to a hybrid model, 'backwards' is an approach we can highly recommend. And the fact that nobody else in your industry is doing it may be the very reason why you should.

Socket Mobile's transition from a highly commoditized business to a whole new model is truly special. 'Backwards' is not only good for us but also a smarter way for our app partners and their end users to move forward. And we can't wait to see where it takes us and our users next.

People like to deal with people

Author ANDRE SANTOS

ANDRÉ SANTOS *is a LinkedIn Top Voice, LinkedIn Creator, Top 20 Influencers by iBest Award and the only Brazilian chosen as 30 LinkedIn Global Influencers by Engati. Post-graduated in Business Administration, he has 38-year career and has been working for twenty years as a mentor and speaker in social selling, personal branding & influence on LinkedIn. He has trained and mentored 20 000 professionals in ten countries and given interviews to Record News, Época Negócios, and BBC Brazil.*

1. You've grown a huge following on social media – especially LinkedIn. What's your secret?

Yes, I've gone up from 1k to 370k followers in four years. Sometimes even I don't believe it. When I realized I could monetize my LinkedIn, I decided to treat it as business and even booked slots on my agenda to create content, interact with people, and approach decision makers. I found it was 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. So, my secret is: [Discipline + Method].

2. For readers wanting to boost their personal or corporate brand, what's your best advice?

One of the big mistakes I made at first was to think that building a personal or corporate brand was something fast. On the contrary, it's a slow process, which requires daily work. My best tip is: You're a brand, too. Have you thought about that? Take care of your personal brand as much as the corporate brand where you work for. Your personal brand will follow you throughout your entire professional life, whether in a large company, or in your own. A strong personal brand will attract customers to business and talented people to your company.

3. What would you tell people to focus on as a starting point if they want to build a personal brand?

First, have a complete and attractive LinkedIn profile. It should communicate in thirty seconds what you do and the problem you solve for whoever's reading it.

Some questions can help you do that, such as which job function best defines you? What other words define you as a person and professional? What are your passions and motivation? What do you want to leave as a legacy in the world? What will be your digital positioning/reputation? How would you like to be recognized and remembered?

What awards, recognitions, and metrics can you include in your profile to create authority? Enter keywords that reflect your persona and make it easier to be found through keywords in Google.

4. Can you offer an example of a universal lesson that anyone can apply?

Yes, people like to deal with people. It happens everywhere, including personal or professional, physical or virtual environments. One of the reasons I became known at LinkedIn was daily sharing my life and career challenges. I shared my own difficulties and how I overcame them. Many people empathized and decided to follow me. I also learned a lot from their stories. In the end, what engages is not technical publications, but humanized ones. Remember that no one wants to interact with brands or logos. People want to find real people and inspiring stories!

5. What do people come to mind as examples of stellar personal branders?

I like following some LinkedIn influencers, such as Richard Branson, Adam Grant, Bill Gates, Daniel Goleman and Simon Sinek, among others. Why is that? They're leaders who transcend the boundaries of their own companies and inspire millions of people. They write about their businesses, but also about personal aspects of life. For example, the other day I saw a picture of Richard Branson at his hotel enjoying a rainbow in the sky (43k likes), Bill Gates showing a picture of his father with Nelson Mandela (47k likes), and a lecture by Simon Sinek on purpose (33k likes). Stories are powerful magnets for empathy and connection.

6. How do you communicate your values in the best possible way when you work with personal and/or corporate branding? How to prevent values from turning into clichés?

One day I saw a Ted Talk by Simon Sinek on Start with Why. That was an aha moment. I realized I was still stuck in my 'what' and 'how', but I had no idea of my 'why'.

I looked for answers and talked to a lot of people. I studied and tried to hear my intuition. One day, I took a blank sheet, an old pen and started writing: a) What have people always said I did well? b) What did they like the most about me? c) What gave me more pleasure doing and put me on a flow state? Words such as 'relationship, empathy, help, connection, belonging, community' emerged. I was astonished that none of them were hard skills, but soft skills. Those were my values.

If you want to communicate your personal or corporate values without being clichés, I suggest you start asking these three questions, too.

7. What's your 'why'?

As a LinkedIn Top Voice, my 'why' is helping C-level executives and brand ambassadors strengthen their personal and corporate branding, increasing their influence, and doing business on LinkedIn. My mission is to help awaken the better version of yourself and communicate it on LinkedIn.

8. Data shows that 60% of a purchase decision is made before the 1st contact. What does this mean for people wanting their sales efforts to have the highest possible impact?

This is very important. Almost all potential clients will study you and your company before reaching out, including your LinkedIn profile and your content. No one likes talking to sellers, but everyone likes hearing an expert.
As a salesman, I've also made mistakes, such as thinking that selling was introducing myself to a decision-maker and asking for a 30-minute meeting. It never worked and

he couldn't care less. Asking for a meeting requires trust and you need to build it gradually. Therefore, never sell on the first contact. I leave a reflection. What are you doing today to show yourself as an expert so that these '60% of the purchase decision before the 1st contact' are the best possible experience for your future customer?

9. It's become popular to talk about making employees become brand ambassadors. Two questions on this:
a) How do you actually do that?
b) What if your employees don't want to be ambassadors for the brand? Should you force them to do so or only hire people in the future that can see themselves as future ambassadors?
Along the last five years daily training several companies on LinkedIn, Influence, Personal Branding & Social Selling, I've created a five-step method to help anyone thrive on LinkedIn and become a brand ambassador:

1. **Have an attractive and complete profile:** In thirty seconds, who are you and what problem do you solve for others?
2. **Expand your network and influence the market:** Invite people who can help you in your career and/or business.
3. **Make genuine interactions and be reminded:** Like/comment posts of your target audience and interact on your own.
4. **Create content with high engagement:** Share personal and professional posts at least three times a week. Explore the various LinkedIn formats (posts, articles, polls, photos, videos, etc.).
5. **Approach decision makers with high conversion:** Break the ice, mention their posts/articles, share tips, and insights. Only sell when you've generated minimal confidence.

Being a brand ambassador is a personal decision and cannot be imposed by any company. Instead, show what your employee gets by becoming an ambassador (ex: prestige, reputation, digital influence). Actually, using LinkedIn is a win-win business. Sales does business, marketing strengthens branding, HR attracts talent, and each employee strengthens his/her personal branding.

10. This book is about impact. What is impact to you?
For me, impact is inspiring or transforming someone's life, whether in personal or professional field. This can be done with an inspiring post or articles, with a friendly word or simply replying to a private message with encouraging words. You don't have to impact millions to become an Influencer. If you impact one person a day, you're already creating impact.

...people like to deal with people. It happens everywhere, including personal or professional, physical or virtual environment. One of the reasons I became known at LinkedIn was daily sharing my life and career challenges. I shared my own difficulties and how I overcame them. Many people empathized and decided to follow me. I also learned a lot from their stories.

ANDRE SANTOS
LinkedIn Top Voice & LinkedIn Creator

Your differences are your strength

Author PRERNA GUPTA

PRERNA *is Founder & CEO of Mysterious, a messenger app designed to foster meaningful conversation in tight-knit communities. She is a serial entrepreneur who has launched mobile entertainment apps, like Hooked and Smule, reaching over a billion people. Prerna has been named one of the Most Influential Women in Tech by Fast Company, and her writing has been featured in New York Times, Vogue, and TechCrunch, among others.*

1. What is entrepreneurship for you and what drove you to become an entrepreneur?
Entrepreneurship to me is about creativity – the ability to have a fantastical vision of the future and bring that vision into existence. I became an entrepreneur because I don't know any other way to live. I want to spend each moment of my life inventing, learning, pushing myself to create new things at the edge of possibility.

2. What did you learn from each company you started?
My first company, Yaari, was a social networking site for Indians, which I started in 2005, a few weeks after Facebook raised its Series A funding. We set out to become the dominant social networking site in India, and we grew to 2 million users in the first year, but Facebook eventually entered India and ate our lunch. My biggest lesson from Yaari was the importance of pursuing a Lean Startup methodology for product development. Always build a minimum viable product and "ship early, ship often".

My second company, Khush, developed music creation apps using machine learning technology to help people make music on their phones. We built some of the earliest apps on the iPhone App Store. Our app Songify hit the number one spot in the App Store three days after we launched. My biggest lesson from creating Songify was a product mantra I still use to this day: do ONE thing better than everyone else.

What is the one thing your product does better than everything else that's currently out there? Focus on building that one thing first, and get traction on it before adding other features.

My third company, Hooked, is a storytelling app for teens. We tell bite-sized stories in text and video, and we invented the popular chat fiction format that has gotten hundreds of millions of teens to read fiction on their phones. Hooked has been the number one app in over 25 countries. My

biggest lesson from Hooked: hook them in 10. When marketing a product, you have 10 seconds or less to hook a potential user and reel them in. Focus on that first time user experience relentlessly.

3. Forbes named you ''The Queen of Viral Apps''. Can you tell us more about what made your apps viral and able to reach the impressive 1 billion users?
All the apps I've built have one thing in common: they bring people joy. That's always been my mission with every product I've created – to bring moments of joy into people's daily lives. We are craving joy and meaning, and I believe our apps have resonated with such broad audiences because we've focused on giving them that.

4. What is your opinion on the current start-up culture? How do you balance everything?
Startup culture is relentless. There is an intense pressure to be "always on", to be on top of all the news, to be out there networking, see and be seen, and to raise huge amounts of funding and become a unicorn. All of this is a distraction. Exceptional founders succeed because they have the ability to drown out all the noise and maintain a singular focus on building the best products in the world.

I balance things in my own life by being very thoughtful about how I spend my time, staying disciplined with my schedule, saying no to anything that isn't top priority, staying focused on my long-term goals and, most important of all, getting enough sleep.

5. Your most recent company Mysterious is a NFT platform. What were the considerations around this and why did you choose to focus on music video NFT?
The idea for Mysterious came from what we're seeing with Hooked – we have seen that literally billions of people around the world are craving more meaningful artistic experiences in their social media feeds. When you show people thoughtful art in their feeds, they stop and pay attention.

But the problem is that creators can't earn enough from ad revenue to sustain creating thoughtful art. Thoughtful art takes time to develop.

And so, we're all collectively stuck in a warped social media vortex – where creators are forced to churn out low-quality content to seek out a living, and consumers are addicted to feeds dominated by selfie culture that makes them miserable.

Web3 offers us an opportunity to create a new kind of social media culture, where creators have the time and space to create art people are willing to pay for, and consumers can focus on content that brings them joy.

Music videos are the cultural currency of our time – it's how we establish and share culture around the world. It's not a coincidence that all major entertainment platforms – MTV in analog, YouTube in web1 and TikTok in web2 – got their start with music videos.

I believe that music videos will also be what brings mass audiences into web3.

6. You recently invested in MASTERS app. What made you believe in them?
MASTERS was started by two exceptional founders – Greg Drach and Christian Dorffer – and I invested because I believe in their vision, passion and grit. Sadly, MASTERS recently shut down as they were not able to achieve product-market fit. Such is the nature of entrepreneurship!

Even the best founders encounter failure. It was a pleasure supporting them, and I look forward to participating in whatever they do next.

7. You have interviewed quite a few famous actors, such as Ashton Kutcher and Geena Davis. What made you choose them?

I interviewed Ashton and Geena for my show, *Hero's Journey*, where I speak with modern-day heroes in business, media and sports to learn about their journeys to success. I chose them because they are visionary celebrities who use their fame to make the world a better place, and I wanted others to learn from their unique and inspiring personal stories.

8. You are a successful female founder. What would you say to women, who want to pursue a similar career path?

Believe in yourself, and don't take no for an answer. Your differences are your strength.

9. What keeps you motivated? Any advice for the young tech leaders out there?

I have this deep belief that I am meant to change the world. My purpose is to create products that bring joy into people's lives. I feel happiest when I am spending my time doing just that. That deep belief in my mission, and the knowledge that I'm happiest when I'm pursuing it, is what keeps me motivated through all the ups and downs of the entrepreneurial journey.

10. Finally, this book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

Impact is changing the way people see things, the way they live their lives, the way they feel.

“

Startup culture is relentless. There is an intense pressure to be “always on”, to be on top of all the news, to be out there networking, see and be seen, and to raise huge amounts of funding and become a unicorn. All of this is a distraction. Exceptional founders succeed because they have the ability to drown out all the noise and maintain a singular focus on building the best products in the world.

PRERNA GUPTA
Founder & CEO at Mysterious

Risk is not a bad thing

Author NINA SHINI

NINA SHINI *is the co-founder of Social Works. She has been an entrepreneur since age 17 and knows quite a lot about marketing and brand positioning. She was born in Denmark and lives in Copenhagen where she runs Social Work's office with 20 employees.*

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what Social Works is all about?
Social Works is one of the leading branding agencies in the Nordics. We specialize in influencer marketing, representing some of the biggest brands and influencers. In short, we are pretty good at branding and positioning – we know how to create impact in the 21st century.

2. You're only 31 years old and have already started three successful businesses. What made you take the entrepreneurial path and stay on it?
For as long as I can remember, I've always been creating and found ways to create value.

That being making my own Barbie doll clothes as a kid, buying dresses online as teen, and selling them to people that didn't trust online shopping yet and all the way to where I am today.

I never decided that I wanted to be an entrepreneur. It all happened by putting one foot in front of the other and following my sense of business opportunities.

3. What did you learn from each company you started?
From the first one, my jewellery company, I barely made any money, and each small penny we made was reinvested. I actually had to invest my savings and lose it. But now I know that this was where I learned how to be an entrepreneur. And I would not be where I am today, if I hadn't done this.

Another important thing I learned from my jewellery company was the marketing game – and this was quite a door opener. This was more than ten years ago, and some people started having 10K followers on social media. I tried to send them some jewellery in return for postings on social media. This was before influencer marketing was a thing – or even a word. I discovered my passion for marketing and

realized there was a huge potential in influencer marketing. This was how I started my influencer agency, Premium People – one of the first ever.

A few years down the road we merged Premium People with another agency. And that was how Social Works saw the light.

I think too many people are afraid of going down a path because they think it means "forever". That being an education, a job or something else. I've always been very curious about following paths and exploring opportunities. Risk is not necessarily a bad thing. Even though we are being taught otherwise. Large corporations have "risk management" and risk is often portrayed as a bad thing. But opportunity lies within risk, and this is how you create impact.

4. Your company Social Works has big clients, such as Christian Dior, Giorgio Armani, Prada, Louis Vuitton, Nespresso, and many others. What were the steps you took to acquire these high-profile customers and what is the basis of the partnership?

I believe it's important to do your absolute best. And if you're not the best, you need to hire the people who are. This is how we become better and better at positioning brands and attracting talent from all around. We've also started to see our own company as an influencer – one that creates impact. So, we're very picky with the brands we chose to work with and how we work with them. By doing so, these brands start to reach out directly to us. You shouldn't be afraid of being picky with your portfolio or of insisting on the quality of work you believe in.

5. You recently signed a contract with DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation), can you tell us more about the collaboration and the activities you're performing?

This was a documentary series about the Danish influencer industry. Our industry has had a very hard time in the Danish media, so it was very refreshing that the biggest broadcaster decided to do a documentary about the business behind it and really listen carefully and respectfully. The result has totally changed the perception in Denmark.

6. You have quite a large following on Instagram and LinkedIn, how do you ensure you stay engaged with your audience?

Yes – I believe social media is a great way to connect with people. I do not use social media in a traditional influencer type of way. I use it to get the conversation going about topics I care about. It's a great way to create personal branding and impact the topics you want to.

On LinkedIn, I try to remain business focused and post a few times per week. If you're excited about a post or a topic, it shows. I love to press play on those posts!

On Instagram, it's more a mix of my daily life, business, and motivation.

7. You got a place in Forbes' 30 under 30. Congratulations. This is an amazing achievement. What helped you get there?

Thank you! There were more than 10,000 candidates, so I was quite surprised myself! To be honest, I think I did my research really well. And I used social media to explore which topics the judges found important. Social media leaves a lot of trails… And by knowing this, I could structure my screening very well and highlight those of my achievements that checked those boxes.

8. Could you share with us about your leadership style?

I think I'm very result focused and pretty clear on what's expected. This creates a structure for my employees. They

know when they are doing well and when they need to step up their game. It might sound stressful, but I've learned it creates the opposite.

I also focus a lot on having "personal bubbles." A way of connecting on a personal level that only I and that specific person do. That could be the one person I go cake hunting with, the person I talk to about specific subjects. That we share a genuine interest and activity outside of work means a lot. It's always that hard line between being friends but not too much.

I also try to adapt my leadership style to the individual. This is only possible because we have a very open culture and use a lot of personality tests and group dynamic tests. This is a common language at Social Works. The fact that it's a common language also makes it possible to call behavior. Let me give you an example:

We had to let go of an employee who was very loved by the team. I knew how the different people were going to react and how they would start affecting each other in a stressed situation. And I could calm the situation by referring to their tests and how they react… some get angry, some get sad, and some get very insecure. And they could also see these reactions in each other.

9. You are a successful female founder. What would you say to women who want to pursue a similar career path?
I would probably say forget that you're a female founder. I've never thought of myself as a female founder – I'm a founder. People are full of nuances and different talents. That being a male or female. You've got this.

10. Lastly, this book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

Impact is to be the change you want to see in the world. It can be small things and big things.

We recently created a campaign about impact; how to make in impact in eight secs, eight mins, and eight hours. What if you add eight months or eight years for this? Then you can create quite a lot of change. It's being willing to take a risk and being willing to act.

I think too many people are afraid of going down a path because they think it means "forever". That being an education, a job or something else. I've always been very curious about following paths and exploring opportunities.
Risk is not necessarily a bad thing.
Even though we are being taught otherwise.

NINA SHINI
Co-founder at Social Works

Celebrate successes - and failures!

Author THORBJØRN FINK

THORBJØRN FINK *is Group COO of the Danish fintech company Pleo and CEO of Pleo Financial Services A/S. With a background from Investment Banking at Goldman Sachs, Thorbjørn has worked in the Nordic Private Equity sector, as well as in the global biotechnology company Novozymes. In addition to Pleo, Thorbjørn has been involved as an advisor and investor in several startups and fintech companies in Europe and the US.*

1. You helped build Pleo from the ground up. To the readers who don't know about Pleo, can you please tell a few words about the company?

Pleo is an out-of-the-box business spending solution that offers smart credit cards, account-to-account payments and automated expense reports for employees, enabling them to buy the things they need for work while giving CFO's and finance teams full control and visibility of all company spending.

As one of the fastest scaling FinTechs in Europe, Pleo is valued at USD 4.7bn and operates across 16 markets, with seven European office locations and an organization of 900+ employees.

2. What has been the motivation for building Pleo?

Throughout my career I've worked as an investor, an advisor and in large corporations - and I've always found the process of "buying stuff for work" extremely inefficient, painful, and time consuming. When the co-founder Jeppe Rindom reached out to me back in 2017 and pitched the idea of solving this problem in a new way I immediately thought that the market potential would be immense. I haven't looked back since.

3. You've scaled from nothing to 900 employees from +70 different nationalities. What has this crazy journey been like?

Going from startup to scale up has been quite a journey. Things happen really fast and you get a lot of experience "for free" when being part of a fast-growing company. Scaling fast however, comes with a lot of change and constant chaos and it's really not for everyone.

Personally, I've found it to be really rewarding and fun. I'm very curious by nature and thrive when things are in motion - so I really feel at home in fast-paced environments and get a lot of energy from it.

4. You have distributed teams across +20 countries. How come you've decided to go down this route and have such a distributed workforce?
We believe in the "Future of Work" agenda - and that the winning companies of tomorrow have to adapt to a more distributed way of working. With today's technology, it's possible to work and be productive from almost anywhere, and Pleo's product is actually in itself something which helps employees, managers and CFO's buy the stuff they need for work in a distributed, transparent, and controlled way.

5. Pleo became the first unicorn within fintech in Denmark. Do you remember that day?
Absolutely. Since 2017 I have led all Pleo's fundraising efforts together with the co-founder Jeppe Rindom and such processes are usually quite intense. Going through intense periods and achieving something together is what forges memories and thinking back I'm equally proud of what we managed to achieve with each funding round.

I believe a lot of entrepreneurs share my tendency of not focusing so much on successes but instead constantly moving on to the next challenge. My advice is: Remember to celebrate successes like fundraising along the journey. Its OK to be proud of what you and the team has achieved - and celebrating milestones will boost morale, make your employees proud and who knows - maybe inspire others to become entrepreneurs.

6. Fintech is maturing pretty fast. What are your top three fintech predictions for the upcoming years?

1) Increased M&A activity // I think we might see increased consolidation in certain parts of the fintech ecosystem, especially considering the current economic climate;

2) Brand and service as differentiators // As the industry matures, we will see increased differentiation in other areas such as brand and the support/service offered by fintech companies out there;

3) Payment infrastructure // We will likely see breakthroughs within payments infrastructure making it faster and cheaper to transfer funds across countries and regions - to the benefit of the end customers.

7. Growing fast as a company is extremely exciting, but at the same time, very challenging. Could you share with the IMPACT-readers a few of the Do's and Don'ts of rapid scaling?
Be transparent about your company goals and make sure your organization understands how to translate them into their daily work.

Celebrate successes - *and* failures! Everyone fails but the more we share our failures, the faster we (and others) learn. Don't focus on the past. Look ahead and do what is right for the *future*.

8. You make angel investments in startups in Europe and the US. Why not just focus 100% on Pleo?
I have an immense respect for people who take risks and startup companies, and I feel I have some experience which companies can benefit from. One way of putting this into play is by being involved in other early-stage companies either as an advisor or investor.

9. What advice can you give to other entrepreneurs looking to get funding?
Keep an eye on your burn rate and don't raise when you are close to running out of cash. Rather raise 6 months early so you have time to run a thorough process.

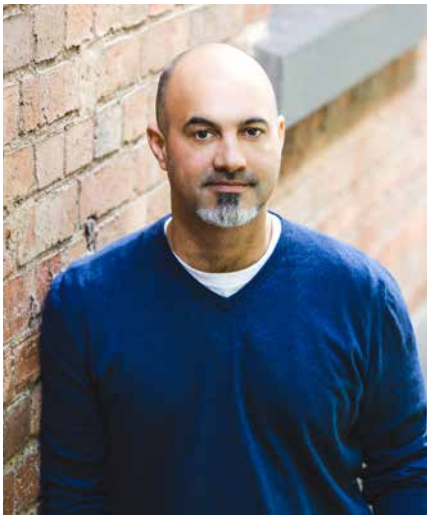
Leave no stone unturned - that VC fund you didn't even know existed might actually be the perfect fit for your company.

Don't be in constant fundraising mode. Agree when you want to focus on fundraising, give it full focus and once completed get back to work.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact for me is making a difference for others by working with great people towards a common goal.

Celebrate successes - and failures! Everyone fails but the more we share our failures, the faster we (and others) learn. Don’t focus on the past. Look ahead and do what is right for the future.

THORBJØRN FINK
Group COO at Pleo



Bringing creative ideas to life

Author HICHAME ASSI

HICHAME ASSI *is CEO of Envato, one of the world's leading communities for creative assets and tools, and has over two decades of experience in online business and e-commerce platforms. Prior to joining Envato, Hichame was CEO of HotelsCombined and lead the Sydney-founded business from start-up to scale-up as it grew internationally. In Hichame's spare time he can be found reading about the fields of Open & Social Innovation, mentoring entrepreneurs and negotiating with his teenage son.*

1.Envato is one of the bootstrapped companies that has made it very far. What were the considerations between bootstrapping versus other ways of growing as a company?

When Envato was founded by Collis and Cyan Ta'eed almost sixteen years ago, it was actually centered on a much simpler premise: filling a clear need for digital creatives to have access to high-quality assets, quickly. As the company grew and discussions about bootstrapping versus other means of scaling and growth occurred, Collis and Cyan were quite clear that they wanted to run a business that was as much in control of its own destiny as possible – one that didn't have to compromise on its values-driven, community-centric view of how it could run.

We've stayed true to these origins and values to this day, and I believe our outcome-driven, sustainable growth model has proven this decision to be the right one for Envato.

2. What fueled the decision to stay in Melbourne, rather than move to Silicon Valley or similar places?

Melbourne was a natural fit for us in the early years, especially as a founder-led creative tech company looking to grow beyond a Sydney garage, given how local startups have been historically supported.

However, we have expanded our global footprint quite significantly since those early days and now have an office in Guadalajara in Mexico, as well as a significant presence in New Zealand and the US. We're planning to build a small team in Israel in the near future and have a network of contractors in countries all over the world who have supported us from day one…so we're a very international company despite our Australian origin story!

3. You're in a highly competitive market. How do you handle this as a company? Do you look at competitors and try to get inspired by them, or do you totally ignore

your nearest competitors and focus on what you do best?
We definitely keep a close eye on trends, in both technology but also content, and jump at the chance to get involved with those that are most relevant. But what really keeps us focused is our global creative community. One of our foundational values has always been to have 'community spirit', so while we obviously take note of what our competitors are doing, we try to ensure that our decision-making process is orientated around our creators, so that we may empower them to thrive.

4. Impact is a huge thing in business currently. Everyone talks about it. Is it something that is focused on at Envato?
Definitely, it's a prominent measure and point of focus across our business in all manner of contexts.

For one, we're a certified B Corp, which means we hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of sustainability across a number of domains, from environmental to staff and customers, with each area requiring us to demonstrate meaningful and positive impact towards doing business better. From this work alone, we've started to upgrade our governance processes, gone carbon-neutral across our entire global footprint and worked harder than ever on delivering outstanding results and earnings for our community of creatives.

On a more focused level, this quest for impact can be seen in our response to the war in Ukraine, in which we moved quickly to provide meaningful support to our affected Ukrainian creators.

Finally, it's present in our employer value proposition: your work, your impact. It's the starting point for any conversation we now have about how we recruit our team globally, and how we provide an outstanding experience for everyone once employed. We take great pride in the results our people have helped generate for creatives around the world, and this is a regular, codified reminder of that.

5. How do you think about maintaining that standard and continuing to attract and retain the level of talent you've built the company on?
It's certainly a challenge in the current environment, but we're focusing on the impact our whole team can have on the community and the world, supported by comprehensive benefits no matter where our people are based.

Our employee value proposition (EVP) centers on the theme 'your work, your impact', which allows our team the autonomy to deliver impactful work that in turn drives the delivery of our purpose and generates positive impacts for our community. Whether that be through empowering creators to thrive through our platforms, supporting our sustainability practices or leading a delivery team…we monitor the impact we have and report annually on the outcomes in our Public Impact Statement.

6. What is your best piece of advice for people management?
Trust your people and provide psychological safety that makes it safe for the team to learn through trying and failing.

7. You joined Envato as only its second-ever CEO. What was that like?
It's been a very interesting journey taking over from the founding CEO Collis Ta'eed. I'm grateful that he's been around to help with the transition, as well as having a very welcoming team who've been receptive to Envato's evolution.

8. What is Envato's take on the current big discussions about remote work, the great resignation, etc.?
The dramatic and large-scale transformation and growth of remote work has certainly been significant, but it was one we were reasonably prepared for at Envato. A flexible work environment, purpose and values-driven with a focus on results, has underpinned our business since day one.

However, what has been reaffirmed to us is now, more than ever, the importance of having a strong EVP (employee value proposition) for both current and prospective members of our team, something that is a central point of unification and understanding, not just of where we are at but where we aspire to be as an employer. We know compelling benefits for all our staff are important, but the EVP is the glue that holds it all together.

9. Where is Envato in 10 years from now? And what impact has it made on the world by then?
That's a big question. I would hope that we would have continued to have an outstanding impact on our global creative community; helping make creativity accessible to all and ensuring our creators continue to receive industry-leading payouts in the process. But broader than that, I hope we will have fulfilled our promise as a B Corp to do better business, especially on the environmental side. We just committed to planting thousands of trees each year as part of a strong commitment to getting to carbon-zero as a business, so in ten years from now, I hope we have several forests worth of Envato-planted trees!

> **One of our foundational values has always been to have 'community spirit', so while we obviously take note of what our competitors are doing, we try to ensure that our decision-making process is orientated around our creators,so that we may empower them to thrive.**

HICHAME ASSI
CEO at Envato

The future is plural, everything is possible and probable

Author JUNIOR BORNELI

JUNIOR BORNELI, *42 years old, born in a small town of 13,000 inhabitants in the interior of Brazil, is CEO and founder of StartSe, one of the main edtechs in the world, with branches in five countries. He is the author of the best-selling Infinite Organizations, has more than 10 million readers on LinkedIn, and is part of the Marketing Hall of Fame in Brazil.*

1. You're author of the bestseller Organizações Infinitas, or in English, Infinite Organizations. One of the messages in this book is that companies that live forever, die all the time. What does this mean?
Infinite Organizations are companies that have the ability to reinvent themselves all the time, doing what is necessary to create a new cycle of perpetuity. This decision is difficult because the speed of transformations is much faster than in the past and the success cycles are getting shorter and shorter.

So, it's necessary to exercise an ambidextrous management, where a company must continue doing what it already does very well, but also build some options for the future. Before, the future was singular. There weren't many alternatives when we looked ahead. Today, the future is plural, everything is possible and probable. Banks become healthcare companies. Health companies create their own schools. And schools create their own fintechs. Facebook, for example, will only be the Goal if it manages to complete the difficult journey of ceasing to be what brought it here and becoming something that Zuck believes will be the company's future. Infinite Organizations reinvent themselves all the time and live cycles of beginning, middle and beginning.

2. Many companies today are afraid of not being innovative enough and being beaten by others because of this. What is your message to these companies?
The main message is to keep things as they and to expose yourself to the greatest risk. It's necessary to choose one or more paths and advance along them, without fear of making mistakes.

Making a mistake, by the way, is one of the ways to discover that the path is another. And the sooner you discover

things like this, the faster you find the right direction. It's certain that what we do today will be disrupted. If this is true, it's better that we ourselves are the people who will destroy our business. By controlling our own cannibalization process, we have a chance to maintain relevance in the future.

So, my message is get moving as soon as possible, look at your company as a big laboratory of experiments and have a beginner's mind. After all, with so much volatility, with so much technology and so many changes, every path is a possibility to create a new cycle of perpetuity.

3. You've done a Ted Talk, in which you point out that 90% of all startups fail. Why is that the case and what can we/startups do about it?

Yes, this is true. 90% of startups fail, but 100% of entrepreneurs who persist find a way. Startups fail because they are small innovation experiments. So, it's normal for things not to go as expected. However, with each mistake, the entrepreneur needs to get stronger and more prepared to take the next step and resist the next mistake. Steve Jobs himself said, "my difference to others is that I just didn't give up".

I read over 20,000 pages of biographies about the world's greatest entrepreneurs. And they all failed. Extraordinary things are done by ordinary people who have decided to try one more time. We tend to think that the entrepreneur who achieves success is an extraordinary person, but no! They are ordinary people who believe in their projects and do whatever is necessary to achieve their goals. I have failed many times; you will fail and this is not a failure. Every failure is a motivation pill.

4. You're the founder of StartSe – a business school for anyone who wants to transform their future today. What's different about StartSe compared to all the other business school offerings out there?

I don't know if StartSe is different, but I can say that it is original. We believe in the transforming power of people and our purpose is to create new beginnings. We do this through so-called education of now, and we even created a new word to define it: NOWledge.

In our view, it doesn't make sense to take two, three, or four years to teach about things that change all the time. Today, for example, we only talk about AI, but two years ago, nobody talked about it. What we do is observe everything that happens around the world, translate it into accessible language and practical actions so that our customers can live a fresh start from there.

We have headquarters in Brazil and branches in the biggest innovation hubs in the world: Silicon Valley, Tel Aviv, Shanghai, Estonia, and also in Lisbon and Miami. Wherever there's something new happening, we're there. Because that speed is critical in today's world. We don't talk about cases from a past that no longer exists. Nor do we dare to speak of an unknown future. We talk about what you need to do today to take your business to the next level. Startups take less than one year to become unicorns. We cannot take two years to teach people about a new business model or a new technology.

5. StartSe prepares people to understand or even better create jobs that currently don't even exist. How do you do this?

When you look to the future and see self-driving cars, drones for food deliveries, and algorithms for diagnostic tests, it's clear that many professions will disappear or be badly hit. Therefore, we need to train people for this new world, prepare them to use their arms less and their neu-

rons more. The industrial revolution powered our arms and now AI will power our brains. We identify the biggest gaps in the market and create courses and programs to fill them. We have taught about lawtechs, fintechs, agtechs, healthtechs, and edtechs to thousands of people in recent years. And, right now, we're training half a million new developers for free in Brazil by 2025.

6. You've grown a huge following on social media – especially on LinkedIn. What's your secret?
The first and most important thing is that I love sharing content and that's the foundation of everything. I have been using LinkedIn for many years and have always believed in the strategy of sharing content to attract attention to my business. A few things are important to succeed on this network:

a) **consistency:** I post at least two or three times a day, every day, even on weekends. The algorithm rewards those who maintain a regularity of publications.
b) **originality:** it's no use just replicating content. You need to give your own opinion. On LinkedIn, people follow other people because they are inspired by them.
c) **truth:** always be yourself, create your style and captivate your audience. Don't try to follow magic formulas, but learn a little bit from every successful person on the net. Create your own content format.

Through LinkedIn, I met a lot of people, I did a lot of business, and I got to a lot of places. Don't ignore the influencing power of content and the connectivity of networks.

7. This book is about impact. What is impact to you?
I loved the name of the book, because it's a word that we repeat many times here. To make an impact is to bring about transformation. It's to offer another vision, another opportunity on the way. Impact is what generates movement, which causes reflection, which activates new inner connections, which in turn cause outer movements.

I was born in a city of 13,000 inhabitants in the interior of Brazil. I know the effects of the word impact. Opportunities generate impact. Education makes impact. Connections make an impact. Whoever was impacted multiplies the impacts. I live to make an impact on the people who go through StartSe.

8. Which impact would you like to have made before you leave this earth?
I would like every person in this world to understand that it's possible to do more than they imagine and be much better than they are. Everyone can be better if they receive the right stimuli. There are talented people all over the world, from Brazil to Sudan. But not everyone can start their inner potential. StartSe was born to say: 'hey, you are much better than you think and I can help you take the next step'.

Before leaving this world, I would like at least one person to see what I saw when I was a young man in the countryside of Brazil: 'I can be much better than that'. And that, on the other end of the line, there's someone ready to provide the education and connections needed so that opportunities begin to sprout and impact and transformations happen.

> **We need to train people for this new world, prepare them to use their arms less and their neurons more. The industrial revolution powered our arms and now AI will power our brains.**

JUNIOR BORNELI
CEO & Founder at StartSe

Be the change that you want to see

Author MOONIE ZHU

MOONIE *is a Chinese national living in Germany since 2006. She is the go-to person for all things relating to Chinese e-commerce and digital marketing. Besides being a renowned China expert, Moonie is also an entrepreneur, keynote speaker, Influencer, and female leadership advocator. She is the co-founder of the China-focused e-commerce and social media agency eTOC, which has already assisted over 100 international brands to thrive in the Chinese market.*

1. The world needs more female entrepreneurs. You're one of them. What has been your experience with starting your first company eTOC?
16 years ago, in 2006, I arrived in Germany as an exchange student from China. Soon after, during a trip to Hamburg Harbor, I noticed a staggering statistic: over 1/3 of the containers being processed there were from China.

It was then, when I first found myself face-to-face with this insane opportunity, and I knew right away that I would strive to become a bridge between Europe and China in the days to come. Then, 12 years later in 2018, after I finally felt fully prepared through gaining valuable experience during my stay at 3 major international corporations (Beiersdorf, Henkel and Tchibo), I realized my ambition, the dream that I set out to do all those years ago. I co-founded eTOC.

We started from nothing, armed only with our skills and passion. I vividly remember the time when I was setting up our website; back then, I didn't know the first thing about websites. I browsed through hundreds of YouTube tutorials, learning about domain, hosting, and content management.

My ex-colleagues laughed at me when I told them I built the website by myself as they knew I had no previous IT experience. In August 2022 eTOC just had its 4th birthday. Looking back at these past 4 years, we've experienced so much!

That casual yet essential lunch in Shanghai with Hao (my co-founder), when we decided to build eTOC; The days and nights I spent watching entrepreneurship tutorials; That first major client we secured, even though we were so new and small-scale; The sleepless nights thinking about how to build a highly effective and motivated team that shares our vision and values; Those satisfying moments of securing clients but also the repeated frustration of rejections; What a journey this had been… No one can possibly imagine how proud I am!

An old saying came to mind: "It doesn't matter where your destination in life is, what matters the most are the people that accompany you on your journey."

Our organization was founded on the core values of trust, integrity, and teamwork and we are now a team of 15 dedicated people who worked day and night to achieve what we have today. I feel truly privileged to be a part of this endeavor, to get to know so many inspiring people. Among them, there are mentors, business partners, clients, and other entrepreneur fellows. They not only give me constant inspiration but also supply me with trust and support.

2. You bootstrapped eTOC from scratch. What is your advice to other entrepreneurs, when it comes to either seeking funding or bootstrapping their idea?
If you believe that your venture is something special, then let your product or service do the talking. Focus your time and energy on creating the best possible product or service, instead of worrying about finding funding.

This leads to my next advice – be the change that you want to see.

Don't just sit there and worry about things. If you want to change something, then work towards it. There is no point worrying about anything if you don't make the effort to do something about it. And entrepreneurship is all about stepping outside of your comfort zone and getting things done.

When we started to build eTOC, we were quite literally just a two-man operation. All of a sudden, I had to deal with topics like legal, taxes, IT, sales, HR – none of which I've learnt or did before. You will be forced to learn a myriad of new things in order to put the missing pieces together. The good news is you could always find a way to solve the problem through continuous learning. And the new topics weren't actually that scary when you really made up the mind to learn.

3. You've reached 7 figure sales with 0 funding. How did you do this?
Outstanding services and strategies provided aside; a major part of our success can be attributed to our company culture. We believe in building long-lasting relationships with each and every one of our clients and we do this by working from a mutually beneficial perspective.

It is said that: "Being nice and playing fair won't get you far. You've got to be ruthless if you want to succeed. Trample others under your boot to achieve your objectives." Many people seem to enshrine this concept! They think that life is a competition, and there can only be one winner. I've always strongly opposed these sentiments.

I strongly believe that building upon a mutually beneficial foundation will be a lot more stable compared to building upon a bedrock of ruthlessness. Though there may not be a way for everyone to win, the least we can do is to work towards that goal.

4. You're originally from China, and I know that you want to build a stronger bridge between Europe and China. How come?

1. I have the necessary fundamentals;
   During my time in corporate, I accumulated solid experience in supply chain, marketing, e-commerce and strategy development. I've had extensive experience working on the German side, formulating actionable Chinese market entry strategies.

2. China and Germany are both my "home";

I spend almost half of my life in China and the other half in Germany. I feel privileged to be able to experience both cultures firsthand. Both have enriched my life, broadened my horizons, and made me into the person I am today.

3. It's obviously my calling.
   It was a privilege for me to have lived in two amazing countries and this experience opened up a whole new horizon. Over time, this experience was transformed into a voice – my calling. I wanted to use my experience and become a bridge between China and the west.

5. You've just recently started creating content on LinkedIn, and many of your posts get thousands and thousands of interactions. What is your secret, if you have any?

It's simple, really. Put yourself out there, stay in the game even when the results are not motivating at first, be authentic, and always try your best to provide tangible added value.

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There is no point worrying about anything if you don’t make the effort to do something about it. And entrepreneurship is all about stepping outside of your comfort zone and getting things done.

MOONIE ZHU
Co-founder at eTOC

Only the market gives you the true answers

Author ANDREAS EHN

ANDREAS *was Spotify's first employee and chief technology officer (CTO), where he brought together the world-class tech team that designed and built the platform and product for the music service. Before that he worked for the Swedish online-gaming company Stardoll. Later he co-founded Wrapp, a mobile-marketing startup, where he also served as CTO. Since 2015, he is an angel investor, advisor and board member based in Singapore.*

In 2008 the world got a new music streaming service named Spotify. It was developed in Stockholm, Sweden, and provided digital rights management-protected content from record labels and media companies.

It may have started out as a local thing, but the freemium service quickly expanded. Today, Spotify has more than 140 million monthly active users and over 50 million paying subscribers.

I (Jonathan) had the pleasure of meeting up with Andreas Ehn, who was Spotify's first employee and CTO. Andreas was responsible for the product and platform architecture as well as hiring a world-class engineering team, of which many have gone on to become successful entrepreneurs on their own.

After Spotify Andreas founded Wrapp - a mobile online-to-offline customer acquisition service for bricks-and-mortar retailers that raised money from prominent investors including Atomico and Greylock (with Niklas Zennström and Reid Hoffman joining the board).

1. Many people talk about disruption and how to disrupt markets. Did Napster disrupt the music industry, or did Spotify?

Neither I believe.

Technology disrupted the industry. The massive scale filesharing of Napster completely changed the dynamics in the business and completely revolutionized music online. Ultimately it forced the labels to consider new business models, and this enabled the rise of streaming – which led by Spotify.

2. In the beginning with Napster, you could access music very conveniently, but no one was really paying for it. Then iTunes launched, but as I understand, you guys didn't really look at them for inspiration?

True. Spotify did not have the same mindset as iTunes. Everyone else had tried to launch a music service and just looked at the commercial landscape of other licensed services. Our background was not music or consumption, because we were computer science graduates with a hacker-mentality, so we focused on filesharing as our main source of inspiration.

We were all pirating music for our own needs, so we set out to build a commercial service that should be better than piracy. The key element was that the price point had to be zero, and we created an ad-funded solution. That strategy took a long time for the labels to accept, so we didn't launch commercially until two years after, we started working on the service.

3. And no venture companies would invest in you guys in the beginning?
No. We were lucky enough to have founders who had built and sold businesses before. Martin had built a highly successful marketing company named Tradedoubler, and Daniel had in fact sold his company to Tradedoubler. That is how they got to know each other, and that is how we got enough money to finance the first couple of years, when we earned absolutely no money.

4. I've seen you discussing this dilemma about being perfect versus good enough. Meaning how good should a product or service be, before you introduce it to the marketplace. Where is your take on this today?
I think that my mindset has shifted over the years. I started with a classical engineering mindset – meaning that everything should be really well built, before we launch it.

Today I think that I've realized that only the market really gives you the true answers, so you should ship sooner. Time and time again it's been shown impossible to know in advance.

5. You mention that you were not really looking at the existing services to compete with. What was your mission then?
We entered an industry, where the record labels fundamentally wanted music to be expensive. They would rather sell something expensive to fewer people, before their mindset was that music is an art-form, and art costs money.

Our approach was to change the fundamentals of music online. We introduced a free model that people still to this day want us to shut down.

We entered into a market, where there were no viable online business models. People had more or less stopped buying CDs, so we had to convince the record labels that Spotify was the way to go in this bleeding market. It took time, but we started locally and from there started signing national and global deals.

6. If Napster had never disrupted the music industry, would we ever have had a Spotify too?
I think something else would have existed anyway. Napster and Spotify were natural children of their time. People were already pirating things online, so the next obvious step was to build some sort of sustainable and viable business model around this.

7. What was the biggest strength of Spotify as a company?
It was and still is the focus on user-experience, I believe. Today Spotify is moving more towards becoming a media company, and in fact I think this is the biggest threat to the business model right now – risking to lose having tech at the core of everything, you do.

Spotify managed to attract all the best engineers, because we were not a conventional music label or media company, but a tech company that focused on user experience and technical skills amongst our staff members.

8. You left Spotify after having worked there for some years, and then you moved away from Sweden. Why this desire to leave your home country?
For different reasons. First of all, I'm a very curious person. I have started on a personal education project, where I want to learn more about the world and understand it better. For this reason, I've set up a framework for myself, where I should live in 10 different countries for the next 5 years. So, 6 months each place.

My goal is to get to know these places. Get to know the people. Get to know the cities, the startups etc. And also, be doing some investments there.

9. Do people that have big dreams need to leave their home country?
Not necessarily, but for instance living in San Francisco in the US or in Shenzhen in China will just give you completely different opportunities than most places. You are in the epicenter of tech innovation, and just being there and working there make you bump into things and people that you would never do in for instance my home town of Stockholm.

I think that my mindset has shifted over the years. I started with a classical engineering mindset – meaning that everything should be really well built, before we launch it. Today I think that I've realized that only the market really gives you the true answers, so you should ship sooner.

ANDREAS EHN

Former CTO at Spotify and
Co-founder at Wrapp

The creator economy: How to succeed

Author JOE PULIZZI

JOE PULIZZI *is author, podcaster, marketing speaker and entrepreneur. He is the founder of multiple startups including content creator education site, The Tilt, and the content entrepreneur event Creator Economy Expo (CEX). Joe is the bestselling author of seven books including Content Inc. and Epic Content Marketing. He has two weekly podcasts; the motivational Content Inc. podcast and the content news and analysis show This Old Marketing with Robert Rose.*

1. People talk about 'the creator economy'. Can you explain to the readers of IMPACT, what this means?
The creator economy includes both the businesses built by creators, including bloggers, newsletter writers, streamers, YouTubers, Tik Tok creators, etc., and the technologies that make that possible.

It is believed that well over 50 million businesses qualify as creator businesses, what we call content entrepreneurs. And, although there is no statistic around this, creator businesses are one of the fastest growing in the world. Simply put, there are no barriers to entry and more people want to become successful creators than astronauts.

Many people focus on the technologies, like YouTube, Meta, Instagram or email providers like ConvertKit and Substack, but the first mention of the creator economy should always be about the creators that make the industry go.

2. What does it take to succeed as a content entrepreneur in the creator economy?
So many things, but in general, the content creator needs to first and foremost build an audience that knows, likes and trusts them. This could be through a blog, a YouTube channel, a Twitch stream or an e-newsletter.
For this to work, the content creator needs to deliver something truly different (what we call The Content Tilt) and deliver that content consistently over a long-period of time. According to The Tilt research, it takes 6 months for a future content entrepreneur to generate revenue and 17 months for them to be self-sustaining.

3. Who are the typical content entrepreneurs of 2022? I've seen that some refer to them as 'the unconventionals'?
Most people think of the big content creators out there, like MrBeast on YouTube or Hasan Piker on Twitch, but most successful content entrepreneurs have small, loyal audiences of super fans.

We call them "the unconventionals" because content entrepreneurs span all age groups, industries and channels. For most, success isn't based on a viral hit or even a massive audience. A content entrepreneur can live anywhere and literally be "next door."

Big influencers get a lot of the attention, but it's the middle-class of content creators that runs the creator economy.

4. So many people talk about building massive audiences, but how do you actually go about doing this?
You never set out to build a massive audience. You actually want to identify a small, niche audience where you can become the leading expert in a particular area. Once you do that, you can always broaden your reach.

For example, the Huffington Post started as just one blog to one audience covering one topic. Now they have hundreds of blogs.

Start with the audience, the audience's pain points, and solve those pain points consistently over time.

5. How do you develop valuable content?
Simply put, it takes time. Whether you start as a blog or a podcast or a video, most of your initial content will be (let's be honest) terrible. MrBeast says his first 100 videos on YouTube were absolutely horrible. Now he has over 100 million followers.

Like anything else, it takes time to figure out your voice, your content niche, and truly understand the audience.

6. You talk about identifying the intersection between one's expertise and one's future customer's needs. What does this mean?
Your expertise? What are you good at or passionate about? What can you create content about consistently that is better than most?

Your audience's desire? What keeps them up at night? How can you position your content to meet their needs? This intersection creates a "sweet spot" that you can own and become a leading expert in a niche to a particular audience.

7. You use the frame 'TILT' and refer to finding a place, where little or no competition exists. Is this similar to the mindset of the Blue Ocean Strategy, or?
Yes, very similar to the Blue Ocean Strategy. The Content Tilt is the next step beyond the sweet spot. Most companies stop at the sweet spot. The problem? There may be 100 companies trying to do the same thing. How are you going to break through with a minimal budget?

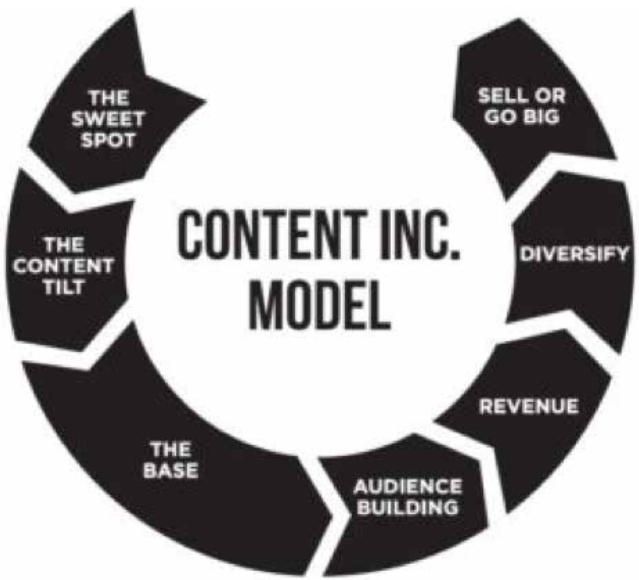
So, we need to differentiate. We could do this by focusing on a very small content niche that is ignored. We can do it through our point of view. We could do it on a different platform. We could have a very unique personality or sense of humor. We could do it through our consistency.

8. What if I have built a very promising content business and want to sell it. What should I consider in this process?
First, you should set your exit strategy early. Do you want to sell this thing you are building or keep it? You want to make this decision early because it will affect all the decisions to follow. For example, calling the content brand Joe Pulizzi would be a horrible brand to sell. I mean, what company would buy that? But if you want to keep it forever, then great.

Also, for most content creator businesses, they sell to partners and sponsors. That means over time we want to build close relationships with these partners and make a list of those potential sponsors that would want to buy you. How can you fill a gap that they need?

Also, what you sell makes a difference in what you sell for. For example, an event business as the core revenue will probably get you more money on a sale than a print magazine business. Subscription businesses (recurring revenue) are the most coveted.

9. You've created a model – The Content Inc. model. Can you run us through this briefly?
Content Inc. walks you through the entire process of becoming a successful content creator. The steps include how a content creator can:



- Identify the intersection of your expertise and your future customer's needs
- Determine how to "tilt" your sweet spot to find a place where little or no competition exists
- Establish your number-one channel for disseminating content (blog, podcast, YouTube, etc.)
- Use social-media and SEO to convert one-time visitors into long-term subscribers
- Grow your business by expanding into multiple delivery channels
- Monetize your product or service for ultimate business success
- Understand how to sell your content asset for millions or build the business into a large enterprise

The Content Inc. model was developed by working with and interviewing hundreds of successful content creation businesses and is the same model used to build the New York Times, Red Bull Media House, and Huffington Post.

10. This book is about IMPACT, which is obviously a very broad term. When it comes to your work and your passion for content marketing, how do you see this area align with the broader agenda of making a positive impact on the world?
I fell in love with content marketing because I believe it is the absolute best way to market and sell products and services. BEFORE selling anything, we deliver amazing information to prospects. Once they come to know, like and trust us, they become customers.

Sounds like magic, doesn't it? While there is nothing wrong with advertising or traditional marketing, I do believe there is a better way…and that better way has had a major impact on both marketing professionals and the customers we communicate with.

Start with the audience, the audience's pain points, and solve those pain points consistently over time.

JOE PULIZZI
Author, podcaster, marketing speaker & entrepreneur

Would you rather have a million dollars or a penny that doubles every day?

Author CHRIS KAUFMAN

CHRIS KAUFMAN *is the Co-Founder and former Chief Creative Officer of StockX. As a creative leader, entrepreneur, designer, and investor, he focuses his efforts on women and minority-led businesses and initiatives that positively impact Detroit and the surrounding region. He's currently pursuing his Master of Fine Arts in 2D Design at the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Master of Science in Learning and Organizational Change at Northwestern University.*

1. This book is all about doers and dreamers. Which one do you feel most like and why?

I really think it's a balance of both, in order to be a doer, you need to be a bit of a dreamer. If I were to describe myself, I'm definitely a doer.

There are a lot of people who have ideas, and many have really great ideas, but they don't necessarily have the drive or the expertise to execute them and I think this is really critical to making ideas happen. I think I am someone who leans towards being more of a doer than a dreamer, but it always starts with the dream.

2. What inspired you to develop StockX?

For me, this has always been about making people's lives better. Look for opportunities in the world around us, observe, be critical, and never stop striving for a better way to do things. It's what leads to really good ideas.

When we created StockX, we're certainly not the first people to sell sneakers and high-end luxury goods on the Internet, but what we saw was an opportunity to make that experience better. There was no unanimity in the market, and the idea we had was to apply stock market mechanics to secondary retail and build on the three pillars of what makes the stock market function.

The example we always use is if you buy a share of Apple stock, you don't know whom you're buying it from, but you trust in the platform to guarantee the authenticity of that share, and you know what the last person paid for it, so you can make intelligent buying/selling decisions using real market data, and we saw an opportunity to apply that to retail. That's how the idea for StockX came about.

3. Knowing what you know now, is there something that entrepreneurs should do differently?

The typical things that entrepreneurs spend a lot of time on in the beginning, are really trying to perfect and obsessing about whatever product they have. I can't stress enough the importance of just getting things to market. Undone is better than perfect. In every single scenario. The reality is no matter how perfect you think your product is until it's in the hands of customers, there are going to be things that you didn't think of. You can test and go on instinct and intuition, which is great and can get you far but it's not the same as testing in the real world.

My biggest piece of advice to entrepreneurs and myself is to move quickly. The time to obsess over details is once things are out in the world and you are perfecting that experience. I think that's something we could have done better in the beginning.

4. Do you have any techniques that help you to become a better doer?

The best advice I have is going to sound simple: You just have to take the first step. Often times the most challenging part is just taking the first step, but you can't build momentum until you take the first step.

I have a technique in my daily routine because I can be a bit of a procrastinator, and what I do is count backward from five. Normally within those five seconds, it will remove my active thought process from the task just long enough to take the step forward to do the task. I often find that when we are stuck, it's a bit of mental paralysis and if we can just for a moment get our brain out of that mode. It provides you with a great opportunity to take that step forward.

5. Is there anyone who has had a significant impact on your growth and development?

I'm fortunate to say that I have had a lot of people in my life that have had a significant impact on my growth and development. Many of those people have been people whom I have been in the trenches with and they are like family to me.

Other people like my executive coach, were instrumental in my growth and helped me get to a point of leading from a perspective of total vulnerability. I recommend that for any leaders or anyone who wants to be a leader. Find yourself a great executive coach. I can't stress enough, how beneficial that is.

The last group of people that are really important to me and influenced my growth over time it's been, teachers. These people set a good foundation for me early on and I feel forever in debt to these people that have dedicated their lives to education and continue to have an impact on my life.

6. What has been your motivation with StockX?

I think creating products that change people's lives, creating businesses that help create jobs, in the case of StockX, we were creating a lot of jobs in the city of Detroit. Which directly contributed to the revitalization of a major American city, and we are very proud to be involved and be a small part of that.

What really motivates me is working on things that are making a positive impact on the world, and building a great team alongside me and accomplish those things. That's the most incredible part of this journey.

7. What does success mean to you?

I define success as, doing meaningful, fulfilling work, that has a positive impact on the world. Making a lot of money is not a mark of success. It might be a measure of progress and success in the business, but I don't think that this necessarily makes one successful as a leader or in their career. Success is not measured by money, success is measured by

the impact that we are having on the world, and that is the most important measure of success to me.

8. As someone with design background, are the details or the bigger picture more important?
They are both very important to me, details are more important, and I say this as somebody who comes from the design and creative side of the business. Good design is a good business and the thing that sets apart good design from great design is details.

Big picture, you've got the idea, and start working on your idea. But over time you got to start focusing on the incremental, which is all about details, and it makes the difference. It's about making a small incremental change that compounds over time.

The analogy, that I think of when I think of this is: 'Would you rather have a million dollars or a penny that doubles every day for thirty days?' And most people would choose the million dollars but when you do the math and you will figure out that the penny will become way more than a million dollars. That's a really good lesson in the value of compounding small changes and how much those things make a difference over time. I think long term it's all about details, short term, you got to figure out your big picture.

9. What are your tips for building a great team?
It's all about culture and trust, and being a servant leader. It's your job to build a good culture, a safe space to share ideas, and approach conflict from a place of trust and vulnerability. You have to set an example and be in the trenches for them, that is the most important part if you want to build a good team. And to get the right people on your team.

I think one of the most important things is to hire slowly, it's always important with expertise, but something that's way more important is attitude and passion. I can teach anyone to do the job if they are willing to learn and have the right attitude, but you can't teach somebody to be excited to be a part of something. You got to hire for attitude first, then you need to continue to grow and foster that person once they are on your team.

Then if something is not working out, and you have done everything that you can do. You got to fire fast for everyone's sake because you got to show that there is a level of accountability and we're going to stick to that as a team. I think those are the most important things I can share about building a team.

10. Are you working on other exciting projects besides StockX?
A handful of things, I'm at the point of transition in my career. I decided to take a step back from the day-to-day operations at StockX to a smaller capacity in an advisory role. For the next couple of years, I'm going to focus on my education, and I will be working on graduate degrees in both fine art and organizational change.

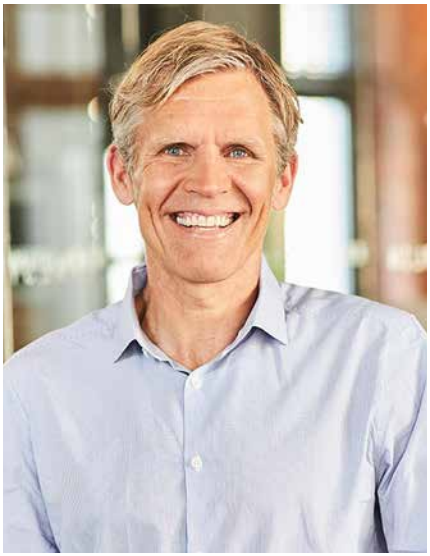
There are also a handful of organizations and a handful of investments that I'm involved in and advise on regularly. I'm heavily involved with Eastern Michigan University and I'm on an advisory board there, called GameAbove. There is a dating app that I'm working on with some young entrepreneurs called IRLY, I'm an advisor and an investor there and it's just getting off the ground. And there is Detroit Pizza Depot in LA and a barbershop brand called The Social Club in Detroit. I'm working with them from an investment and advisory perspective.

Then recently I invested in a health and beauty brand, whom I'm now advising. It was founded by two Asian

women, which I'm super excited about and they have already seen a lot of success driving revenue. Then I'm also an executive producer for a project called Vert project. But what we are doing is, we're looking at microbiomes and specifically, microbiomes that flourish in extreme conditions and looking at the DNA of those organisms. Seeing if their adaptivity and evolution can be applied to human beings.

GROWTH

CHAPTER 3



When is the right time to expand?

Author MIKA SALMI

MIKA SALMI *is a serial entrepreneur. He has invested in multiple unicorns, discovered Grammy, Oscar and Emmy winning artists, created the original online short video company, run the internet's most popular casual games web sites, built one of the first sports tracking apps, and pioneered new business models in education.*
Mika has done this as a Founder and as a CEO. Now he is leading Lakestar as Managing Partner, a top global VC based in Europe.

We at Lakestar recently hosted a dinner in Paris with 30 tech founders and investors on the topic of "Going Global." The evening generated some interesting insights worth sharing.

Expanding beyond your home market may seem like a given if you are an ambitious tech start-up - no matter where you are based in the world. And the reality is that for a company to achieve real scale and to show strong growth over time it needs to expand into multiple markets.

But how and when to go global is not always so clear. It is certainly not an obvious choice when your home market is large (like the US and China) even if you subscribe to **Reid Hoffman's** mantra of **"Blitzscaling"**.

So, the question really isn't "if" but "when" and "how." When to go global really depends on the company and the type of product and what kind of customers you have. And even so, the choice of when to go global may not follow hard rules.

For example, one French company at our dinner is building customer service software. They are less than a year old and are in the process of raising their seed round. This company already has plans to expand outside of France to the US via a New York outpost once the seed round closes. This may seem too early to some but the CEO/Founder was confident in his decision because the immediate opportunity he saw in the US market was too great to wait until his business was more mature.

On the other hand, the founders of two much more mature companies at the dinner – **BlaBlaCar** and **Eventbrite** – said they didn't formally expand outside of their home markets (France and USA) until a few years after their founding

and until after they had received their Series A financing. Due to the nature of its platform, Eventbrite actually had users from over 100 countries within a couple of years of launching. But they waited to "launch" in various markets with a dedicated team until they had a clear strategy and solid plan.

BlaBlaCar is a shared transportation company and would have seemed to be an obvious choice to be cross border on day one. But they waited longer than you would expect because they not only wanted to have their strategy clear but they needed a certain level of financing before expanding.

Indeed, expanding too soon can be a big problem for a young company. Not only will you stretch your resources (people and capital), but understanding your customer is critical when you initially build your product. If you're too spread out with a diversity of customers, the data and knowledge you receive may be diluted, and you won't be able to build a product that customers love.

Here a few reasons to go global at a specific time:

1. Existing customer request – you have a customer that operates across borders and they want to use your product in another market;

2. Demand driven – you are getting requests from numerous potential customers in another market;

3. Competition – a competitor is aggressively pursuing a market that you cannot afford to lose;

4. Revenue/Scale/Growth – your home market growth is slowing and you are looking for further revenue growth;

5. Opportunistic – you are presented a unique opportunity you can't pass up.

The business model revolution

Author BILL SCHMARZO

BILL SCHMARZO *is Author, Professor, Innovator, Advisor - Data Science, Design Thinking and Data Economics. Bill is the Customer Data Innovation Lead for Dell Technologies Data Management Innovation group. He was Chief Innovation Officer at Hitachi Vantara and VP of Advertiser Analytics at Yahoo. Bill has written 4 books and over 400 blogs. Bill holds MBA from University of Iowa and BS in Mathematics, Computer Science and Business Administration from Coe College.*

Of course, taking a hammer to a casino is probably not a good thing.

We are in the middle of a business model revolution. And we are active participants in that revolution. We have been transitioning from a society where possession and application of physical commodities defined wealth and power, to a society where possession and application of knowledge define wealth and power.

Throughout the 20th century, oil had been the most valuable commodity in defining wealth and power. Possession and application of oil defined the fortunes of individuals (John D. Rockefeller, H.L. Hunt, Paul Getty), companies (Standard Oil, ExxonMobil, Shell, BP), and countries (United States, Russia, Saudi Arab, Iraq, Canada, Venezuela). Countries even went to war over oil (watch out Canada).

Today, wealth creation has transitioned to companies (Google, Meta, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft) and individuals (Jeff, Steve, Larry, Sergey, Mark, Bill, Elon) who possess and apply customer, product, service, and operational **knowledge** to power superior business and operational outcomes via a continuously-learning customer experience (Figure 1).

Today's leading companies are exploiting the economic characteristics of knowledge or **insights** (where insights are predictive behavioral and performance propensities at the individual human or device entity level) gleaned using data and analytics – digital assets that not only can be used across an unlimited number of use cases at zero marginal cost, but can also continuously-learn, adapt, and refine to become more valuable the more that they are used.

But let's be clear about what differentiates today's business model transformation. Those companies that are thriving during this business model transformation aren't in the tools business. They are in the knowledge business.

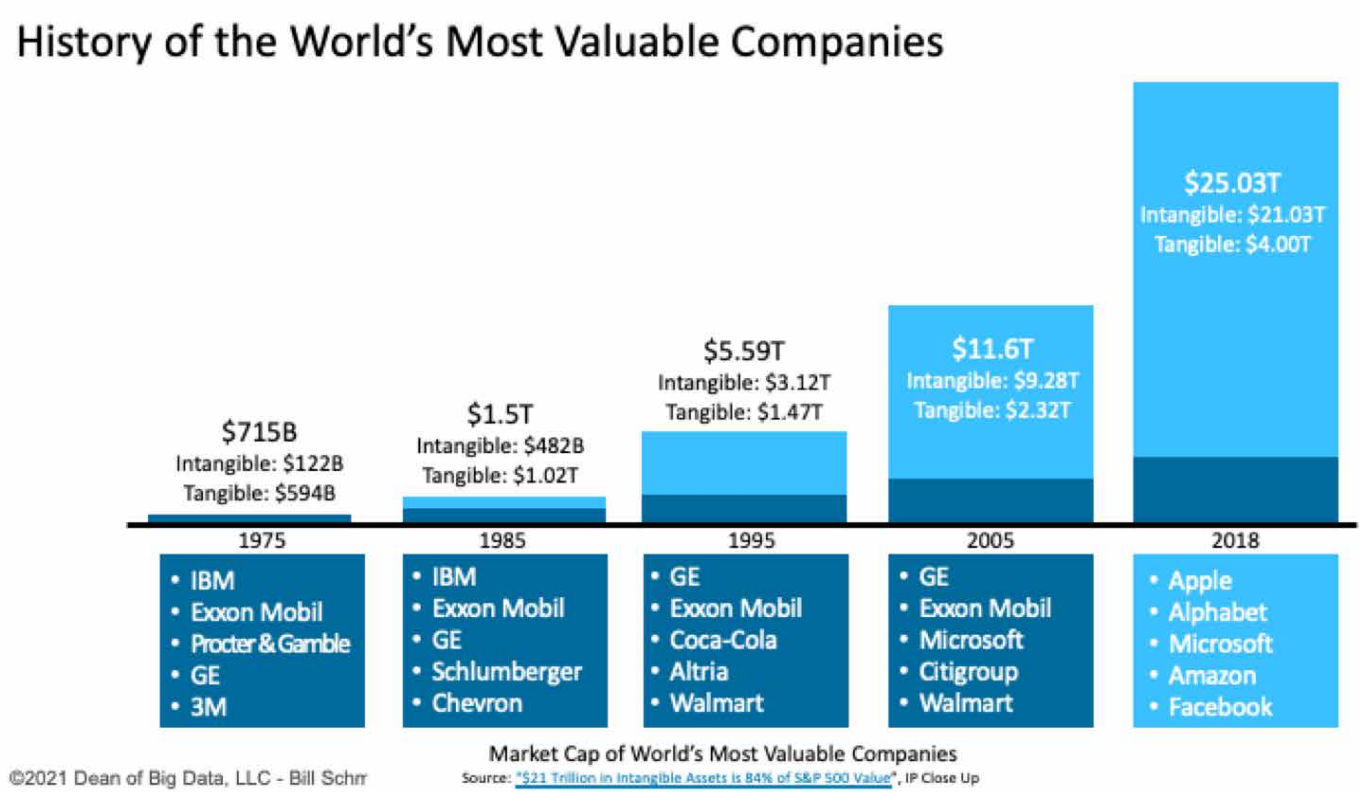


Figure 1: History of the World's Most Valuable Companies

Hammers versus Casinos Business Model

These transformational companies – plus others such as Uber, Netflix, Spotify, American Express, and Wealthfront – are in the business of uncovering, codifying, and leveraging customer, product, service, and operational **knowledge** (predictive behavioral and performance propensities) that deliver superior business and operational outcomes through a more compelling, continuously-learning customer experience.

These companies are not in the tools business. They are more similar to the casino business, a business that derives and drives value by leveraging customer, service, and operational knowledge to create a more compelling, continuously-learning customer experience (Figure 2).

Surprisingly, many of these companies that are digitally transforming their business models do make tools, but they then open-source those tools versus selling them. For example:

- Google has created several valuable, open-source tools including Android (an open-source operating system based designed primarily for an array of devices with different form factors), TensorFlow (an end-to-end open-source platform for machine learning), Keras (which provides a Python interface for artificial neural networks), and MapReduce (programming model used to access big data stored in the Hadoop File System).

- Facebook is an example of another company that has created and then open-sourced many powerful tools including Presto (distributed SQL query engine for running interactive analytic queries), Cassandra (distributed, wide-column store, NoSQL database management system), and Hive (distributed, fault-tolerant data warehouse system).

- LinkedIn has made several open-source tool contributions including Apache Kafka (distributed event store and stream-processing platform), Voldemort (Distributed key-value store), and Pinot (real-time distributed OLAP store).

- Yahoo has made open-source tool contributions including Apache Hadoop (using a network of many computers to solve problems involving massive amounts of data and computation) and Vespa (a full-featured text search engine that supports both regular text search and fast approximate vector search).

And why do these leading companies give away these powerful "tools"? Let's review Google's decision to open-source TensorFlow to understand a key aspect of organizations that are digitally transforming their business models.

Figure 2: What is Your Digital Transformation Business Model

Business Model Transformation Key #1: Exploiting Economies of Learning

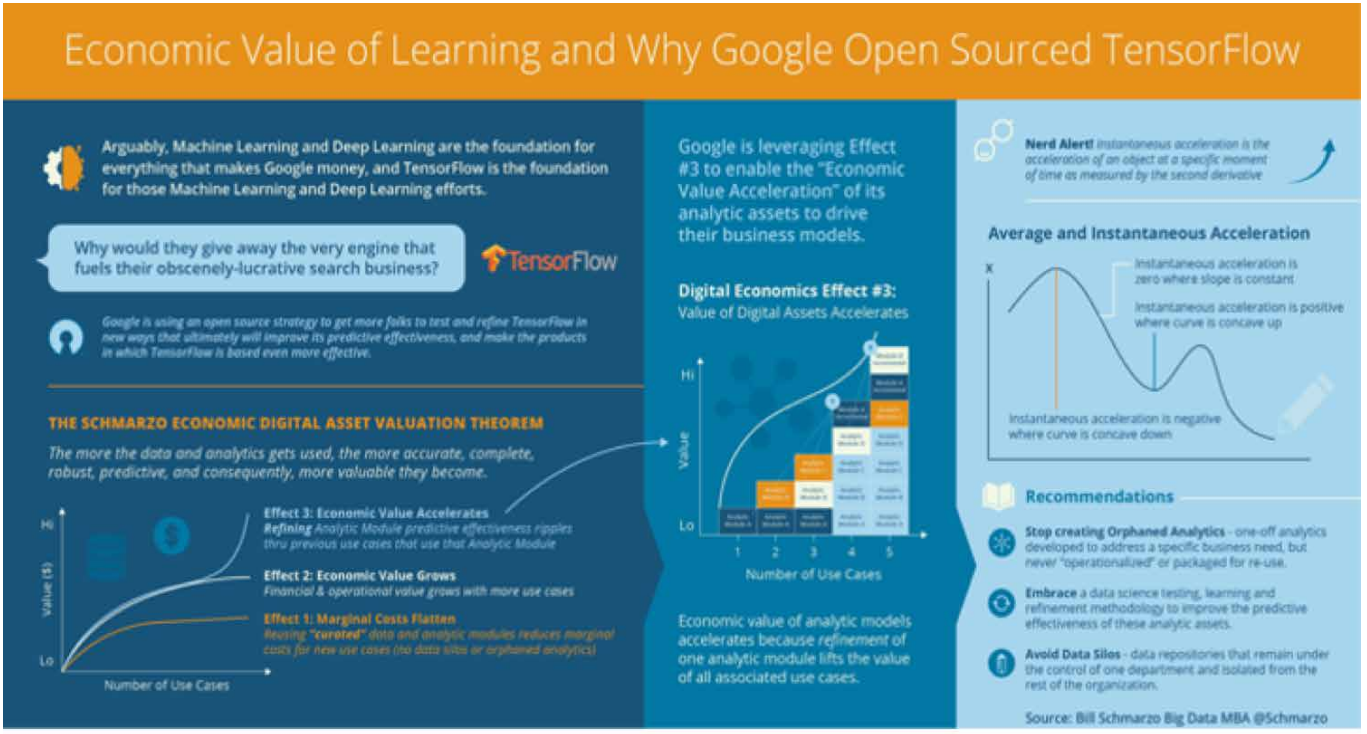
Google uses TensorFlow to power many of its most profitable services including Personal Photo App (it auto-magically groups your photos into storyboards or collages), recognize spoken words (natural language processing), translate foreign languages (handy for me as I frequently travel internationally), and its search engine. Arguably, TensorFlow is the foundation for everything that makes Google money.

So, why would Google open-source this incredibly valuable tool?

From the Forbes article ***"Reasons Why Google's Latest AI-TensorFlow is Open Sourced"***, we get this valuable insight (maybe the most important lesson in digitally transforming one's business model):

"In order to keep up with this influx of data and ***expedite the evolution of its machine learning engine****, Google has open sourced its engine TensorFlow."*

Figure 3: "Economic Value of Learning and Why Google Open Sourced TensorFlow"



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Google open-sourced TensorFlow to gain tens of thousands of more users across thousands of new use cases so that TensorFlow could **learn** and improve the predictive effectiveness of the platform that runs Google's business. Google knows that they are in the knowledge business and understands that the "economies of learning" are more powerful than the "economies of scale."

So, we understand that the source of economic value isn't in the tools. And shockingly, the source of economic value isn't in the data. The true source of economic value is in applying the tools to one's data to uncover, codify, and leverage customer, product, service, and operational predictive insights.

Business Model Transformation Key #2: Insights Monetization

The Data & Analytics Business Model Maturity Index provides a roadmap and guide to help organizations to become more effective at leveraging data and analytics to power their business models. And underpinning the Data & Analytics Business Model Maturity Index is a powerful **Analytic Insights Undertow** driven by the organization's ability to 1) mine, 2) apply, and 3) monetization individualized customer, product, service, and operational **predictive insights** (Figure 4).

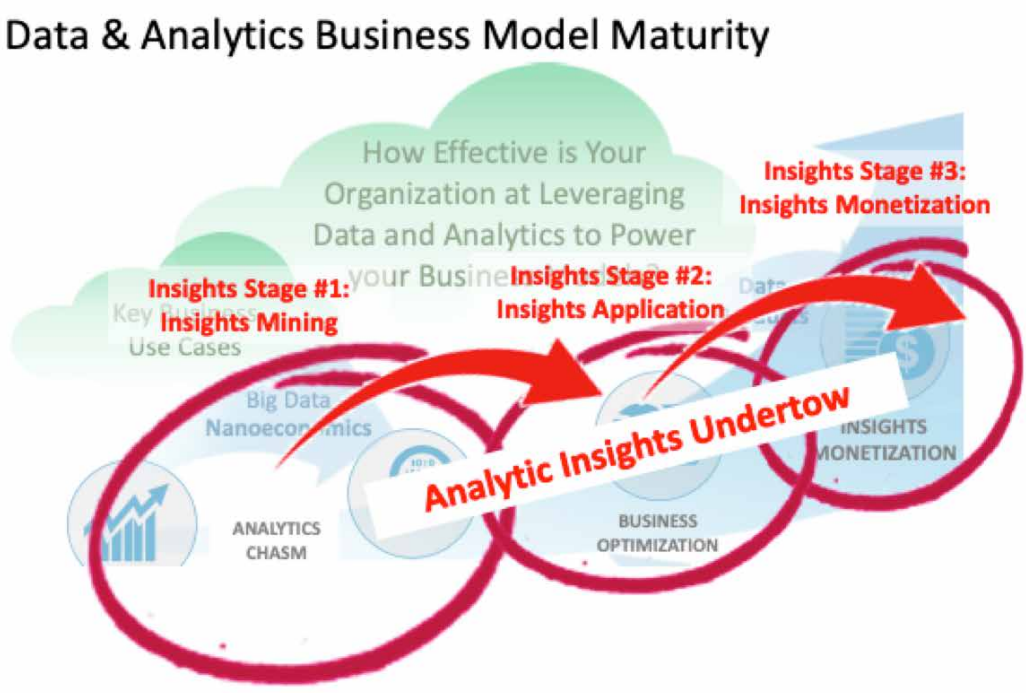

Figure 4: Analytics Insight Powerful Undertow

The Analytics Insights Undertow powering the Data & Analytics Business Model Maturity Index is comprised of 3 stages:

- **Stage 1: Insights Mining.** On a use case-by-use case basis (a best practice approach that we'll discuss later), we can apply AI / ML to **mine** (or uncover), codify and capture the individualized human or device analytic insights (predictive behavioral and performance propensities).

- **Stage 2: Insights Application.** We can then **apply** the individualized analytic insights to optimize the organization's key business and operational use cases that deliver a meaningful, quantifiable ROI for each use case.

- **Stage 3: Insights Monetization.** We can leverage the customer, product, and operational insights to create new revenue opportunities (such as new products, services, audiences, channels, markets, partnerships, consumption models, etc.) and new data products that open up and expand the organization's total addressable market.

To support the Analytic Insights Undertow, we use Analytic Profiles to capture, share, and refine the individualized customer, product, service, and operational analytic insights or predictive propensities (Figure 5).

Analytic Profiles provide a data model for capturing, codifying and sharing the analytic insights at the individual human or device level. These individualized analytic in-

Figure 5: Analytic Profiles

Healthcare Analytic Profiles: Codifying Analytic Insights

Analytic Profiles codify, share, re-use and continuously-refine the predicted propensities, patterns, trends and relationships for the organization's key human and device assets

Patient Care Data

- Demographic
- Behavioral Demographics
- Psychographics
- Patient care / treatment history
- Patient vital stats history
- Physician / Nurse care notes
- Patient comments
- Pharmacy/Prescriptions
- Others...

Schmarzo Patient Healthcare Profile	NCE Score	Variance	Trend
Health Score	92	1.89	↑
Wellness Score	92	1.85	↔
Diet Score	67	3.25	↔
Exercise Score	82	2.25	↑
Stress Score	65	1.90	↓
COVID19 At-Risk Score	22	2.35	↓
Cancer At-Risk Score	14	1.74	↑
Pulmonary At-Risk Score	02	1.15	↔
Oncology At-Risk Score	08	1.20	↓
Heart Attack At-Risk Score	09	1.25	↔
Stroke At-Risk Score	06	1.10	↔
....			

External Patient Data

- Diet History (DietPlanner, MyFitnessPal)
- Physical Exercise History (Apple Watch, FitBit)
- Mental Acuity History (Lumosity, CogniFit)
- Stress History (Stress Doctor, Happify)
- Emotional History (Text, Social)
- Vices History
- Vacation / Relaxation History
- Others...

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sights can include KPIs, predictive indicators, segments, analytic scores (think individualized credit score), features, and business rules that codify the behaviors, preferences, propensities, inclinations, tendencies, interests, associations, and affiliations of the organization's key human or device business entities.

Business Model Transformation Key #3: Use Case-driven Execution

Use Cases *are clusters of* ***Decisions*** *whose effectiveness is measured by* ***Key Performance Indicators*** *(KPIs) that drive the delivery of specific* ***Business or Operational Outcomes.***

A use case-by-use case approach for creating, sharing, and refining the organization's data and analytic assets has the benefit of delivering measurable and meaningful financial and operational benefits more quickly. There is no need to wait for that data and analytics "big bang" project (and associated spend).

It is against the analytic insights (predictive propensities) stored in the Analytic Profiles that optimize the use cases that deliver superior business and operational outcomes (Figure 6).

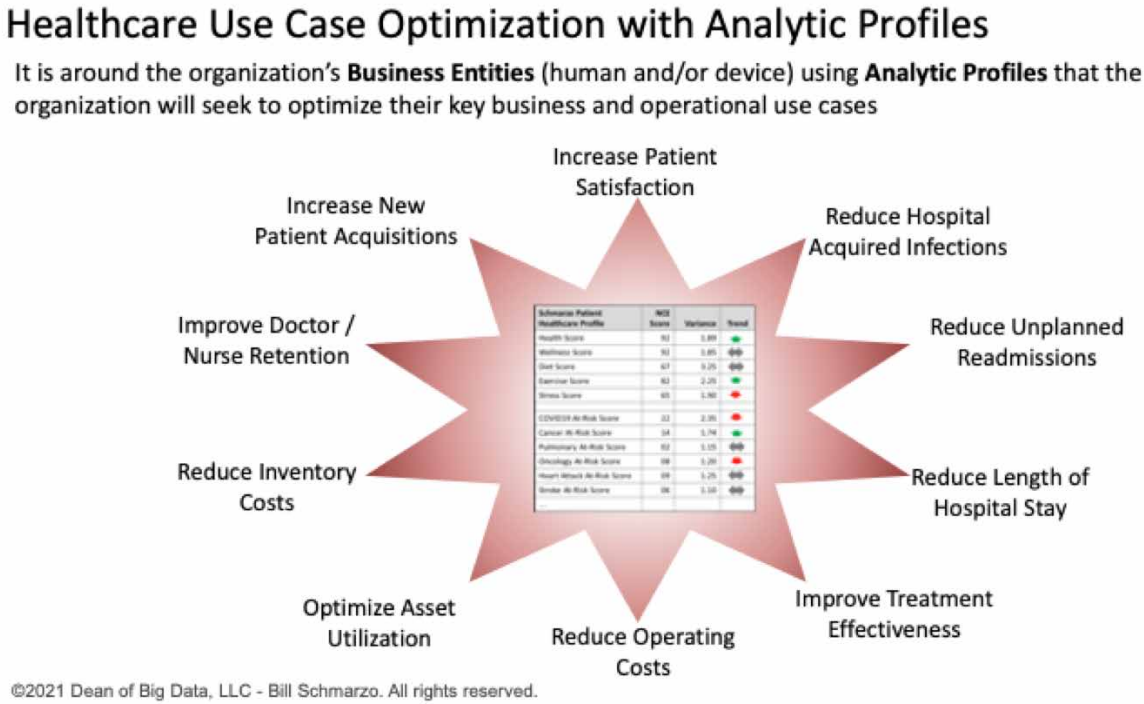


Figure 6: Role of Analytic Profiles in Optimizing Business and Operational Use Cases

The focus on use cases as the driver of the organization's business model transformation is both powerful (from a value creation perspective) and enabling (from an organizational alignment perspective). Why?

- Use cases are readily identifiable by the business stakeholders and subject matter experts (because they live them every day)
- Resolution or optimization of use cases is a source of quantifiable business and operational value (improving, reducing, or optimizing the use cases can have material business and operational value)
- A focus on use cases synergizes the collaboration between business stakeholders and the data science (data and analytics) team to define the objectives, benefits, value statements, and potential impediments of the use case, identify the metrics and KPIs against which use case progress and success will be measured, and codify the associated costs of use case False Positives and False Negatives (see "The Art of Thinking Like a Data Scientist" methodology).
- A use case-by-use case implementation approach provides an incremental, "pays for itself" approach to building out the organization's data and analytic assets and capabilities (see the "Schmarzo Economic Digital Asset Valuation Theorem").

Hammers or Casino Business Model Summary

In knowledge-based industries, the economies of learning are more powerful than the economies of scale. And soon,

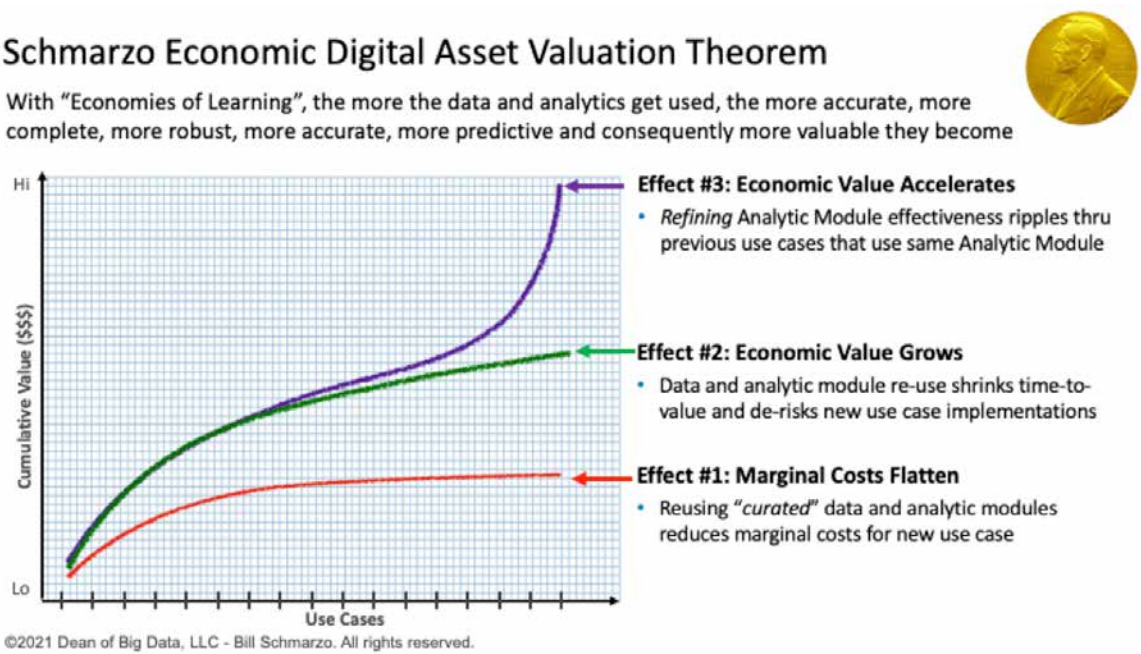


Figure 7: Schmarzo Economic Digital Asset Valuation Theorem

we'll all be competing in knowledge-based industries.

We are transitioning from business models where possession and application of physical commodities defined wealth and power, to business models where possession and application of customer, product, service, and operational knowledge define wealth and power.

Key concepts behind this business model transformation include:

- **Economies of Learning:** accelerating the organization's ability to continuously learn, adapt, and refine from both an AI / ML as well as a human perspective.
- **Insights Monetization:** understanding and exploiting the powerful Analytics Insights Undertow driven by the organization's ability to 1) mine, 2) apply, and 3) monetization individualized customer, product, service, and operational **predictive insights.**
- **Use case-by-use case Execution:** Driving the organization's knowledge or predictive insights mining, application, and monetization process on a use case-by-use case basis that is a powerful enabler from both a value creation as well as organizational alignment perspective.

Do these things well (in addition to unleashing the creative and innovative capabilities of all your employees, something that I'll discuss in my next blog), and you've earned the honor of being able to exploit all three effects that comprise the Schmarzo Economic Digital Asset Valuation Theorem to accelerate your digital transformation (Figure 7).

> **We are transitioning from business models where possession and application of physical commodities defined wealth and power, to business models where possession and application of customer, product, service, and operational knowledge define wealth and power.**

BILL SCHMARZO
Author, Professor, Innovator & Advisor

The ExO model and how to benefit from it

Author SALIM ISMAIL

SALIM ISMAIL *is is the best-selling author of Exponential Organizations and Chairman at OpenExO. He is a sought-after strategist and has been building disruptive digital companies as a serial entrepreneur since the early 2000s. As a prolific speaker, Salim gives more than 150 talks a year. He has been profiled across a vast array of media outlets including The New York Times, Bloomberg BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, WIRED, Vogue, and the BBC.*

1. For people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what an ExO is?
An ExO (Exponential Organization) is a purpose-driven, agile, scalable, flexible organization that enjoys a massive drop in the marginal cost of supply thanks to its implementation of ExO attributes and technology. It organizes all stakeholders in an innovative way and enjoys positive outcomes disproportionately larger than its peers. And, ultimately, it works to make the world a better place.

First described in the book Exponential Organizations, the ExO model can be written as
ExO = MTP + SCALE + IDEAS

MTP - Massive Transformative Purpose. The MTP reflects an organization's aspiration—the core purpose of its existence. It describes the change in the world that the organization wants to achieve. This is an essential attribute for all ExO's.

SCALE Attributes - a group of five attributes focused on connecting and keeping abundance

- S Staff on Demand
  - Tap Global Talent for Exponential Growth.
- C Community & Crowd
  - The Engine of Exponential Growth.
- A Algorithms
  - Leveraging Data for Exponential Growth.
- L Leveraged Assets
  - Why Own When You Can SCALE?
- E Engagement
  - Make Exponential Growth Stick.

IDEAS Attributes - a group of five attributes focused on managing abundance to grow

- I Interfaces
  - Removing Limits to Exponential Growth.
- D Dashboards
  - Steer your ExO RocketShip.

- E Experimentation - Exponential Learning.
- A Autonomy
  - Self-Directed Teams for Exponential Growth.
- S Social - 10x Collaboration.

2. Can you share examples of organizations leveraging ExO attributes?

- MTP
- Airbnb - Giving humanity a place to belong
- TED - Ideas Worth Spreading
- GitHub - Social coding
- Tesla - Accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy
- IKEA - Create a better everyday life for people
- Unilever - Make sustainable living commonplace
- SpaceX - Making Humanity Multiplanetary

Staff on Demand - This is a vital part of the business model of a number of organizations such as task Rabbit, Uber, Fiverr, and essentially all Gig economy platforms. Numerous organizations and Startups can leverage these platforms for leveraging Staff on Demand. We also want to make it clear that Staff on Demand is not about exploiting people. The social contract is fairly broken and is something that as a society we need to work on repairing.

Community & Crowd - TED is a great example of how they leveraged their community to build out TEDx. Tesla leverages their community for marketing activities and advocacy. X Prize leverage the crowd for its prizes. Kickstarter and other Crowdfunding platforms leverage crowds for both projects and funding. Xiaomi uses the community to develop and test products.

Algorithms - YouTube, Netflix, and Amazon all use recommendation algorithms. UPS and other last mile courier companies use routing algorithms, Deepminds learning algorithms are what beat Lee Sedol at Go. With AI tools in the cloud more and more organizations can leverage Algorithms

Leveraged Assets - This is vital to the sharing economy, leveraging empty rooms or cars with Airbnb/Couchsurfing and ride-sharing. Apple leverage the manufacturing capability of Foxconn. Many organizations leverage Google Maps Assets for their products. Leveraging Cloud computing is a simple form of leveraged assets.

Engagement - Including gamification techniques in your offering can be difficult but organizations such as Duolingo or Eyewire have done this well. TikTok can engage users to remain in their app. Axie Infinity is an example of engagement in the new play to earn space.

Interfaces - The App Store developer interfaces or Google AdWords are interfaces that take on the majority of the work thus making them extremely scalable. Zapier is a tool that offers companies API access thus giving them the ability to improve their interface, there are other API tools too.

Dashboards - The BYD dashboard shared in this video is a show of what is possible. Measuring what matters is extremely important. Many organizations leverage dashboards with vanity metrics that are difficult to understand or use to implement changes.

Experimentation - Amazon's institutional Yes and Type1 vs Type 2 decisions leads to experimentation. Looks at how SpaceX experiment constantly, something rare in that industry. Tata has an annual best failure award to reward experimentation.

Autonomy - Examples of Autonomy at work include Morning Star Company, a tomato processor in California organizationally structured through a system called Mission Focused Self-Management. The company is operated by colleagues without titles or an appointed hierarchy of authority. Leadership is dynamic and situational and is taken based on competency and integrity. Buurtzorg is a pioneering health care organization in the Netherlands with 9,000 nurses and only 28 support staff. It is a distributed network of nurse teams of 10-12 with local decision authority, caring for people in their neighborhoods. They save the Dutch social security system hundreds of millions of Euros each year, and actively help competitors learn their methods and philosophy.

Since 1983 FAVI, the 400-person French automotive parts supplier has operated in teams with no management layer or executive committee. It commands a 50% market share, it hasn't missed a shipping date in over 25 years, and with profit-sharing, each employee receives 16-17 months salary equivalent per year.

Social - Most startups leverage the Social attribute well. Many large organizations feel that due to the Pandemic they too are leveraging this attribute well and whilst video conferencing has increased dramatically many are still using email as the main communication tool.

But the bigger the organization, the bigger the impact. In 2015, we ranked the Fortune 100 against the ExO model and tracked them over seven years. Essentially, how purpose-driven, agile, flexible and scalable were their org structures. In 2022, we ran a 7-yr trailing analysis comparing the top 10 that used the attribute the most versus the bottom 10 that least used the model—the results were astounding. The top 10 (most ExO friendly) outperformed the bottom 10 by 3x on revenue growth, 6x on profitability, and fully 40x on shareholder returns. Let's just repeat that last line. Over a 7-year period, the biggest companies that most used the ExO attributes delivered fully 40 times better shareholder returns than those that used the attributes the least. Basically, this is very clear evidence that as the external world becomes more volatile, your ability to adapt will drive market value.

3. You talk about disruptive convergence. Can you explain what this is, and why it's important?

Disruptive convergence is where different Exponential Technologies come together to cause greater disruption. Elon Musk uses this in all his businesses, looking at technologies converging and building a product to leverage this. For example, in Tesla, it's sensors, battery technologies, material sciences, internet access, machine learning, etc. I often speak about the twenty Gutenberg moments happening all at once. There are in fact at least a dozen different technologies that are doubling in their price performance or usability every nine months to three years and organizations need to understand these and how they can be leveraged. For example, we are only a few years away from a product that leverages genome sequencing, together with biometric sensors and CRISPR to radically improve health.

4. Many entrepreneurs will be reading this book. How can they benefit from the development of ExOs?

If you are starting or have started a company you need to be building an Exponential Organization. Being an entrepreneur is hard and therefore having a Massive Transformative Purpose is key to getting through the tough times. Then, you do not want to be building out a linear company when the world is moving faster than ever before. You want to ensure that you can build an organizational structure that is innovative, scalable and long-lasting and so

being able to map how you leverage the ExO Attributes is important.

The good news for new organizations is that you have no legacy immune system to overcome but as you grow this immune system will start to form and so recognizing this and building an ExO culture is important.

5. The IMPACT book is both about turning ideas into action and innovation, but it's also about addressing some of the world's biggest challenges at the moment – e.g., health. You've worked a lot with what you've named exponential medicine. What are the perspectives on this, when we talk about making the world a better place?
We are entering into a time where we are going to actually be able to have real healthcare as opposed to the sick-care system we have right now. The majority of people know very little about their health. They are essentially driving around with a piece of paper covering the dashboard of the car and guessing when they may need a gas refill or an oil change.

This is changing with the rise of sensors, the dropping cost of genome sequencing as well as other testing methods. For example, we'll have early detection for most cancers within five years. In addition to that, we have the use of AI in diagnosis, drug discovery, research, and other areas in the healthcare space. Next is the rise of gene editing techniques such as CRISPR which are already being used in diseases such as sickle cell anemia. Research and investment into longevity are at an all-time high, too. So ultimately there is a future where we will live healthier and longer lives.

6. I know that even though you're passionate about ExOs, it doesn't always work out in real life. So, what can we learn from the ExOs that have failed?
One thing we have learned is that ExOs are not immune to the failure modes that we see with other organizations such as the struggle to find product market fit, founder disputes, incorrect timing, lack of resources, too much funding, etc. The good news is that the cost of starting an ExO is extremely low, so the downside (and therefore risk) is very small.

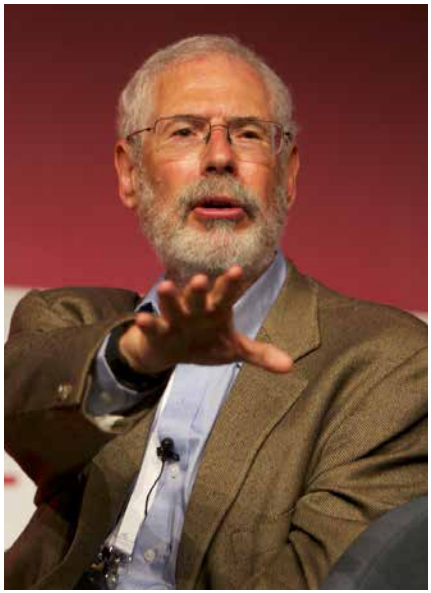
7. Entrepreneurs are reading this book, but corporate leaders are too. Would you advise them to fight these new disruptive companies or to simply buy them?
Firstly, I would say that fighting is the first misstep. Corporations should look at how they can collaborate with disruptive startups. For example Microsoft with OpenAI. Essentially corporates need to first update the leadership about where the world is, the opportunities ahead, and how to recognize their corporate immune system. We believe that it is near impossible to develop disruptive innovations in the core business and therefore innovation needs to be on the edge in a stealth mode.

8. Do you have a dream?
My MTP is to transform society. And my dream would be to see that operate in a world of abundance in a decentralized model where people can live with a full opportunity of all kinds. And I believe with free energy, lots of clean water, healthcare and education accessible over the internet (which itself will be satellite delivered at low cost), and other models that is completely possible.

Sometimes we call it Star Trek versus Mad Max. Sometimes we call it abundance versus scarcity. Today, it's clear, the evidence shows that anything is possible and it is an amazing vision to think about a world where people can live cleanly, and sustainably in harmony and synchronicity, with the planet.

So that would be my dream.

Your company survival depends on a simple formula



Author STEVE BLANK

STEVE BLANK *is an Adjunct Professor at Stanford and co-founder of the Gordian Knot Center for National Security Innovation. He has been described as the Father of Modern Entrepreneurship. Credited with launching the Lean Startup movement and the curriculums for the National Science Foundation Innovation Corps and Hacking for Defense and Diplomacy, he's changed how startups are built; how entrepreneurship is taught; how science is commercialized, and how companies and the government innovate.*

Every year I teach classrooms full of students who leave class understanding the basics of how to search for product/market fit—and thinking their next goal is to "get funded."

That's a mistake.

There are two reasons to raise money:

1. You have a killer idea that is only partially validated, that you think can get to $50M+ of revenue in 5 years with 80%+ gross margins and you need money to get to product-market fit, or;
2. You (think) you have product-market fit with real customers and real revenue and need money to grow and expand.

Not all startups need outside investment to grow. What most founders don't realize is:

- Every stage of a startup requires a different set of metrics and milestones and founder skills. Knowing these will help a founder position her pitch to get investors' attention;
- Founders need to keep their eye on the prize — not just the next funding round.

Luckily, I teach with two great VCs, Mar Hershenson of Pear Ventures and Jeff Epstein of Bessemer Venture Partners who both put together presentations unraveling the mysteries of how and why startups raise money. Jeff's presentation is from the point of a view of "What Investors Want" (see resources here) while Mar's takes it from a

founder trying to figure out the funding landscape. And thanks to Ann Miura-Ko of Floodgate (my first Lean LaunchPad co-instructor) for her suggestions.

Keep in mind that there is no "one way" to raise money. Different investors will almost certainly have different models, and different regions may have different math. Still, there are some benchmarks to keep in mind.

Here's the first 2½ years of a startup journey.

The Startup Investment Landscape

For startups the early stage funding landscape looks like this:

- Step 1: The Pre-seed round – you raise $500K-$2.5M
- Step 2: The Seed round – you raise $2.5-$7.5M
- Step 3: The Series A – you raise $7.5-$25M
- Step 4: Series B – you raise $15-$65M
- Step 5: Series, C, D….

Credit: Steve Blank

This is a journey that can be planned and measured. In a pre-seed round you are focused on building minimal viable products, testing your insights and searching for product/market fit. In the seed round you have an early product and by the end you've found product/market fit and understand the scale of what you're building and the levers that you can pull to accelerate growth. For a Series A round you want to prove you have built a repeatable and scalable sales/revenue model and understand all parts of the business model. Series B is about proving your net revenue model (can you be profitable?). Series C onwards funds growing your company to $100M in gross profit.

Pitch

By the way, if your pitch is not going to knock investors' socks off, if you cannot communicate a big vision and a unique insight about the 10x advantages which customers and users will care deeply about, then even if you build out the smartest, most thoughtful process of chasing fundraising, you will fail.

Team, Product, Traction, Business Model and Market

In each step of funding there are five questions you (and potential investors) will be asking: Tell me about your team, your product, your traction, your business model and the market.

Team is just what it sounds like. Tell me why you're the right person to lead this company (bad answer "Because it's my idea." Better answer, "Because I'm the customer.") Tell me about the group of people you've surrounded yourself with – your cofounders and then your key executives. Each stage of funding and company growth requires additional expertise and new skills, and you'll want to demonstrate that you have these with potential investors.

Product (sometimes called the "value proposition") is the product or service you're building. One of the tough things for a startup is to figure out how much of the "product" has to be real and working at each stage of funding.

Traction is a fancy investor word for "Show me you're making progress." It's sometimes called "product/market fit." In a startup's early days – pre-seed and seed – this is not about how much revenue you've made but more about how much customer passion your product is creating and how many more are loving it each week/month.

Business Model - Founders tend to fixate on the product. Now that product/market fit is part of the lexicon most understand that the product also needs passionate customers. But great product and eager customers are just part of what makes a great business. The rest that makes up a company is called its business model. These elements of the business model– revenue (pricing, pricing strategy), distribution channel, How to Get/Keep/Grow customers, Key Activities, Resources and Costs – are other, critical parts your start up needs to understand and have in place.

Market is a euphemism for "How big can your company grow?" Investors want to put their money to work in a startup that can be worth billions or tens of billions of dollars. What are your unique insights about technology, economics, change in market, etc. What evidence do you have that you can grow this big? How will you do it?

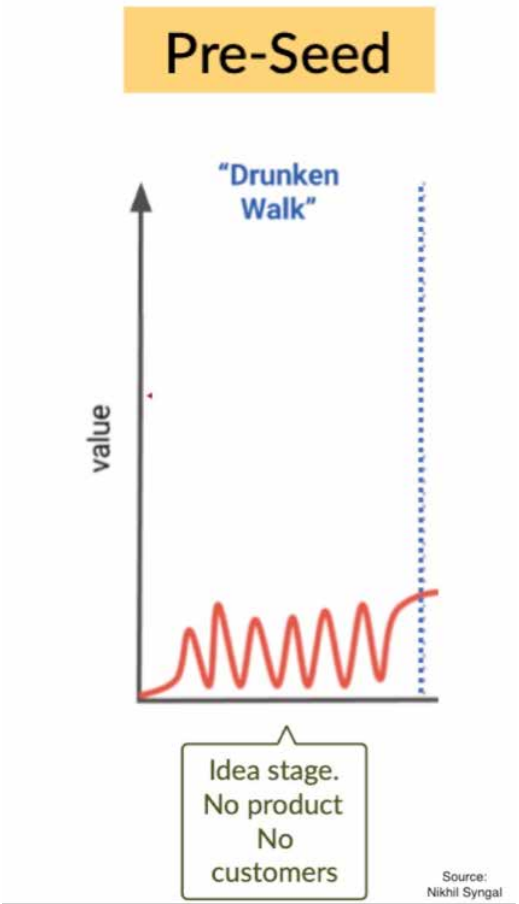
The big idea about all of this is that at each step of funding, the order and priority of team, product, traction and market changes.

Pre-seed Round of Funding

In the pre-seed stage, a startup is searching for product/market fit. There are no customers and no product, just a series of minimal viable products.

Funding: Startups typically raise anywhere from $500K to $2,500,000 in pre-seed. At the low-end this might come from friends, family or angel investors. At the high-end pre-seed angel funds might invest.

- *Team:* As you're raising money from friends, family or angels, investors in this round are betting mostly about you and your team. Have you or your team members achieved anything important in the past? Any wins to date in your startup? Do you have co-founders who complement your skills?



- *Traction:* Tell investors about your search for product/market fit and what you've learned from potential customers to date. Show them the evolution of your minimal viable product and its current state. You need to begin to "instrument" your customer acquisition process with analytics.
- *Product:* At this stage you are building a series of low-fidelity products (sometimes called a minimal viable product or MVP). It might be a wire-frame, PowerPoint demo or prototype. The goal of the product at this stage is not a sale, but to test hypotheses about customer product/market fit.
- *Market:* Tell us why this is going to be a huge market. Even better, start with a unique insight – what have people missed, what's changed, what's now possible?
- *Business Model:* List all the parts of your business model. What are your assumptions about each part? What is some of the critical metrics that matter? How do you plan to test them.

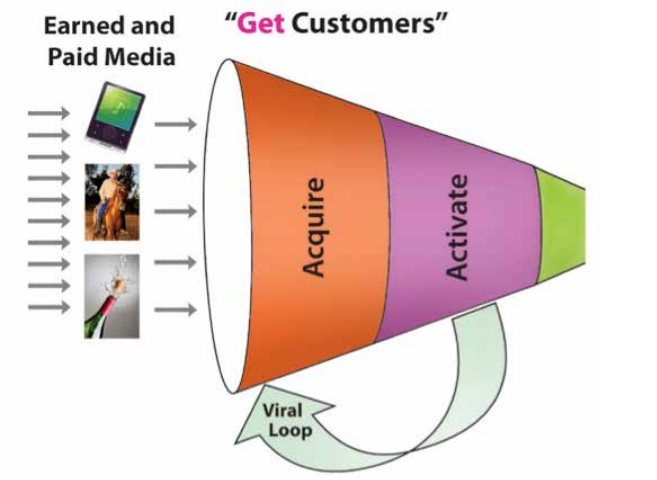
Goal/Time: By the end of the pre-seed stage the company ought to have evidence that it has found product/market fit. You should be thinking about an end-to-end pipeline of how to Get/Keep/Grow customers. This pre-seed stage typically takes 6-12 months.

Pre-Seed Round Paperwork: Smart investors will typically give you minimal paperwork – either a convertible note or a SAFE (Simple Agreement for Future Equity) or a KISS (Keep It Simple Securities).

Seed Round of Funding

By the end of the pre-seed stage (about a year into your startup), your startup has evidence that they've found product/market fit. Now it's time to raise money to acquire paying customers.

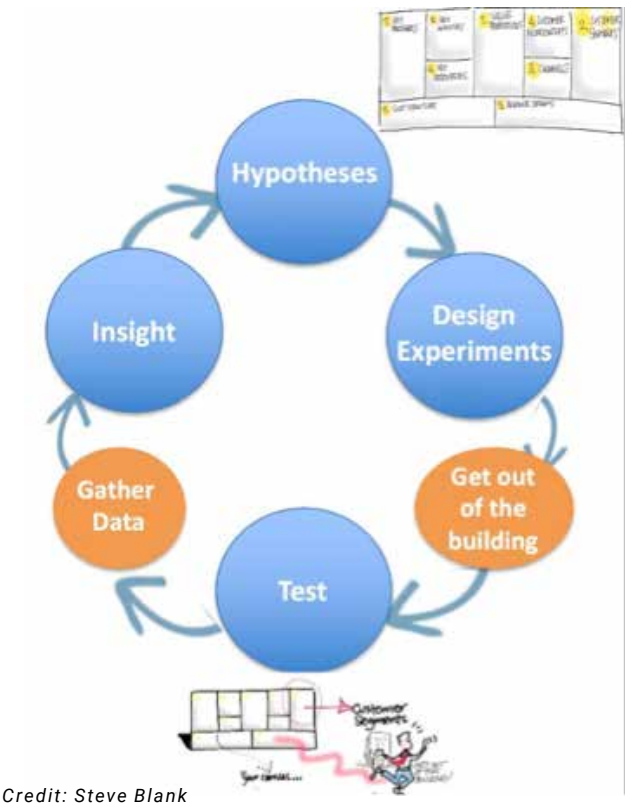
Funding: Startups typically raise anywhere from $1.5 million – $7.5 million in a seed round. At the low-end this might come from angel investors and pre-seed funds. At the high-end, funds specializing in Seed rounds and Series A funds might invest.



Credit: Steve Blank

- *Traction:* For a seed round investors want to focus on traction, you need to provide proof that customers love and can't live without your product. This means you have evidence that you've found product/market fit and have fanatic customers who are reference accounts. You've built detailed analytics tracking into your product and you should be seeing organic and viral growth; and can provide Daily/Weekly/Monthly Active Users, 30d/90d/120d retention. Retention and low attrition are good signs of customer validation.
- *Product:* At this stage you have a high-fidelity product, one that earlyvangelists (early passionate customers) can use and pay for. Enough of the product is demonstrable enough that you can gauge customers' price sensitivity, depth of engagement, etc. The three-year product roadmap gets earlyvangelists engaged.
- *Team:* Do you have a core team that can build the first product and get early sales? The culture needs to be hypothesis > experiment > data > insight > validate/invalidate/modify hypotheses.
- *Business Model:* In seed you often discover that your business has more moving parts than you originally thought. You may be in a multi-sided market with other customer segments/partners that are critical to your business. You should be testing all parts of your business model; revenue models/pricing, resources, activities and partners.
- *Market:* Tell us why the data validates that this is going to be a huge market. At first the founders do the first sale, then they prove your first salespeople can repeat that sale.

Goal/Time: By the end of the seed stage, the company ought to have evidence that repeatable sales can be made by the founding team. This typically takes 12-18 months.
Seed Round Paperwork: Either a convertible note or a SAFE or a KISS – professional investors at this round often want an equity round with a more formal set of documents for their investments.



Credit: Steve Blank

Series A Round of Funding

By the end of the seed stage–about 2½ years into your startup– your startup has a repeatable and scalable sales

model and a provable case that there can be a multi-billion dollar valuation.

Funding: Startups typically raise anywhere from $7.5 million – $25 million in a Series A round. This size round typically comes from a venture fund or a corporate VC.

- *Market*: You need to convince investors that this is at least a $1B+ company.
- *Product:* At this stage you have a fully-featured first version of the product needed to scale sales. And you are working to the three-year product vision, iterating and course correcting based on customer feedback.
- *Traction:* For a Series A round investors want to focus on a repeatable and scalable sales model with efficient growth. Startups raising an A round typically have $ ½M-$4M Annual Recurring Revenue. Note that the focus should not just be on growth month-to-month but also on efficient growth.
- *Team:* The core product team is working efficiently and the sales team for scale is in place and 75% are meeting quota.
- *Business Model:* By the end of Series A, all parts of the business model have been tested and they add up to a scalable, repeatable and profitable business.

Goal: By the end of the Series A, the company ought to prove that you're a business not a hobby. You need to show > $5M in gross profit. Just to put your journey in perspective, if you want to achieve Unicorn status or go public, you ultimately need to deliver $100 million annual gross profit in Years 6 – 8.

Series A Paperwork: You'll be seeing a Term Sheet, Stock Purchase Agreement, Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation, Investors' Rights Agreement, Right of First Refusal and Co-Sale Agreement and a Voting Agreement.

Vertical	Round Size ($M)	Post Money Valuation ($M)	Dilution
B2B SaaS	$4-15M	$15-75M	13-38%
Usage Based B2B	$5-10M	$20-80M	13-27%
Marketplace	$5-12M	$15-60M	20-32%
Hardtech/ Moonshot	$24-240M	$8-43M	15-54%
Consumer (transactional)	$5-10M	$15-107M	9-33%
Consumer (Subscription)	$5-10M	$30-43M	17-28%

Source: 101 companies from the Series A Guide Benchmarks from Y Combinator .https://www.ycombinator.com/resources/benchmarks

Revenue Growth

Some investors think of the ideal startup revenue growth with a shorthand of "triple, triple, double, double, double."

Years 1-3: $0-$2M in revenue
Year 4: Triple the revenue to $2-$6M
Year 5: Triple the revenue again to $6-$18M
Year 6: Double the revenue to $12-$36M
Year 7: Double the revenue again to: $24-$72M
Year 8: Double the revenue again to: $48-$144M

Valuations

Fair or not, not all startups are equal in the eye of their potential investors. Some startups may be considered "hotter" than others and get much higher valuations. A hot startup may be even able to skip the pre-seed round and go directly to a seed round – meaning more money raised at a higher valuation. The criteria for a "hot" startup include:

- The background of the founders
- attended a top university i.e., Stanford, MIT, Harvard
- had previous experience at a high-growth company, i.e., Facebook, Google, etc.
- serial entrepreneur

- A "hot" market
- It depends on the month or year – is it AI? Big Data? AR/VR, Cyber, Robotics

- Hype
- Do you have a big investor leading the round?
- Have you gone through Y-Combinator?
- Are you famous?

- Location
- Silicon Valley
- Other innovation clusters

- FOMO
- A startup with a huge vision and story can create FOMO (fear of missing out) in investors – one of the strongest forces for accelerating your fundraising process.
- At the same time VCs worry about FOLS: Fear of looking stupid
- FOMO > FOLS

If your pitch is not going to knock investors' socks off, if you cannot communicate a big vision and a unique insight about the 10x advantages which customers and users will care deeply about, then even if you build out the smartest, most thoughtful process of chasing fundraising, you will fail.

STEVE BLANK

Adjunct Professor at Stanford and co-founder of the Gordian Knot Center for National Security Innovation

The 48-hour rule of acquisition

Author MADS FOSSELIUS

MADS FOSSELIUS *leads the next-generation customer service platform company Dixa as CEO and co-founder. The company's mission is to transform the customer experience for brands across the globe and help them create positive and valuable experiences for their customers and agents alike. For 20+ years, Mads' focus has been to drive and accelerate change in the customer service space, initially as an engineer and later in more leadership-oriented and strategic roles.*

1. Can you please share with the readers of IMPACT the story behind Dixa, what made you start this company?
The shared vision of Dixa dates back to one of my first jobs. Working in a call-centre in Denmark, I started as an agent, became a team leader and eventually moved my way up into the IT department to create software to fill the gaps between outdated customer support systems.

Together with three friends, we gained first-hand knowledge of some of the challenges facing customer support teams.

For us, the obvious problem was that consumer demands and expectations were clearly changing. Consumers didn't want impersonal or transactional interactions when talking to their favourite brands. At the same time, brands were struggling with siloed channels, systems, and data making it impossible for customer service teams to deliver great, personalised experiences and create happy, loyal customers.

So, in 2015, Dixa was built to give brands the tools to unify all their customer service channels in one single platform and equip agents with the tools they need to deliver unparalleled omnichannel support experiences. As a result, we are now empowering brands across the world to create great experiences for customers and agents in a conversational, friendly and engaging way.

2. What's the difference between the conversational platform Dixa and other ticketing services like Zendesk and Freshdesk for example?
Brands are starting to recognise that existing ticket-based solutions to customer service are broken and unable to provide a truly engaging and personalised experience suited to the modern consumer. This a major problem as a negative experience will cause customers to turn to competitors – especially in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace. Ticketing systems were originally built to report and resolve complex issues between technical departments. Early

help desk software providers adopted this concept but for most consumer customer service, it's not really necessary and creates a bad experience.

Most customer service teams can solve problems in one interaction so escalation and the ability to track escalations isn't as important. Offering a more human touch is more relevant in today's world.

Dixa is redefining the customer journey as it's built upon a strong combination of enabling stellar customer experiences and agent experiences, driven by the huge conversational trend that's taking place across several industry verticals. Dixa provides one clear customer conversation history, threading all channels and relevant data together.

This makes it easy for the customer service agent to review, respond and deliver great customer care. It also ensures customers don't have to repeat themselves, something 72% of consumers say amounts to poor customer service. It's not uncommon, now, to hear the phrase 'CX is the new form of marketing'. This is because innovative platforms such as Dixa enable brands to create personal customer friendships at scale, using smart routing algorithms, automated replies, enrichment data and machine learning.

Put simply, we enable brands to deliver the highest form of customer service.

3. Your company expanded relatively quickly; what steps did you take to make that happen?
Back in 2018, in just nine months, we went from ten to forty employees and from $20,000 to $1 million in annual revenue. Since then, we've gone from managing a small number of people to being responsible for 300 people, which is a big jump, and I've learned a lot of valuable lessons along the way. For example, in order to manage this pace and scale of growth you need to be able to cope well under pressure, which means remaining level-headed and cool no matter the situation, and always rely on facts to make decisions, not emotions.

4. You talk about making friendships between brands and customers. Are you implementing that strategy with Dixa's customers?
Customer friendship is at the heart of everything we do. Our core mission is to enable our brands to build lasting friendships with their customers, but we also make sure to 'practice what we preach', and take the customer friendship mentality to how we work with our own customers. We have a long-standing relationship with many of our customers, which has been nurtured and grown through our customer friendship philosophy.

5. Dixa raised a $105-million series C a year ago. How has this investment changed where the company is now?
In 2021, we raised $105-million series C in a funding round led by growth investment firm General Atlantic, which we used to invest heavily in both our platform and talent. We more than doubled our product and engineering team and other areas of the company. We also scaled geographically, building out operations in new markets and strengthening our foothold in the US.

Aside from investing in product development, talent and expanding our reach, we recently made a double acquisition bringing on board Miuros, an AI-powered customer service performance solution and Solvemate, a conversational AI chatbot product. This has allowed us to expand the capabilities of our platform through harnessing the power of automation and artificial intelligence to set a new standard in conversational customer service.

6. As you mention in a previous article, back in 2021, Dixa spent twelve months in 'acquisition mode'. Can you tell us more about this experience and what this brought for the company?

Our first acquisition was at the beginning of 2021 when we acquired the Australian knowledge base, Elevio.

Acquiring a company on the other side of the world in the middle of a pandemic over Zoom had its challenges, but since Elevio and Dixa had already been partnering together for three years, it meant that many of the team at Dixa had had the opportunity to work with many of the Elevio team before.

Interestingly, we actually turned the time zone differences into a benefit while working with the Elevio team. If we're smart in our product development, we now have the ability to implement a 24-hour schedule on product cycles. This has taken time to set up but it's a real benefit. This is a good example of what twelve months in 'acquisition mode' was like. We spent time understanding how best to incorporate new players into the Dixa family, deriving benefits everywhere we looked and sometimes from unexpected places.
An acquisition is a time of collaboration and forming human connections. But it's also a period of hard work. At Dixa, we perform extensive due diligence before acquiring a company which means that once the acquisition is made, the merging process is simplified. It's far easier to get everyone on board when you've already investigated the people, product and culture.

At Dixa, we're building our machine learning and AI core and therefore spent the year looking for partners that technologically and culturally fit into that same product vision. We're not acquiring technology companies outside the core of the Dixa solution offering at this stage in the journey – there, we are building strategic partnerships. Elevio is a good example of this – a knowledge centre was an important add on, but as we grew it became an IP and a core offering. This has happened more recently to technology such as machine learning, AI and chatbots with the acquisitions of Miuros and Solvemate.

2021 was a year of hard work and, above all, preparation while in acquisition mode.

7. Can you tell us about the 48-hour rule of acquisition?

The 48-hour rule of acquisition can actually be distilled down to one sentence: Strike fast to create impact and form lasting bonds.

So much work goes into an acquisition that, as CEO or a leader, you could be inclined to take the opportunity to sit back and plan out a strategic long-term merging process. You'll need to think long term, but if you truly want to create impact you must also act quickly to ensure that the wider teams in both the parent company and the acquired company understand the new vision and are keen to be part of the journey from day one.

Following a period of building and growing our own platform at Dixa, we made our first acquisition at the beginning of 2021 in Melbourne, 16,000 kilometers from our HQ in Copenhagen. Since then, we have integrated two more companies – a French customer intelligence AI startup and a German customer service automation AI platform – into our family.

Leveraging my experience in selling previous companies I've founded, I took a core team of department leaders and flew them between Geneva, Lyon, Berlin, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen in the first 48 hours following our recent double acquisition.

As CEO it's your role to ensure that all parties feel included within the new structure and connecting with peo-

ple in person on the ground quickly and in an impactful way is an integral part of any successful acquisition strategy.

Borrowing from ideas rooted in Scandinavian culture, act fast to execute a successful merger by forming in-person, human connections with one another from day one. This is what I have termed the '48-hour rule'.

8. You are a successful leader. What's your leadership style and how do you keep your employees motivated?
For me, good leadership is based on self-awareness, empathy and communication. No man is an island, so I try to be an effective listener and always accept others' feedback and be open to change. We've also tried to establish a culture in our team as early as possible and keep this culture consistent by making the right hires. People can have all the technical skills, but what's most important is that they are good human beings and leaders. It's ultimately the team and its energy that drives a business, so hiring the right people keeps our teams motivated.

9. The life of an entrepreneur can be challenging. How do you ensure you have a good work-life balance? Do you have any advice for the young entrepreneurs out there?
The early days of any venture are bound to be testing and sometimes strenuous periods. For example, I found that in the early days of Dixa, I had to take the same approach as a businessman 200 years ago. You need to get your suitcase and your car (or get your Zoom up and running) and talk to customers. All entrepreneurs, regardless of specialty or personality, need to go sell in the early days, even before they have a product. Examples of great product scaling through organic sales through homebuilt websites are extremely rare. Instead of telling a glamorous romantic story, people should tell the real story. Like any company, you have to start by finding customers and selling your product.

I became CEO of Dixa in January 2018. At the time, I had a Ford Mondeo (a salesman's car in Denmark) and traveled around Denmark, Sweden and Europe. Honestly, I felt like a 23-year-old account executive on the road, but I had to do this to find the ideal product market fit and customer profiles.

When you're pursuing your dream, it's easy to dedicate too much of yourself to work. I certainly had periods in which I was traveling very frequently with very little downtime. Yet I quickly realised the value in creating distinct boundaries between work and personal life. You need to schedule personal time to recharge and ensure you have the drive and energy for the long run.

For me, this meant assessing my priorities and learning to say no to things. Personally, I enjoy it.

10. Lastly, this book is all about IMPACT. What is impact to you?
To me, making an impact means changing something for the better. I want to fundamentally disrupt the customer service industry and bring it into the 21st century. I've been in the customer service industry for twenty-three years, and until now, the technology just hasn't been keeping up with the rapid pace of technological development. This issue just keeps growing as companies grow, which is why I set out to change it. I know I'll truly have had an impact when bad customer service is a thing of the past.

What it means to 'cross the chasm'

Author GEOFFREY MOORE

GEOFFREY MOORE *is an author, speaker, and advisor who splits his consulting time between start-up companies in the Wildcat Venture Partners portfolios and established high-tech enterprises. He helped found The Chasm Group, Chasm Institute, and TCG Advisors and today he is chairman emeritus of all three. Moore is the author of Crossing the Chasm and Zone to Win. Additionally, he gives between 50 and 80 speeches a year.*

1. *Crossing the Chasm*: Marketing and Selling High-Tech Products to Mainstream Customers is the handbook many entrepreneurs and CEO's have turned to over the years when launching and scaling their businesses. With over one million copies sold in ten different languages, you've had a huge impact, but for the readers who don't know your work: Can you explain, what it means to 'cross the chasm'?

When disruptive technology is introduced into any new market, prospects for buying the new offering self-segregate into visionary early adopters, who are willing to be first, and the pragmatic early majority, who want to see people like themselves using the product first. The chasm is the gap in adoption this creates as no one in the second group believes that the visionary customers are a good reference point. They keep waiting for people like themselves to go ahead, and until some do, adoption stalls. The goal of crossing the chasm is to ignite this second cohort of adopters by targeting an urgent problem specific to a particular market segment that cannot be solved by conventional means and then to use the disruptive technology to solve it for the first time. Pragmatists in pain are the ones who go first, creating the references for the rest of mainstream market to follow.

2. As an entrepreneur, how do you deal with VCs, when you're in the process of crossing the chasm?

VCs are well aware of the chasm. They are looking to the entrepreneur to propose a well-formed business plan to cross it. The reason that the book has held up as long as it has is that many entrepreneurs have succeeded in adapting its playbook to the specific realities of their business.

3. What if founders are confident? Are they just in the middle of crossing the chasm and simply need more cash to do so?

Being in the middle of the chasm is not a safe place because you are not getting traction, regardless of how much you

are spending. The good news about the crossing-the-chasm playbook is that it is not particularly expensive to execute. The tougher news is that it calls for the entire company to take a laser focus on a single use case in a single market segment and do whatever it takes to make those prospects completely successful.

4. What does "big enough to matter, small enough to win" mean?

Pragmatic customers want to go with the market leader, the company that other people like them have used and been successful with. If you are a small enterprise – say $5M in revenue – then you need the target market for your crossing-the-chasm play to be big enough for you to do a "double triple: - $5M to S15M to 45M, but small enough that at $45M you are the clear market segment leader – so, not much bigger than $100M all in. The good news about such segments is that the big players in the market simply cannot focus at that granular a level, and so your chances of success are very high if you can meet the third criterion of the formula – and a good fit with your crown jewels."

5. When should you focus on 'jumping ponds' or doubling down on the current customer segment?

As you imply, the first goal is to become a big fish in a small pond. But then to grow beyond that you need to expand into adjacent market segments. We call this phase of expansion the 'bowling alley' because the best practice is to expand in one of two ways –either into a new segment that has the same use case (and thus you can bring the same partner ecosystem with you) or into a new use case within the first segment (in which case you can leverage your customer references). You would start either or both of these journeys once you have established yourself as the segment leader in the 'head bowling pin.' Our rule of thumb is that if you can win 5 of the top 30 customers in the segment before your closest competitor wins more than one, that sends a strong enough signal for the segment to anoint you as the leader.

6. What are the 'Four Zones'?

When publicly held companies need to catch the next wave, they have to fund it out of the operating income of the current wave, and there is never enough money to go around. Worse, in the short term, the new business actually loses money, and at a time when investors are questioning whether the established enterprise can actually transform itself. This creates a crisis of prioritization which has brought enterprises to their knees.

To execute effectively under such pressure, it is critical that companies segregate their operations into four zones, each of which has its own operating model. Each model is designed to create success in the zone for which it is intended, which is great. The problem is that this same model will create failure if it is applied in any other zone. So 'zoning' your enterprise is a critical success factor.

In this context the four zones are:

1) **The Performance Zone**, where you manage your core business from the point of view of sales bookings and product/service revenues—essentially, what you report out during an earnings call.

2) **The Productivity Zone**, where you manage all the cost-center functions that are necessary for the Performance Zone to operate effectively, efficiently, and in compliance with regulations.

3) **The Incubation Zone**, where you fund and operate next-generation businesses following a venture-in

spired operating model that focuses on "power metrics" organized around meeting market validated milestones.

4) **The Transformation Zone**, where you reorient the entire enterprise top to bottom to adapt it to the next wave of technology that by this time is taking the market by storm. This is the most challenging zone because your performance metrics go down before they go up, and everyone is under enormous pressure to bend the curve as fast as possible. As a result, the CEO must lead forcefully at this time and rigorously eliminate any opting out or backsliding. It is a really tough time, but if you succeed, you will change the relevance of your company for decades to come, not to mention your market cap.

7. You've written the following: "If you ask why start-ups outperform established enterprises when it comes to catching the next wave, the answer is that they are not conflicted." Can you explain what you mean by 'not conflicted'?

If you give an extra million dollars to a start-up, there is only one place they can put it. When you do the same for an established enterprise, there are any number of ways they could spend it, and they struggle to allocate it effectively. Most of the time, they divide it up equitably, which is absolutely the wrong thing to do.

The whole point of strategy is to allocate resources asymmetrically to achieve competitive advantage. Start-ups do this by default. Established enterprises have to be really disciplined to do the same.

8. Sustaining innovation is the lifeblood of any enterprise, but how do you actually do this?

Sustaining innovation is actually pretty easy. You just focus on your customer's use cases and look for the bottlenecks that remain. Every time you remove a bottleneck, another one emerges somewhere else. As long as you stay close to the customer, you will never run out of opportunities to innovate. And, as long as you do your best with those opportunities, your customer will stay loyal to you, even when you don't have the best product for their needs at any given point in time.

9. Disruption and 'disruptive innovation' have been buzzwords in latest decade, but is disruption always a positive thing? What is your take on innovation and this book's topic about 'impact'? When is innovation good, and when is it bad for the world?

Joseph Schumpeter described disruptive innovation as 'creative destruction'. I think that captures the good and bad of it. The underlying dynamics organize around 'trapped value' – bottlenecks in the standard processes that run things as they are today, where waste is caused for any number of reasons, and which will reward a disruptive technology if it can break the bottleneck.

For those being held back by the trapped value, this is a wonderful thing. But for those companies who are losing their place, it is a bad thing. An established enterprise's profit pool always looks like trapped value to a start-up – hence the inevitable cycles of disruption.

10. In your latest book, The Infinite Staircase, you write about what the universe tells us about life, ethics and morality. So, what does the universe tell us about these big questions?

The big idea is that life itself, and all we hold precious about it, emerged from the bottom up, not from the top down. This is the secular story of creation based on ongoing evolution, something that started with the Big Bang and is

still going on today, and given all the specialist studies that make it up, it takes me about two thirds of the book to re-tell. The big takeaway from this narrative is that our core human values – kindness, fairness, morality, and justice – actually originate in our mammalian heritage, born from our universal experience of being nurtured, and only later get captured in our sacred texts once language has been invented. Despite all the divisions that politics and religion have fostered, we really are one species at heart.

Going digital requires courage & a new mindset

Author SARA SCHØLER LASS

SARA SCHØLER LASS *is an entrepreneur, founder of the companies WeZimplify and Zimplifi, and an expert within the field of customer innovation, digital business development and design thinking. Through her company Zimplifi and previous experience as global innovation manager in Grundfos she helps companies to become more digital and customer focused. Sara was named one of Denmark's 100 talents in 2012, and has launched several podcasts about innovation and entrepreneurship through Zimplifi.*

Digitalisation - development vs automation?

Often companies focus on digitalisation as the end result, but there's much more needed to create success with digital offerings. Before starting, you need to elaborate and be clear on your direction, so start to map the questions below to find your position:

Do you know your key market, your customers, why they buy your product, and the value you create? What type of business are you in? Are you a consulting business, a retailer with physical shops, a company offering physical products, giving advice and service to your customers – business and private customers, etc.? Which industry are you in and how are your industry and market changing within new technologies and what are the expectations from your customers and partners? etc.

When this is in place, I suggest prioritising and focusing on where your main focus lies within the following areas for digitalisation.

Development of new business opportunities: Creating customer value within the core business, supplementing the core business, or a totally new business. An example could be collecting, analysing and providing data in a simple overview of by example the service of a heating system, so your customers can optimise their business or private home in a more sustainable way.

Automation of existing business processes: Optimising and effectiveness of, how you run your business internally and with external value for your customer. This could be optimising your invoice flow, purchase flow, communication and interaction on your website, or how candidates can apply for a job, and the customer experiences so it's easy to be a customer within your business.

So be clear about why you need to go digital, what and how the value of your effort will be.

Getting started

The success rate for sales to existing customers is 60-70% while the success rate for sales to a new customer is 5-20%.

This is an important mantra for me: Never forget loyal and engaged customers. Use them and involve them in the process because it's of high value for your work for digitalisation. Start to map and understand your customers, their pains and their workflow or daily tasks. Where can you as a business support them even more?

Let's use an example. The main task of the B2B energy company Heat Energy (a fictive company name) is to provide the product and the installation of an energy system to the customer. They have data available, which can give their customer a more proactive service of their product and reduce the time they use on service. The offering is to provide the data to the customer in a way that creates value and one that the customer wants to pay for & ensure the Heat Energy company a recurring revenue instead of one-time payment.
In this case:

1) The value is the reduction of time used on service visits for the customer. This will provide the customer security in bills and payments, due to a fixed price;
2) The value is the overview of data, which provides the customer with an opportunity to have a more sustainable energy consumption (reduce, control and change);
3) The product the company offers is an overview of real time data, data related to service information on their installation (how is the performance of the energy system, how is the energy optimisation, the engine, etc.) The value for the customer will be a more sustainable use of the energy and savings in payment in energy usage;
4) The product will be a subscription package that the customer can sign up to and pay for different types of data each month.

Heat Energy went from delivering a product to offering data as a service packaged as a monthly subscription.

Different price setting

To be able to set the right price for their SW product, Heat Energy needs to make a change in focus, evaluate their business and earnings in a different way and measure their results using different parameters.

Finding the right price for a new potential digital offering, requires you know exactly, why and how your offering creates value for your customers and also where there are flexibilities within your product to ensure you continue to have active customers and users.

In *Heat Energy*, we evaluated the flexibility based on the number of buildings their customers needed service at, the number of energy systems being installed, and how many service employees needed to use the data provided.
We also focused on the savings for the customer in both transportation to the sites and the energy reduction per building by providing the data overview. These savings estimated and supported the pricing of the provided subscription packages.

The parameters of flexibility and value indicate how much you can take for your product and where you earn

money, it supports your sales pitch and value proposition, and it helps to support the customers in having the opportunity to upgrade or downgrade their subscription depending on their needs.

Go2Market requires different competencies

Launching and selling a new digital software solution is different from selling a physical product or a project sale. Often this change in perspective and effort is underestimated. Launching a software product gives you the opportunity to create leads online, offer demos, and often sell an offering at a lower price than a physical product.

The effort for the sales and marketing will always depend on the type of business you are in, the product you are selling, the type of customers, and the complexity of your product.

A part of succeeding with getting new subscribers and customers is upscaling for the right marketing and sales competencies. Go2market will often require you to start focusing on the automation of your marketing processes and to ensure a strong automation set-up. Here you move from your external digital customer development to optimizing internal flows (in this case your own - but it could also be a service to the customer). You need to have: SEO, content, campaign and customer success managers/employees, and software salespeople who are used to selling software and know the IT and business processes in a company. Often the stakeholders will be different and require a different approach to win the sale.

Win the results – one step at the time

My advice is to go digital if you aim to create value for your new or existing customers, if you can create a recurring business of high value, or optimize your existing business with a unique customer experience in mind. But keep in mind that you shouldn't try to reinvent the entire business in one go. Take it one step at a time and evaluate on an ongoing basis.

This is an important mantra for me: Never forget loyal and engaged customers. Use them and involve them in the process because it's of high value for your work for digitalisation. Start to map and understand your customers, their pains and their workflow or daily tasks.

SARA SCHØLER LASS
Founder at WeZimplify and Zimplifi

Sales and marketing for the digital age. What's changed?

Author TIMOTHY HUGHES

TIMOTHY HUGHES *is universally recognised as the world leading pioneer and exponents of social selling and is currently ranked number one by Onalytica as the most influential social selling person in the world. In 2021, LinkedIn said he was one of the top eight sales experts globally to follow. He is also co-founder and CEO of DLA Ignite and co-author of the bestselling books Social Selling and Smarketing.*

If you look at sales and marketing, we're in a pretty sorry state of affairs. Cold calling started 40 years ago, email marketing was invented 30 years ago, and advertising was invented some 100 years ago.

Marketing doesn't work anymore

Here we are in the digital age and we are reliant on 100-year-old technology to create demand for us. Surely something is wrong? And it is. More and more senior business leaders are agreeing that marketing doesn't work anymore.

If we're honest with ourselves, marketing in its current format just isn't fit for purpose. The days of interrupting people and pitching our services is destroying our brand and is so inefficient and ineffective. This isn't me just saying this. It's based on data.

According to research, it shows that email marketing and cold calling have a 98% failure rate and the only way that salespeople and marketers can try and get a return is to send more emails and make more calls. Problem is that when the number increases, the return drops.

Digital has changed the world

This change in buyer behaviour isn't new. It's been taking place for over ten years. It's just that the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated it.

We're now in a situation where the buyer is more empowered than ever before. If you approach me with your message, then I can go online and check you and the competition out. If I tell you that the iPhone is the best cell phone in the world, you can research and find ten articles that say it isn't.

What can a business do?

Let's take a step back and think about this. There has been a perfect storm of mobile, the internet, social media, and COVID-19. All the research from McKinsey, Salesforce, HubSpot, Gartner, etc. all say that the modern buyer is on social media. Enter, social selling.

Now imagine

What if I said I can take you to a place where all your prospects hang out, would you go?

I can pick you up in the car tomorrow and you can hang out there and have conversations with them.

When you arrived, what would you do?

Grab a coffee and go up to the first one and start a conversation? Of course, you would.

Or would you walk in and say, "buy my stuff because we're great". Of course, you wouldn't. Somebody would call security.

That's the difference. Selling on social is ..... social. You have conversations with people.

You don't go up to people and pitch to them. People will call security.

What is social selling?

Here at DLA Ignite, we define social selling as:
"Using your presence and behaviour on social media to build influence, make connections, grow relationships and trust, which leads to conversation and commercial interaction."
So how do you start social selling?

1. Buyer-centric profile – This is a profile on social media that's attractive to the buyer and not the seller.

2. Digital territory – This is where you connect with, but not spam, the people you want to influence. After all, people buy from people they know, like, and trust.

3. Content – We know our buyers are online looking for help and advice. This is why content is critical in sales and marketing today. This is not brochures and whitepapers; research shows that nobody comes to social media to read them. This is about being visible to the modern buyer, building your authority, and offering an authentic way to show you are the expert.

The results

A client of ours had two sales teams. One that just cold called and another that was trained in social selling. We found that:

When they social selling team had calls with rank-and-file people, they had 11% more conversions than the cold callers.

When the social selling team had calls with senior technical people, they had 23% more conversions than the cold callers.

When the social selling team had calls with C-level people, they had 42% more conversions than the cold callers.

Just think of the impact that social selling and influence could make on your business in terms of pipeline and your win rate?

What makes things go viral?

Author JONAH BERGER

JONAH BERGER *is a marketing professor and internationally bestselling author. He is a world-renowned expert on change, word of mouth, influence, consumer behavior, and how products, ideas, and behaviors catch on. He has published over 50 articles in top-tier academic journals, and popular outlets like The New York Times and Harvard Business Review often cover his work. He's keynoted hundred of events, and often consults for organizations like Google, Apple, Nike, and the Gates Foundation.*

If you asked Google a few years ago, "What makes things go viral?" you would get a simple answer: It's luck. No one can predict what will go viral. You might as well buy a lottery ticket.

And that's a great theory — except for the fact that it's completely wrong.

There's a science behind why people share some things rather than others. We've analyzed thousands of pieces of online content and tens of thousands of products and brands in an attempt to understand why some things make the most-emailed list.

Compelling content hinges on one key detail: its shareability. It's not enough to have a Facebook page or tweet every once in a while. Facebook and Twitter are technologies, not strategies in and of themselves. You have to understand why people share some things rather than others in order to use social media to your advantage.

People Want to Seem Smart

Before people share a piece of content, they evaluate its social currency. The better it makes them look, the more likely they'll be to pass it on.

In early February, LinkedIn sent out an email to some of its users: "Congratulations, you have one of the top 5% most-viewed LinkedIn profiles for 2012." It felt good to be part of that special group, sure, but the recipients (including myself) did more than just pat themselves on the back.

They shared the good news with their friends. Thousands

took to Facebook and Twitter to spread the word about their new-found status. "Kind of a big deal," some even wrote.

People shared this information because it made them look good.

If a piece of content makes people seem smart, they're more likely to share it with their friends. And people like being the first to share information because it makes them seem cool and in-the-know.

While people were bragging about themselves, LinkedIn also benefited. People couldn't share their newfound status without making LinkedIn part of the conversation, which helped the social network spread and grow its user base.

Share-Worthy Stuff Capitalizes on Triggers

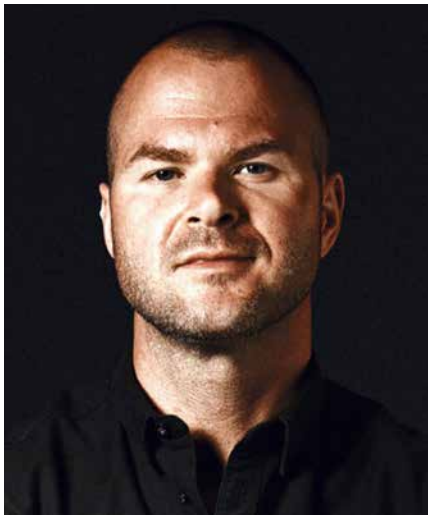
"Triggers" — sights, sounds and other stimuli that remind us of related products and ideas — are another reason we share. Last year, NASA landed a rover on Mars. It was an epic undertaking, requiring millions in funding and years of effort. The world cheered when the rover finally touched down on the rocky Martian terrain and slowly rolled onto the dusty ground. Media outlets clamored to cover the story, and millions of people buzzed about the news.

NASA was, of course, ecstatic. But at the same time, another organization enjoyed some unexpected success — Mars Candy company. Over the same period that Mars the planet was in the news, Mars the chocolate bar saw a surprising uptick in sales.

Mars bars are named after the company's founder, Franklin Mars, not the planet. But all the attention to Mars the planet did something remarkable: It brought the candy to the foreground and showed us that, sometimes, viral success is in the hands of chance.

No one can guarantee 10 million unique views, but most of the time, the content people choose to share isn't random. By understanding the science of virality, you can increase the likelihood that your content will be shared.

How can I stop the scroll?



Author JUSTIN WELSH

*Over the last decade, **JUSTIN WELSH** has helped build two $50M+ ARR companies, teams of 150+ people, and raise over $300M in venture capital. Now he's building a portfolio of one-person online businesses to $5M in revenue. Outside of that, he's an advisor to early-stage SMB SaaS companies, a mentor to entrepreneurs at 500 Startups, and an LP at GTM Fund, a rolling fund investing $4 million per year into early-stage B2B SaaS companies.*

In this article, I'm going to break down the opening to my most successful LinkedIn post of all time.

If you've been on LinkedIn for a long time, you've watched the platform morph from a professional "resume" site to a place where creators are building 7-figure businesses.

If you're on Twitter, but not LinkedIn, you'll be interested to know that people like Sahil Bloom, Nicolas Cole, Dickie Bush, and Jack Butcher are actively producing content there daily.

But writing on LinkedIn is much different than writing on platforms like Twitter. And when creators start writing, they often hear crickets.

On February 21st, 2022, I sat down to write a LinkedIn post with the sole intention of seeing if I could produce something viral.

Note: *My goal is never to go viral. But I thought it would be fun to try, and see what I learned.*

In this article, I'll show you how I thought about constructing the post and the results.

Let's dive in.

Start by thinking "How can I stop the scroll?"

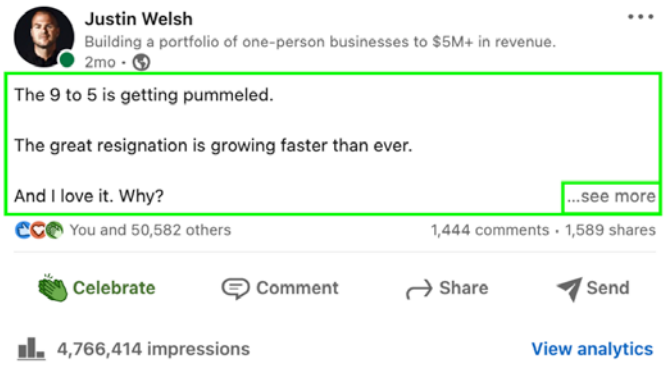
One of the significant differences between LinkedIn and Twitter is how content comes across in your feed.

On Twitter, it's mostly short Tweets of 280 characters or less. That means you can skim your feed and pick up Tweets that are interesting or relevant to you pretty easily.

LinkedIn, however, has a 3,000-character limit, with 210 of those characters appearing "above the fold" (what I'm referring to as the "opener").

After reading the opener, people choose whether to click the "see more" button, or keep scrolling for different content.

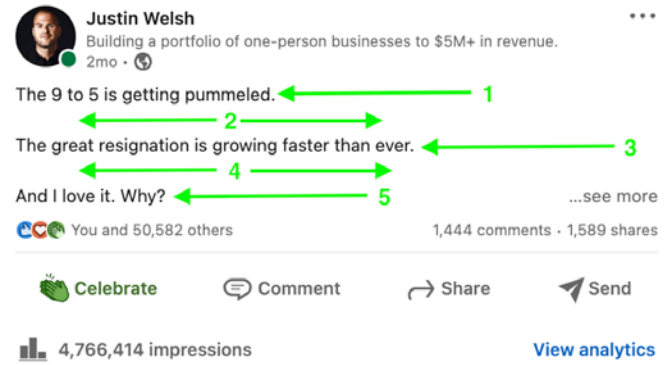
Below is a picture of the space "above the fold" with the "see more" button encouraging people to continue reading.



That means a LinkedIn post is a lot like a Twitter thread. **You have 210 characters to get people interested in the rest of it.**

To ensure that people read the opener of your LinkedIn post, I'd recommend using 3 short lines, with spaces, as it provides a format that's easy to read.

You can see I used this formatting in the post below. 3 written lines, 2 lines of space to create easy readability.



But lines and spaces don't make a post go viral. The written content does. Let's take a look at it.

Line 1: The scroll-stopper

The first line is more important than 95% of the rest of the post. It must be excellent if you want people to read your LinkedIn content.

So, for the first line of this post, I chose what I call a "relatable enemy" and then "threw rocks" at it.

My hope was that the reader would stop scrolling to join me in throwing rocks at an enemy they can very much relate to.

For example, I know a of my audience doesn't like their **9 to 5** jobs. So, I chose **The 9 to 5** as the **relatable enemy** in this example.

Next, we need a negative word to get the audience leaning in, in glee. Here's what I came up with:
The {{RelatableEnemy}} is {{Negativity}}
The 9 to 5 is getting pummeled.

This line should elicit a **positive response** from the crowd because we're **talking negatively** about a **relatable enemy**.

Line 2: Flip The Script

Once I have the reader past the first line, I need to take that positive feeling the reader has and accelerate it by painting a picture of life without the "enemy".

Life with the hero!

So, I flip the script.

I choose the hero (the opposite of the enemy) and tell them that the hero is gaining ground.

You see this a lot in politics when a political candidate starts by telling the crowd their opponent is weakening (like our line about The 9 to 5) and then flips the script to talk about how their own candidacy is gaining ground.

This usually whips the crowd into a frenzy. I'm doing the same here.

The {{Hero}} is {{StrongPositiveStatement}}
The great resignation is growing faster than ever.

Line 3: Gasoline + Teaser

The last line in your opener must take the frenzied reader and hook them into clicking "see more".

So, I pour gasoline onto the fire by telling the crowd that *"I love it"*.

That I love seeing their enemy get beat down. That I relish the weakening enemy in favor of the strengthening hero. That we're all crushing the enemy together and gaining ground.
And after pouring gasoline, I lob a simple teaser question, "Why?".

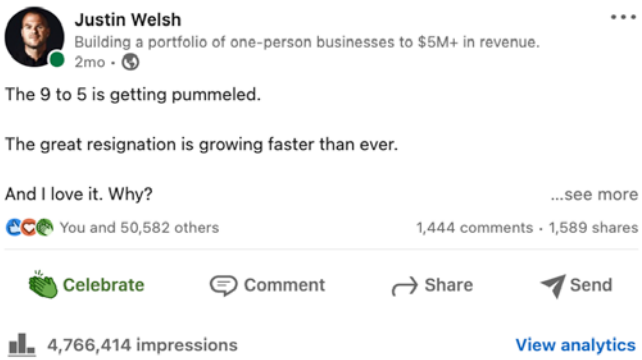
And I {gasoline}. {TeaserQuestion}?
And I love it. Why?

At this point, we've tarnished the crowd's enemy, championed the hero, and whipped them into a frenzy.

The question "Why?" is simply used to get them past the "see more".

And it worked.

This post has 4.766M impressions, 50,583 engagements, 1,444 comments, and has been shared 1,589 times.

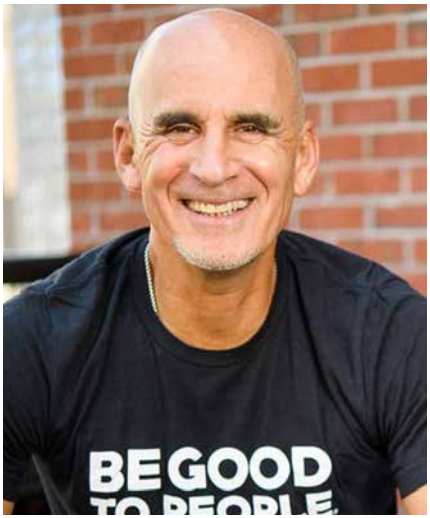


I turned this opener into a template that I can use a reuse often:
The {RelatableEnemy} is {Negativity}
The {Hero} is {StrongPositiveStatement}
And I {Gasoline}. {TeaserQuestion}?

For every post that I create that performs well, I analyze the post, turn it into a template, and reuse it multiple times.

> **But writing on LinkedIn is much different than writing on platforms like Twitter. And when creators start writing, they often hear crickets.**

JUSTIN WELSH
Founder at The Saturday Solopreneur



The marketing impact of a ROR-mindset

Author TED RUBIN

TED *is a leading Social Marketing Strategist, International Keynote Speaker, Business Advisor, and… Author, Connector, Provocateur. In 2009 he started using and evangelizing the term ROR, Return on Relationship, hashtag #RonR. Many people in the marketing world know Ted for his enthusiastic, energetic and undeniably personal connection to people.*
His books: Return on Relationship, How to Look People in the Eye Digitally, The Age of Influence, and 2022 released Retail Relevancy.

ROR: Return on Relationship, #RonR, simply put, is the value that is accrued by a person or brand due to nurturing a relationship. ROI is simple dollars and cents, ROR is the value (both perceived and real) that will accrue over time through connection, trust, loyalty, recommendations and sharing. AND is used to define and educate companies, brands, and people about the importance of creating authentic connection, interaction, and engagement.

For me, and I learned this early on from my parents, especially my Dad, is that it is All About Relationships, and he impressed upon me to "do for others without expectation of anything directly in return." It's more about what you build as your reputation and how people think about you. As you continue to practice this, others will notice, and will reciprocate in a spirit of giving. That's been a huge part of my life and my success despite numerous setbacks. And listening to others is an important part of that. So many times, we listen to what people are telling us but we don't really "hear" what they're saying. Are you really hearing what I'm saying—actively listening—and truly paying attention? My Mom, who was an educator, would say to me as a kid, "Honey, you need to really hear what they're saying, not just take notes and listen." To me, it's such an important thing.

When I was the CMO of e.l.f. Cosmetics in 2008 – 2010 I built their brand, and took the brand from online to in-store (specifically as an in-line brand at Target nationwide), leveraging social media and its exponential word-of-mouth capability. Much of this was accomplished with something I first started talking about and scaling in 2009… Return on Relationship ROR, #RonR.

Early on I was building an engaged following, growing our presence, and protecting all that was social from any of the promotional proclivities of the founders. Within months, by myself and with the help of a few interns, I had built the

most active social presence for a cosmetics brand against the likes of Estee Lauder, L'Oréal, and Sephora… and the very first social aggregated content site for a brand, called ASKelf.com, as an adjunct to elfcosmetics.com. In all fairness, they had legal departments to deal with and I did not, so I drove a truck through that advantage.

Every week the founders and head of email marketing would ask when they could start promoting deals via social, and every week I said… "NOT YET, it's not about selling here," can't claim to have "known" that then, but it all seemed so clear to me. So finally, after a few months of this I was called into their office. At the end of the meeting, they tried to pin me down to a date for offering discounts via social with all this talk about ROI, and I blurted out… "It's not about ROI with social right now, it's about ROR, Return on Relationship," and I just shut up and sat there staring at them. I didn't know what they would say, no one to the best of my knowledge at the time was using that term. They stared at me for what seemed like forever, then told me they had another meeting but were very intrigued by ROR and wanted to schedule a meeting for the end of the following week to discuss. I got out of there as fast as I could and immediately tweeted out to my then large number of followers, 2000 of them (at the time had me on the list of most followed CMO on Twitter) … "It's not just about ROI, we have to start thinking about ROR, Return on Relationship," and within minutes there were dozens of RT's and responses.

I spent the next week putting some meat on the bone, and Return on Relationship, as a way to build a business, was off to the races. It then took a lot of time to expand on the ideas (still doing that every day), publishing the book in 2013, and finally getting my hands on the ReturnOnRelationship.com URL shortly thereafter.

Shifting to an explanation more suitable to the business world, I consider ROR (#RonR) greater than ROI, because ROI will match a fixed period of time, or perhaps be income related, whereas ROR will have a "halo" effect. For example, two projects can have the same ROI, but if one was done with better relationship management, it has the added benefit of a "satisfied" customer or relationship… it's like "I" + compassion.

What happens is that when people are happy and satisfied, they will share that. There's a misconception in the digital world that people complain more than they share good things. I don't think that's true. I think a lot of people get tired of hearing others complain all the time—but nobody gets tired of hearing, "Oh this restaurant was amazing," or "OMG I just had the most awesome experience with this brand—you've got to check out their products!" People seek out those kinds of references much more so than they seek negative ones. A brand that steps up its engagement game will not only protect and extend its organic reach, but also find a significant competitive advantage. We all love when someone listens to us. When your fans hear from you, their excitement will spread along with your reach and reputation, which is what I call 'Return on Relationship.' **Your Brand is what you do… Your Reputation is what people Remember AND Share!**

Fight quantity, clutter and filters because we know there's way too much content out there… with quality (content & engagement). With every post, update and comment ask yourself, "Is it adding something meaningful or simply adding to the noise?" Content may be King, but Connection is Queen, and she rules the house. How you engage with people via the content you share is what helps you achieve results.

Relationships are like muscle tissue, the more you engage them, the stronger and more valuable they become.

Teach Today, Sell Tomorrow

Author MARCUS SHERIDAN

MARCUS *is a highly sought-after international keynote speaker. In 2017, Forbes named Marcus "One of 20 Speakers You Don't Want to Miss." As an owner of IMPACT, Marcus has established one of the most successful digital sales and marketing agencies in the country. Within his speaking company, Marcus Sheridan International, he gives more than 70 global keynotes annually in which he inspires audiences in the areas of sales, marketing, leadership, and communication.*

Research has proven what we all know to be true: Nearly every purchase today begins with an internet search. Whether shopping for software or furniture, insurance or shoes, buyers start with a search engine and a question. And this makes the search engine results page an absolutely critical place to be found by customers.

That very moment, right before they hit enter, is an inflection point. A person becomes a potential customer, in the very earliest sense. They might be weeks, months, or even years away from a purchase. They might be only "problem aware" and completely ignorant of what you offer. Still, this moment matters.

When a customer begins a journey toward a purchase, they are looking for only one thing: **information they can trust.**

The problem is that trustworthy information is a scant commodity on the internet, where most companies choose to pitch rather than educate.

If you want to sell to the modern buyer, you must be willing to educate them. You need to be helpful first — unbiased, transparent, and honest. You need to teach.

What customers want to know

There are free tools that can show us exactly what people are searching. This is not guesswork or speculation. We can find vetted, aggregated questions from the buying public. What do your customers want to know?

No matter what you sell, your buyers want to know the same basic information: That what you sell is right for them, that they're getting a fair deal, and that you'll provide them a great customer experience.

When you write content that addresses buyers' questions openly and honestly, you cultivate trust and build relationships. So, what do they want to know?

Whatever they're buying, customers want to know the same few things, and if you publish helpful answers, those customers will find their way to your website. You just have to answer their questions. I recommend focusing on five core topic areas.

- First on everyone's mind is **price**. You don't need to say exactly what someone will pay, just give a range — and explain what makes that number go up or down.

- Customers want to know the **problems** that come along with any product or service. There's a reason we're so drawn to 1-star reviews, after all. Address the shortcomings of what you sell — and you explain who it's not a good fit for.

- There's a reason so many e-commerce websites let you compare several items at once. People love head-to-head **comparisons**. From the outside, two options might look pretty similar. As an expert, you can help explain the differences. And your buyers will appreciate it.

- Right next to comparisons come **reviews**. Write about what you sell, then write about adjacent products or services. If you're a retailer, this comes naturally. You should easily be able to review the products you sell. But it doesn't stop there. A home decorator can review design trends or paint brands. A shipping company can review insurance providers. Think about the adjacent purchases your customers will be making.

- Bundle your reviews into **"Best of"**-type lists that offer a rundown of the top options in any category. Write about the best gyms in Houston or the best project management software options — just be sure to explain your rankings.

When you publish the content that answers your buyers' questions, you speak to their most pressing need: to be educated. And you set yourself up to sell.

You'll be there in the search results, ready with an answer.

Teach today, sell tomorrow

Not every site visitor will become a customer, but if someone is asking questions, they have an interest. Maybe it's a need. Maybe it's a pain point. Maybe it's an aspiration. But they are certainly interested, and interest is always a customer's first step.

You never know when they're going to be ready to buy, but you want to make sure you're there when they do.

When you work to build trust with your audience, when they come to see you as a teacher, when you ditch the sales pitch in favor of authenticity, your buyers will come to trust you.

We should all be in the business of trust.

If you want your marketing to make an impact, your content should be like a parade, not a movie

Author VITOR PEÇANHA

VITOR PEÇANHA *is the co-founder and CMO of Rock Content, a global leader in Content Marketing, with more than 400 employees and operating in four different countries. He's built a content strategy that's the main growth driver for the company, with more than 6 million blog visits a month and 500 thousand students in his online courses. He's also an international speaker and bestselling author.*

The Brazilian Carnival is one of the biggest parties on earth (and my favorite), a week's long festival celebrated all over the country. In the city of Rio de Janeiro alone, it's estimated that the Carnival sees an average of over two million people take to the streets for the festivities per day.

If you've ever seen a picture of the event, it was probably of the parade at "Marquês de Sapucaí" avenue in Rio, our main attraction to anyone who wants to have a taste of what the Carnival is all about. Being surrounded by thousands of people singing and dancing, with colorful costumes all around, and great music playing, definitely has a memorable impact on visitors.

When I founded my company, Rock Content, almost ten years ago, content marketing was all about inbound: bring organic traffic to your blog, convert it into leads, and turn them into customers. Straightforward success.

Nowadays things have changed, and I believe that a future-proof marketing strategy should be just like the Carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro. I'm not talking about the music or the dancing, of course, but about structure and cohesion.

Dozens of samba schools put on dazzling musical performances during the Carnival, showing off the best and most authentic aspects of Brazilian culture. These samba schools have thousands involved in the performance, with more than 250 drummers alone!

The logistics of each performance are harrowing, but the samba always prevails to put on a great show. That's because there's always a central theme, captured by every detail of the presentation, from their cars and costumes, to the most important element, their song: the samba.

Each school's parade lasts between 60 to 70 minutes, so there's of course the chance that someone watching will miss some parts. People need to go to the bathroom or even the bar to get drinks. This is a party, after all!

If you're watching a movie, missing even a few minutes makes it harder to understand or enjoy, since you miss part of the story. The same is true for why you can't skip episodes of your favorite TV show.

But that's not true for a parade. You don't need to see everything to understand or enjoy it. Every section of it is beautiful and entertaining in itself, and if you miss a few parts of it, you'll still have a great experience.

That's why your marketing needs to be more like a parade, not a movie: you can't expect everyone to see every piece of content you create, so every bit of content must be valuable on its own and identifiable as coming from your brand.
Until a few years ago I wouldn't invest a single dollar on any initiative that didn't have proven and direct ROI. We could grow just by investing in advertising aimed at last-click acquisition, especially since SEO was a surefire way to generate traffic and revenue, and our social media channels had great organic reach.

Good times for us marketers (though perhaps not so much for our audiences), but now things have changed.

First, because of—justifiable—privacy concerns, it's getting harder and harder to rely solely on PPC to get results. Highly targeted advertising is slowly receding, and reaching your audience is becoming more expensive. Laws like the GDPR have made it harder to access data, as seen in the impending death of the 3rd party cookie or the privacy changes in iOS 14.

Second, we learned that distribution channels based on algorithms are not our friends. Organic reach is almost nonexistent on social media for brands and in 2020, according to research done by Sparktoro, two-thirds of Google searches are zero-click, meaning that the user doesn't need to leave the SERP to get what they want. So much for reliable organic distribution!

So, what's the solution? A powerful brand, great distribution, and owned channels!

Your brand is your samba, connecting everything under a cohesive and distinctive narrative, echoing your unique traits. Every piece of content you create and promote—including Ads—is like the sections of a Carnival parade: part of the whole, yet able to exist independently.

If you do it properly, every time any piece of your content leaves its mark on someone, they'll remember your brand. And the ultimate goal of that is for them to seek your brand out in the future, not just discover your content by accident. When this becomes true, magic happens. If a person is searching for your brand and content on Google or a social network, there's no algorithm that will stop them from finding you. You are already on the top of their mind.

But it's also important to create your own channels, with direct distribution, so you can create an audience that's truly yours and easily reachable. That's why you should always try to convert visitors into newsletter or podcast subscribers, for example.

You have to be so good at this that they'll wait for your next email, YouTube video, or podcast the same way they wait anxiously for Netflix to launch an episode of their favorite series. Your role, as a marketer who wants to make an impact, is to orchestrate a parade that your audience likes so much that they'll keep coming back to see it again and again!

A good result can only be achieved with holistic work

Author ASTRID KRAMER

ASTRID KRAMER *has been an expert in Corporate SEO since 2007. The combination of SEO with UX and business requirements has brought her international key accounts. She excels in public speaking and moderating in front of hundreds of audience members. Her academic foundation includes a master's degree in information science, social psychology and law and informatics and a postgraduate course in business management.*

1. You are a Corporate SEO and UX consultant. Can you explain to the readers of IMPACT what does working on Enterprise SEO & UX consist of?

My scope of work includes all areas of SEO, i.e., technical SEO, editorial SEO and SEO strategy. The same goes for UX. The difference with consulting, for example, small companies is that my work is also strongly influenced by company policy. Communication between departments and with stakeholders is essential for the final success. Therefore, it's my job to mediate between IT, editorial and management, but also PR, social media and many other departments to achieve the best possible result for everyone.

For many, SEO is a special discipline. But if you take a closer look, you see how holistic SEO work actually is. Findability, targeting, data-driven work and ultimately satisfied users and perfectly functioning systems like websites and apps are infinitely important in the digital age and can no longer be considered a niche product. For any company with a digital presence, SEO influences all areas of business – and vice versa. This needs to be communicated and conveyed.

2. One of the fields you work on is reputation management. What guidance do you give to enterprises in 2023?

Change of perspective. There is so much talk about the importance of putting yourself in the customer's shoes. And yet many companies act and communicate from their own perspective. They want to present themselves in the best possible way, while it would be much more important to solve the actual problems of potential customers, to make them feel good, to build trust and to retain them. People want to communicate at eye level, in times of social media and participation even more than before.

That's how you have to approach them as a company, too. Explicitly from the SEO point of view, this means that you have to look behind the data! Google your own company and look at the results. Respond to reviews accordingly. Take up and process feedback. It's important to work across different media that the data from the call center can be used perfectly for SEO.

And finally: What does the user see when he has clicked on a ranking and landed on the page? Is he in the right place? Is his search intention met? Is he being guided well to his destination here? Is the page performing well and is his user experience positive? This is where many groups need to work together, both experts and real users. User testing is essential in UX, but also important for SEO. As mentioned at the beginning, a good result can only be achieved with holistic work.

3. You have previously discussed that SEO doesn't result in anything if you don't take UX into account. How can we ensure that the two support each other?
Communication, communication, communication. UX is mostly attached to the graphic area, SEO to the technology. If each department works separately, the result will not be satisfactory. It may even be that departments unknowingly work against each other. Therefore, it's important to get everyone on board. For consultants in these areas, the rule is to never consider your specialized expertise as sufficient, but always learn to understand and respect what others are doing.

It's also important to have functioning project management that is aware of this and acts accordingly. For example, tasks can only be marked as done when all relevant stakeholders have given their go. This is more laborious, but it's worth it in the end. And just as important is creating understanding for SEO and UX. With concrete examples, customer testimonials, etc. Training and seminars for the entire team are extremely helpful here. It's not about training ten new SEOs in the company. But every digitally working employee should understand why SEO and UX are so important and how they belong together.

4. In your opinion, how important is image SEO?
Like every answer in SEO, it depends. Image SEO is important when one's branch or main keywords are linked to images. The search engine result pages (ideally viewed via a tool, so that they are not personalized) are virtually the largest usability lab in the world, since what the search engine considers relevant is ranked here for each search phrase – and these search engines can access an extremely large amount of data.

This also means that if an image search is displayed as a vertical for a term, then images are important here. So, if I sell a product for which explanation charts rank high in image searches, then I should also provide those charts. Ideally, I know this before Google does because I know that my product needs explanation or because feedback came from customer support that potential customers have a lot of questions about XY.

Images and videos are a natural part of the Internet and must be edited accordingly. Since they can be understood less easily than text, they must be enhanced with textual elements in such a way that machines can read and evaluate them. But we are not just talking about machines here either. Visually impaired or blind people should not be excluded when it comes to being able to capture and experience the content on the web. Without additional information such as alt attribute texts or speaking file names, captions and surrounding text, this content cannot be grasped by many people, which brings us back to an intersection between UX, accessibility and SEO. Without one, the other does not exist. Or at least not well.

5. Google is doing core updates several times a year. How have the last few changes affected your work?
I have been in SEO for 15 years and have never been hit by an update. That's because I've never done anything that could be considered gray. That means if you stick to the Google guidelines, if you produce good content, if you work technically clean and keep your system transparent and understandable and if you do SEO sustainably, then no update will surprise you.

Of course, it often takes longer to see success. Of course, high-quality purchased links can initially offer success and produce pretty charts. But if these do not deliver traffic, then they were probably not useful for users. No Google update in the last decades contradicts the actual goal of Google of offering the user the one, best possible result for him and his search query in his specific life situation. So, if I've communicated with the user and not tried to use tricks to achieve quick wins that do not reflect the added value I really deliver to the customer, what update could surprise me?

6. What keeps you motivated? Any advice for the young digital marketers?
Don't stop learning and remain humble and amazed at the many bright minds around you who can do one thing or another better and in a more exciting way than you. I'm absolutely sure that no other job could have inspired me as long as SEO, where I can learn and apply psychology, neuromarketing, graphic design and much more that goes beyond technical know-how. And where there's a community that supports each other, shares its knowledge and inspires each other. I'm endlessly grateful to be able to work in a field that is more collaborative than competitive, and that remains exciting every day – as search systems are also evolving day by day.

7. Finally, this book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
A feeling that remains. Something that someone does or says and that I encounter again sometime, months later, in my life. An example: I needed new profile pictures. I remembered that almost two years ago, I once stumbled across a woman on LinkedIn whose corporate website I thought was fantastic because she presented herself as "out of the box": no suit, but rather colorful clothes. No perspective from above, but photographed at eye level or from below. No typical business photos, but character, expression, style – impact. A feminist statement without explicitly calling it that. This person had so much impact on me that two years later, I searched all my contacts to find her again and to show the photographer what I want for myself (shoutout to Shelly Omilâdé Bell – thanks for the inspiration, you are awesome!).

Globally, I hope that the younger generation, the "last generation", will have more impact on our politics and all of us than it currently seems, because in the current situation, we absolutely need turnaround, innovation and fundamental changes in everyone's life to be able to preserve this planet. In a very small way, I hope that I can have the best possible impact on my son and that I can give him values that will make him happy but also everyone who has to do with him.

People want to communicate at eye level, in times of Social Media and participation even more than before.

ASTRID KRAMER
Expert in Corporate SEO

The essential and unexpected role of the executive brand in modern marketing

Author MARK SCHAEFER

MARK SCHAEFER *is a marketing consultant, Rutgers University faculty member, and the author of "KNOWN: The Handbook for Building and Launching Your Personal Brand."*

Once in a while I see some A-list business celebrity making fun of any effort to build a 'personal brand'. Ironically, without a personal brand, their message probably would not have been seen or shared in the first place!

The fact is, systematically developing and sustaining executive personal brands should be a central business activity today. Not only is personal branding crucial for an individual's long-term success, increasingly it's going to determine whether your company succeeds in this world.

If you don't have a personal brand online, people aren't going to work with you. Do you know how every single conversation I have with people in business goes? Like this. "Hey Mark, I was looking you up online. Really impressive stuff."

Every single time.

When you meet with someone, what do you do beforehand? You look them up online.

What do you do after that coffee meeting? You look them up online.

What do you do when you're trying to figure out how you can work together? You look them up online.

What do you do when you're choosing between working with one person versus another person? You look them up online.

Our digital presence is ingrained in almost every business process. We make decisions based off what we see, and if all we see is an outdated presence online, we're going to assume that person is outdated, too. Obviously creating a personal brand that establishes authority, presence and reputation can boost your career and open new doors. But if you look at the market trends, I'd argue that personal branding plays a part in the future of ALL company branding.

The effectiveness of 'traditional' ads and marketing is eroding rapidly. The 'sales funnel' is collapsing, and customers own the buyer's journey … not you.

If people see your ads (which they probably don't), they won't believe them. Nearly 80 percent of consumers do not believe corporate advertising and the number is even worse among young people.

What do people believe? People. They believe each other, through reviews, shared content, and influencers they respect and trust.

In the past, our businesses were built through an accumulation of advertising impressions. Today, our brands will be known, at least in part, through an accumulation of *human impressions*. I am 100 percent convinced of this. This is why so many legacy brands are dying. They represent the ideals and lawyer-approved voice of a company, or an ad agency, not a trusted voice of a real person.

Tesla has existed as a company for a little over 10 years. And yet, it has approximately the same market valuation of Ford Motor Company — the fifth-largest company by sales volume — which was founded in 1903. At least part of that value comes from the personality of Elon Musk. He is clearly an imperfect person, but I think that's what people love about him. He appears as a quirky human being — not a lawyer-approved mouthpiece. He is honest, flawed, and the greatest entrepreneur of our generation. He is a beloved hero to many.

Who is the person you love at Ford?

Or AT&T? Or L'Oreal?

Mercedes Benz spends nearly $1,000 per car on advertising. Tesla spends zero. With a compelling personal brand at the helm, they don't need to. In this case, a powerful personal brand has an impact on the company stock price. This is why smaller businesses have an advantage in this era of human impressions. Normally, the founder is the brand. It's hard to love a logo, an ad, or a piece of branded content. We love people. That's the future of branding.

By the way, when I talk about human impressions, I'm not talking about begging employees to share your content. I'm not a fan of employee advocacy programs that mandate or gamify content sharing. It's just another form of advertising when you get down to it. And it's not sustainable if there isn't personal value in it for the employee.

In the long run, the only thing that's going to work to cut through the content shock clutter of our world is real information from real people. Not only do we need to trust our people to share whatever they want to share, we need to encourage them, train them, support them. I'm working with one Fortune 500 company right now who paid for employees to develop their own blogging sites — no strings attached.

One young woman in this program had been blogging about how the company's technology is being used for social good. That validation and her enthusiastic and authentic belief in the company is more powerful than any advertisement they could buy. This is the future of corporate branding.

Another giant consulting company I work with is completely re-working their marketing department to help establish and nurture the personal brands of their key consultants.

In the past, a brand is what a company told you it was. Today, a brand is what people tell each other it is. How are you going to insert yourself in these human conversations? If you're still on the fence about personal branding and it's cumulative impact in the business world, you're on a probable path of obsolescence.

Freedom through entrepreneurship

Author NATHAN CHAN

NATHAN CHAN *is the CEO & founder of 'foundr', a global educational platform built for entrepreneurs. Frustrated with the lack of REAL advice for those wanting to build and scale a business, Nathan launched Foundr in 2013 and set out to interview the world's greatest entrepreneurs. Foundr's platform has featured the likes of Richard Branson, Mark Cuban and Ariana Huffington, amassed a global community of 4+ million people, and has become one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial brands in the world.*

1. You are the Founder and CEO of Foundr. Can you tell us more about the story behind the company and what made you start it?

For some context, foundr is an online education business, where we connect our students with teachings from the world's greatest entrepreneurs. Growing up, I wasn't an overly ambitious person. You wouldn't have called me a high-achiever. I remember being stuck in a job that I utterly hated, thinking 'there has to be more to life than this'. I'd heard of people in my network starting online businesses, and at the time- it was a pretty foreign concept. I didn't know where I'd even begin, so I almost began conducting our interviews as an investigative journalist, wanting to learn for myself. Very quickly, I interviewed some incredibly successful founders like Richard Branson, Ariana Huffington and Mark Cuban.

The more insights I discovered through these interviews, the more I realized that everyone should have access to this level of education. Since then, I've dedicated my career to serving tactical information to entrepreneurs at all stages. Today, foundr works with these incredible business icons, to distill their lessons into actionable content for our students.

2. Your company is focused on activities helping entrepreneurs. Where does the passion for entrepreneurship come from?

I'm really passionate about doing work that you find fulfilling. For me, that was a journey of discovery. I think for most people, building a business seems out of reach – something that's reserved for a 'special' type of person. After interviewing hundreds of entrepreneurs, I know that's not true. Steve Jobs once said 'everything around you that you call life was made up by people that were no smarter than you'.

I'm passionate about entrepreneurship, but I'm most passionate about exposing people to the idea that they too

can build an incredible business, and live life on their own terms. Freedom through entrepreneurship is something we talk a lot about at foundr.

3. Back in 2014 you raised 300.000 Instagram followers in 10 months, now you have over 3.5 million. A lot has changed since 2014, do you think it's easier to get that many quality followers now or is it even more difficult. And why?

It's most probably more difficult now, given how many people and brands are on the platform. However, it's certainly not impossible. We see our students do it all the time. The principles that I followed are the same principles that will gain you followers in 2022 (I'll explain these in the next question). If you create great content, and have a real understanding of your audience, you're always going to find a way. And although there's more people on the platform, there's also more places than ever to be active. You have TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. What this means is, although there's a lot of noise, there's more opportunity than ever.

4. What are the top 3 things to do to gain quality followers on Instagram?

1. Be consistent with your posting. This is the biggest hurdle to get across, but you need consistency if you want to grow. The algorithm will thank you for it.

2. Leverage Instagram's newest features. There's a direct correlation between how much you're using Instagram's newest tool, and how quickly you'll see growth. Whether it was Instagram stories or Instagram Reels, we've always been at the forefront of utilising the latest feature. This has certainly helped us, as Instagram rightfully wants to promote content that is showcasing their platform in the most relevant way.

3. Create great content. There's no way around this one, but if you want to gain followers that are right for your brand/business, you need to create content that those people want to consume regularly.

5. You have employees all over the world, how do you keep all of them updated and motivated?

It's a tricky balance, and is something that you're never going to be perfect at. It's about listening to your team, and consistently refining things based on their feedback. Part of this is being as transparent as possible, about both the work and general business updates. We tend to over-communicate.

In terms of motivation – we start by hiring people who are really driven, and have a deep level of passion for the work that we do. Once we're all on the same page, it's easier to keep people motivated. We fail together, and we celebrate together.

6. You have been quite open about the hardships of your career at the start, that nobody would hire you as a marketer. Now you have a multi-million business, what kept your motivation going throughout all the rejections?

Honestly? When I first started the magazine, I got a handful of subscribers. For me, the moment someone put their credit card down for that subscription – I knew I had to deliver on what I had promised them. Now, at scale, we have thousands of students, and delivering on our promises to them keeps me motivated. I never want to let anyone down, especially the people that have invested their time and money in our platform.

I know we have something incredible to offer, so I'm really passionate about bringing in new students, but serving our existing community keeps me motivated.

7. This book is for dreamers and doers, which one are you and why?
Like all entrepreneurs, you kind of have to be both. To be able to create anything of value, you need to be able to not only have a strong vision, but you need to be relentless on bringing it to life. Having a dream is an incredible thing, but it's only as good as your ability to bring it to the world.

8. Entrepreneurship is a hot career choice. Do you have any advice for the young founders out there?
Building a business is really difficult, but it's the most rewarding thing you'll ever do. My only advice would be, make sure you're doing it for the right reasons, and make sure you're open to learning and evolving.

As a founder, you're only as good as your ability to learn and take in information. You don't know everything, and you're going to have to surrender to that idea pretty quickly if you want to succeed.

9. We talk a lot about impact in this book. What is impactful entrepreneurship for you?
Impactful entrepreneurship is following through on what you've promised to people, and leaving them in a better place than where you've found them. Entrepreneurs really do change the world, and to make incredible change, you need a strong vision and a really phenomenal team.

When I first started the magazine, I got a handful of subscribers. For me, the moment someone put their credit card down for that subscription – I knew I had to deliver on what I had promised them.

NATHAN CHAN
Founder & CEO at 'foundr'

How to build trust, win hearts (and boost profits)

Author CHRISTINE ALEMANY

CHRISTINE ALEMANY *is passionate about helping emerging companies grow and scale. An engineer by training and marketer at heart, she is a senior executive with over 20 years of experience reinvigorating brands, building demand generation programs, and launching products for startups and Fortune 500 companies. In her spare time, she advises startups through Columbia Business School's Entrepreneurial Sounding Board and is a teaching fellow at the NASDAQ Entrepreneurial Center.*

Trust is the lifeblood of sustainable (and profitable) customer relationships. Unfortunately, today's age of bias, widespread disinformation, and propaganda has created a trust problem for marketers. People no longer know where (or whom) to turn to for dependable information, and it's only getting worse.

Per the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer, trust in U.S. CEOs is at 47%, and credibility has basically hit rock bottom in Japan (18%) and France (22%). A year later, trust in business leaders continues to fall despite the latest focus on purpose and ESG initiatives. In fact, the 2022 PwC U.S. Trust Survey found that 87% of business leaders think customers highly trust their companies when only about 30% of consumers do. That's a 57-point gap!

Why is this important? Trust is a powerful motivator for consumer behavior. A 2021 survey of 1,000 consumers concluded that more than 80% consider trust a deciding factor in their buying decisions, despite the fact that only 34% trust the brands they use. Moreover, the downside of distrust is stronger than the upside of trust. According to PwC's 2021 Trust in US Business Survey, 44% of consumers surveyed claimed to have stopped buying from a company due to a lack of trust. 22% of employees have left a company because of trust issues.

When it comes to building trust, older adults are more brand conscious, while younger adults are more process conscious. According to a Gallup/Knight Foundation survey, older Americans prioritize brand reputation and political slant when evaluating a brand's credibility and typically rely on one or two sources of information. Conversely, younger adults (18 to 34-year-olds) are more likely to gather information from numerous sources and place more of a premium on how open that outlet is with its facts, research, and processes.

One new layer is the increasing importance of price in building trust as inflation increasingly affects consumers. With claims around inflated corporate profits, consumers want the companies that they support to act in solidarity with them. A business that can be transparent about rising costs and potentially lend a hand by limiting price increases will win the day—creating deeply loyal customers and capturing market share.

Trust is not built on a winner-takes-all system. It's an ecosystem of giving and taking between brand and consumer. As marketing experts, we can apply these findings to develop credibility with our intended audiences as they age and evolve. Here's how.

1. Do not overspin

Grandstanding on ESG without follow-through or substance is worse than sitting on the sidelines. During the summer of 2020, PR teams jumped to distribute public denouncements of systemic racism. But the public was quick to call out the performative declarations of companies whose public anti-racism pledge was at odds with former employees' experiences, company leaders' spotty track record, or lack of follow-through.

2. Avoid half-truths

In the court of public opinion, an omission is akin to lying. If a claim requires omission, then do not use it; and if you do make a mistake, own up to it. In fact, you may find consumers more forgiving if you show any semblance of contrition. Being vulnerable about where you have fallen short in the past suggests honesty, which sits at the foundation of consumer trust, brand affinity, and long-term engagement.

3. Read the room and adjust

Marketers should continually evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing efforts by asking these key questions:

- Is our customer sentiment negative or positive?
- What are our favorability ratings and how are they trending?
- Is our audience engaging with our content?
- Did we follow through on our promises?

By regularly checking whether consumers are picking up what you are putting down, you will find that you can more easily meet and even exceed their ever-evolving preferences.

The fight for consumer trust is ongoing — and it will not be going away anytime soon. In today's age of distrust, marketers have to work harder to build brand trust. Savvy marketers who use authentic brand messaging will engender stronger customer relationships that stand the test of time. Implement these three steps to begin building a brand that people depend on.

Create IMPACT by including your customers

Author BENJAMIN GUNDGAARD

BENJAMIN GUNDGAARD *is an International E-commerce Expert and Best-selling Author of Smartphone E-commerce. 18 years ago, he founded CustomerSense, where he consistently has helped companies such as IKEA, LEGO, TUI, Montblanc, GE and many other companies increase their online revenue by 15% to 300%.*

Customers Included

Successful companies have one thing in common: they include their customers when building and optimizing their products, services, E-commerce stores, etc.

I consult E-commerce companies only; however, the methodology I now will share, in essence applies to all types of product development, web site design and many other types of optimization processes.

Get the data right

In order to analyze and thus understand your customers' behavior, it is important to combine Qualitative and Quantitative data.

By doing so, you both will understand What your customers are doing and Why they are doing it:

What = Quantitative data
This type of data is collected based on numbers and numeric values from online tracking data, etc.

Why = Qualitative data
This type of data e.g., is collected through methods of observing customers interact with your products, E-commerce store, etc.

You need both types of data
When building or optimizing products, services, websites, etc., many companies make the mistake of basing their process on Quantitative data only -- such as A/B Split Tests -- where you test two different features, pages, etc. up against each other for a certain period of time.

However; by doing so, you may locate **Where** there are some issues, but you will never understand **Why**.

I often say:
"You can spend your entire professional life doing A/B Split tests without ever locating a single Conversion Killer (an issue that keeps your customer from buying your products / services).

Or, you can run a User Test and in 1 day locate 5-10 Conversion Killers + 20 to 80 other serious conversion issues".

You have to understand **What** your customers do and **Why** they do or do not do it in order to create a focused and lasting impact.

This is why the process to the left is wrong and the one to the right is correct:

Wrong

1. Set up heat maps
2. Make two versions of the design, based on assumptions
3. Do A / B Split tests of these versions
4. Wait a long time
5. Get doubtful results without knowing why design A perhaps is better than design B.

Correct

1. User Test the site
2. Prioritize the 30 to 100 issues you will find (Conversion Killers first)
3. Compare user test issues with tracking data to locate qualitative and quantitative data clusters
4. Improve the store
5. User Test the improved store before launching it
6. Fix issues
7. Launch
8. Run an A/B Split Test (if needed).

My optimization process

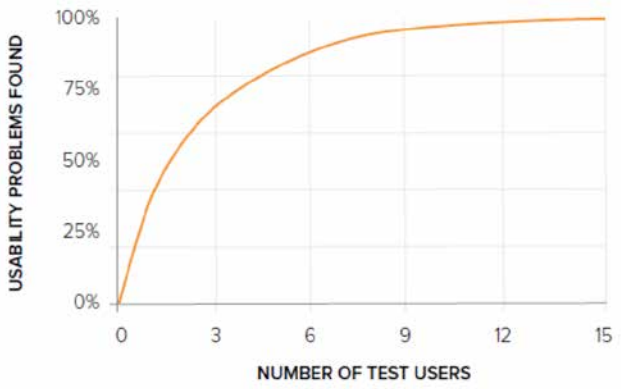
Therefore -- in my experience -- the best process is this:

1. User Test your site (product / service)
A user test is also called a "think-aloud test" because the users in the test speak about how they perceive the user interface: what they like, why they get stuck, etc.:

"When I press this button I expect to see all products "

—

Most user tests are based on 5 representative customers, which will help you locate approximately 85% of all errors within the given tasks, as illustrated by this graph (source):



A user test is the most powerful tool I have ever experienced, when it comes to understanding the customers' behavior. It does not take a lot of time to test, and it is based on real customers interacting with your E-commerce store (product/service).

I have conducted more than 250 user tests, and I learn something new every time. This makes me very humble in terms of just how effective and often very lucrative user tests are.

2. Prioritize the 30 to 100 issues you will find (Conversion Killers first)

Once you have located the issues in your E-commerce store (product/service), you can start out by prioritizing the issues.

This is an example of the number of errors I have located and prioritized in a client's E-commerce store:

Number of errors

Conversion Killers	6
Errors that will influence the revenue	73
Minor errors and input	2
Total	**81**

3. Compare user test issues with tracking data to locate Qualitative and Quantitative data clusters

Once you have user tested your E-commerce store (Qualitative data) you then can compare the findings in the user test with Quantitative Data, such as Google Analytics tracking data:

And then you can achieve your business goals, by following the remaining steps:

4. Improve the store

5. User Test the improved store before launching it

6. Fix issues

7. Launch

8. Run an A/B Split Test (if needed).

Summary

By following along this process, you both will understand Where in your store (product/service) you have Customer Experience issues and Why, which gives you optimum data and knowledge in order to improve your revenue and thus create the best business impact.

> **Successful companies have one thing in common: they include their customers when building and optimizing their products, services, E-commerce stores, etc.**

BENJAMIN GUNDGAARD
International E-commerce Expert
and Best-selling Author

Advocacy 2.0: The right opportunity for the right customer at the right time

Author DEENA ZENYK & LIZ RICHARDSON

LIZ RICHARDSON: *Liz is an award-winning customer marketer and advocacy executive well-known for her innovative work in customer engagement methodology. Her passion is generating best practices and education in the advocacy and engagement field, and is the co-founder and Chief Revenue Officer at Captivate Collective, a leading customer advocacy and engagement agency.*

DEENA ZENYK: *Deena is a true pioneer in her field with nearly 20 years of hands-on experience in advocate marketing and customer engagement. She co-authored the foundational customer advocacy best-seller The Messenger is the Message, and continues to define, test and refine industry best practices as co-founder and Chief Customer Officer at Captivate Collective.*

It's been a long time coming, this evolution in customer advocacy practice. Messaged on promises of access, status, and power, the pursuit of activating customer 'advocates' in the good ol' days, circa 2005-2015, truly thrived on the notion that customers interacting with businesses beyond the sale was still novel and exciting. Since then, the practice has matured. We accept that most programs weren't really exclusive, and those fairly effective lures of status and power were more of a bait and switch than real, meaty hooks. Today, integrated data flows have the power to map, track and sometimes even predict a customer's entire lifecycle with a vendor. This expanded, infinitely more complex view of the customer journey impacts long-held beliefs on what customer advocacy is, how it works and what it means to the business and their customers.

Driving this next chapter of customer advocacy practice is the realization that single-pronged, often-oversold approaches to customer engagement and activation are no longer effective. Customers are much savvier with their time and attention in a growth and retention-based market. They know their power and how to wield it to their advantage.

Whether your company has an advocacy program in place, or is wrangling with how to coordinate a growing number of disconnected customer programs and touch points, the

fundamentals of an Advocacy 2.0 approach will be helpful. As defined by Captivate Collective, contemporary customer advocacy practice is more nuanced, more collaborative and more value driven than its predecessor. Ready to jump in? Here are three ways.

1. Build a foundation of understanding. Your customers are more than their NPS score. They are more than their title or the logo they represent. There are many excellent voice of customer, sentiment acquisition, and analysis tools in the market these days. If you have them, use them. Look at the customer journey and explore the data that is very likely available to you. What are the moments of truth? What are the points of friction? What can you do in those moments to further your advocacy strategy? Even if you have no tools, no data or are limited in your data analysis abilities (no shame - it's not a calling for all!), you are not up the creek. Interview customers, survey them, survey and interview your customer-facing colleagues. Learn whatever you can to fill in a more complete picture of who your customers really are and when and where they interact with your organization. Until you do, it will be a challenge to make your engagements truly relevant.

2. Design a customer engagement program portfolio. Based on your business priorities, what combination of programs/moments/opportunities do you need to meet your goals? Marketo Engage does this really well. Start small, if it means you can make some progress. Do you have a leverage point for customers at each stage? You don't need full blown programs. Start small. Do you have any journey engagement flows mapped? That means identifying opportune moments in the customer journey to nurture relationships or utilize customer good will. Need to amp-up your review game? Take a look at your customer journey to understand the milestones, then establish what needs to happen before that moment to increase your chances with a review ask.

3. Develop and document a single, unifying customer engagement strategy. You won't do this in isolation. Strategy is a collaboration with other customer relationship holders, other program managers, other stakeholders in other departments. The goal here is to share common KPIs; to work towards common goals via a shared mission for your company and your customer's experience. Silos, program ownership, process constraints and other internal goings-on are not your customer's problem. A unified strategy hands your customer the keys to the kingdom, breaks down your silos, and aligns your customer's experience to a master-planned, well-orchestrated, collaboratively-executed engagement journey. Get started by identifying colleagues who have or desire to have meaningful customer interactions. Establish a monthly working group. Share your plans, collaborate on new ideas, coordinate efforts.

The message here is do something. Plans don't always have to be grand strategy overhauls and rebrands. The shift to Advocacy 2.0 starts with a shift in your mindset about what customer advocacy is, how it works and what it means to your business and your customers. Answer those three questions and you'll be on your way to more meaningful customer engagement and activation plays.

The customer is not always right

Author MADS PAASKESEN

MADS PAASKESEN *is an entrepreneur and investor. He's the co-founder and Chairman of the Board of one of Denmark's leading digital marketing agencies, PL & Partners, which he founded with his partner seven years ago. PL & Partners currently has around 50 employees in its office in Copenhagen. Mads also recently co-founded a new venture called anew sleep, which is a D2C e-commerce brand.*

1. This is a book for dreamers and doers, and I know that you're extremely good at executing. So, I would like to focus on that to begin with. First question: If people want to get more impact from their online marketing, what would be your first advice to them?

I'm sure if you ask a hundred people this question, you'll get a hundred different responses. But I'm sure most will and can agree that you have to start at the beginning.

For most advertising platforms, the beginning is the content that the customer will see being displayed, be that through Facebook, Instagram, Google, or another platform. Today the focus on content is bigger than ever before, as advertising has become even easier to get started with, it has also become more competitive than ever.

The best investment you can make for your online marketing efforts is to focus on creating valuable and memorable content that will put your brand in front of many people and that people will interact with.

2. Pinterest, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc. There are so many platforms out there to become visible and attract customers. Who should use what and why?

Most platforms will work for most companies to varying degrees.

That doesn't mean you should focus all your energy on all platforms at the same time.

A good strategy will often involve a bigger focus on a single platform for maximising the effect and performance of that platform before adding another platform.

If you know what will work for your business, then stick with the winning platforms first. Optimise and test everything so you know you are getting the best possible results out of the platform before adding a new platform. Often overseeing multiple platforms at the same time will result in worse performance unless you've mastered the different platforms individually first.

If you're not sure what to use **first**, then check out the following to see what might fit you best.

If you are an e-commerce or B2C-based service company with a known product that people search for.
- Use Google Ads and Google Shopping to capture the customers actively searching for products/services and Facebook/Instagram ads to create retargeting campaigns.

If you are an e-commerce or B2C-based service company with a new product people don't know about yet.
- Use Facebook/Instagram ads to educate the market about your product/service. Use retargeting on all platforms: Google, Facebook and Instagram.

If you are a B2B-based service company with a known service people search for.
- Use Google Ads to capture the customers actively searching for products and Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn ads to create retargeting campaigns.

If you are a B2B-based service company with a new service people don't know about yet.
- Use Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn ads to educate the market about your service. Use retargeting on all platforms: Google, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

3. A lot of agencies will also read this book, and I know that at your agency, you emphasize that the customer is not always right. What is the intention of this rather bold statement?
At PL & Partners, our culture is focused around providing our clients with our honest opinion. We're dedicated to gathering insights that we translate into recommendations to how our clients can improve their business and meet their goals. In order to be the best advisor, we need to be true to our own desire of creating measurable impact. And we cannot be true to that if we just take orders from our clients. We wish to work **with** our clients and not **for** them. And there's a huge difference between those two mindsets. We're here to be bold enough to challenge our client's beliefs and hypotheses and not just accept them.

4. Where do you see the future of performance marketing heading? What will be the most important thing for entrepreneurs and companies wanting to get the best return on their efforts?
The future of digital marketing is always changing, but there are pillars of digital marketing that will always stay the same. If you want to succeed with your business and digital marketing you need to:

1. Create the right plan for your marketing;
2. Measure the effectiveness of your campaign;
3. Pick out the right platforms;
4. Be top in class when it comes to content creation;
5. Deliver a memorable and great experience with your product and service.

At this date and time, the biggest challenge we stand before in digital marketing is a cookieless future.

For years, it's been very easy to get started with digital marketing and deliver measurable results. The advertising industry has been delivering great results that are easily accessible through platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

With the limitations set especially by Apple with the introduction of iOS14, we've seen cookie-based advertising platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and social media platforms struggle to deliver the same easily accessible re-

sults to their customers. Also making it difficult for new and existing advertisers to keep up with the results they have been seeing in the past.

It's become harder and more difficult to succeed, but it's not impossible.

The winners of the future will be the businesses who:
- know and control their data (data is collected, is correct, is sorted, is analysed, is shared, is used to enrich different platforms),
- know their business-critical metrics (profit margin, CAC, LTV, CAC/LTV ratio, retention rate, CHURN, etc.),
- and are able to use the above to make the most qualified decisions when allocating budget to content creation and ad spend on different platforms.

5. You started out as an entrepreneur at a very young age. How has this been a benefit, and how has it also worked against you?
I started my first business at age 19 when I was still in business college, and we (my co-founder Kristian Larsen and I) founded PL & Partners six months after graduating from business college at age 20. It has been a huge advantage to be able to start the business while we were both living with our parents, since it meant that we didn't need any salary for a long time. It was also an advantage that none of us had girlfriends, families or any other commitments, which meant that we could work long hours without neglecting anything or anyone. And that was necessary for us since we were really young, inexperienced and didn't have a network to leverage.

We needed to build all these things and that simply takes time and effort. I think that our young age has been a disadvantage in one primary aspect; the fact that we didn't have experiences, networks, or developed skills (within areas such as sales, project management, recruiting, leadership, finance, etc.) meant that we have had to make every mistake ourselves and learn from that. We've made so many mistakes within all areas of our business, but then we have been able to learn the lesson and try again to succeed.

I can feel how big of a difference there is to start our newest business (anew sleep) where we have skills, experience, network, etc. compared to starting PL & Partners without any of that. But I'm glad that we did it. It has been a fun journey learning and figuring things out while we were going.

6. Your sister Rikke is also an entrepreneur. Do you come from a family of entrepreneurs, or what led you to do something as crazy – for some people – as start your own business?
Rikke just started her creative business designing really creative mirror frames and other interior decor items.

Our parents are definitely not entrepreneurs. They've been on the payroll all their lives. So, no one pushed us to become entrepreneurs and no one showed us the way.

My own personal motivation for getting started as an entrepreneur was a combination of wanting to show the world that I can build things and become a success and also earn a lot of money. Now my motivation is around the freedom that comes from being my own boss. It took five to six years to actually get to that freedom, but now that it's here it's definitely all worth it.

7. You're working on a new start-up – anew sleep. As far as I understand, it's about sleep, but can you put some

more words on it? Remember that this book will not be published until 2023, so you're allowed to reveal things that are currently secrets.
That's right. Right now, we're a month and a half from launching our e-commerce brand anew sleep in Denmark, which will be our first market. With anew, we wish to build a sleep universe. Our long-term desire is to build a premium D2C brand that develops products, content and services that help people improve their sleep. That might be to get more sleep or improve the quality of sleep.

We're launching with a narrow niche product offering of weighted duvets and weighted blankets since this is not something that the broad population uses in the Nordics. It's a well-known product for people that deal with sleeping disorders, anxiety, stress, depression, ADHD, autism and the like, and therefore it's more known as a medical product for patients that deals with the challenges of these conditions.

Sleeping with a weighted blanket reduces the body's production of the stress hormone cortisol and increases the production of the sleep hormone melatonin and the happiness hormone serotonin. There's quite a lot of research showing that many people experience that they fall asleep faster and reach a higher quality of sleep using these products. We strive to develop a premium product to the broad consumer that is not a medical product, but rather a lifestyle product. This will be a huge marketing/branding and storytelling effort, and we look forward to beginning the journey.

Once we get to know our customers, our goal is to get to know them to find out which pains and habits they have for sleep that we can also help them overcome by innovating new products and services.

8. You're from Denmark. A country that many of the readers of this book have probably heard about, whereas others might think that it's the capital of The Netherlands. Denmark only has six million inhabitants. Is it a strength or a weakness to start-up in such a small country?
I think that Denmark has a lot to offer entrepreneurs. There's a lot of things that make it easy to start as an entrepreneur in Denmark. However, there are also things that could definitely be better in order to attract more risk-willing capital and international employees to the start-ups/scaleups in Denmark.

When it comes to the fact that we have only six million inhabitants in Denmark, I would say that it's a challenge. There's definitely a cap on how large your company can grow inside of Denmark's borders. It would definitely be nice to be able to reach a higher level in your business before it's necessary to take on the added complexity of scaling in other countries that have separate cultures, languages, and ways of working. That being said, it's getting easier and easier to scale some businesses (for instance an e-commerce store) to other markets.

9. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact can be many things. It can be an uplift in some numbers, as well as a decrease in others. It can help people improve their lives with an amazing product or service. And it can be to just feel the joy and appreciation of the people that you're working with.

Impact doesn't necessarily have a specific size or amount. It can also be a feeling.

It's always important to me that what I work on has a positive impact in some way. But how big of an impact it is and in what form or way the impact is measured or shown can be very different.

I try to navigate the following aspects when I measure and feel impact in my own work life:

a. Am I doing something good for others (Doesn't have to be saving the world. It can be on a much smaller scale as well)?
b. Am I having fun and developing myself while I do it?
c. Am I working within the laws and the values that are important to me?
d. Am I sharing the joy of the process and results with people I enjoy spending time with?
e. Am I satisfied with the risk/reward ratio and with the financial aspects in general?
f. Am I able to live the life that I wish to live outside of work while doing it?

> **The best investment you can make for your online marketing efforts is to focus on creating valuable and memorable content that will put your brand in front of many people and that people will interact with.**

MADS PAASKESEN
Entrepreneur & Investor

Data is new oil, especially in internet businesses

Author MIKE KORBA

MIKE KORBA *is a CEO & Co-founder at User.com, marketing automation expert, trainer, internet enthusiast and theoretician, e-marketing practitioner, and lecturer at the biggest Polish universities. He's been working in the marketing industry for over nineteen years. As an internet entrepreneur, he understands what it means to do marketing with limited resources. He's been a speaker at many conferences, including Web Summit, SaaStock, Tedx, Infoshare.*

1. Most companies, startups and enterprises, mention the importance of talking to their customers to gain more insights, but how do you actually do this? Survey, interviews, or? What' your experience and what works best?

We have several tools to gain more insights from our customers and that process has changed during our journey. In order to be able to assess whether we are doing well, we regularly conduct satisfaction and loyalty surveys. A tool that works great for us is NPS. It's based on a simple question: How likely are you to recommend us on a scale from 0 to 10. All responses and raw comments are collected and on their basis, we create one slide summary of conclusions (insight).

Another source of insights are our customer support employees.

We love to hear about how our customers feel about our product, therefore, we regularly prepare case studies on the basis of personal interviews with our customers. Apart from that, there are also suggestions on what we can improve, complaints and comparisons to our competitors.

2. You joined and invested in User.com in 2016. How come you decided to join a company in such an extremely competitive space with major players like HubSpot, Pipedrive, etc.? Shouldn't you stay away from the red oceans?

To be honest, when I made the decision to join User.com, I didn't even think about it. I found User.com so compelling that I left my previous job and joined as an employee and then invested my own money to move up and to be considered one of the co-founders. It was something that attracted me, as something that we could see the depth and the potential capabilities of achieving such dreams even with a small team.

Now, after a couple of years, I can tell that I would do the same once again, even taking into account that this market is extremely competitive. Competition shouldn't be

a warning for a new company. It should be considered as an incentive. If the competition is high, it means that there is money on that market so it's easier to be a part of a market landscape and compete with better functionalities and service with other market players. Creating a market, pointing out 'pain relievers', and being an innovator in a niche is more expensive and has a higher probability of failure.

3. You decided to buy the domain User.com at a cost of 400,000 EUR. That's a massive amount for a startup. How come you decided to do that?

Just to clarify, the domain cost us $150,000, but it's still not much because the negotiations started from €400,000. We never thought that we could succeed. We began negotiations just for fun and because of our curiosity about how the process looks. It took us ten months and over 400 exchanged e-mails.

The money we paid seems like a very high price for a domain but when you think about it for a while, then you see it's a great deal. The Internet ran out of four-letter .com domains in 2013, only 28 years after registering the first website, so people are now more than eager to pay any price for short and easy to remember domain names.

That's why we believe in the possibility that the new domain name is a "game changer". It's especially valuable in the brand building process.

4. Many SaaS companies experience that they start with one customer segment, but end up serving a totally different one. Has this also been the case with User.com, and if so, why?

This was also the case with us, though not entirely. We also took another mistake. We tried to satisfy many segments at once: e-commerce, SaaS, service company…

Today, as we have some operating frameworks developed, it would probably not be a problem, but then, at the startup level, it was quite a challenge. It's not like it was a waste of time or a blown budget. Instead, this allowed us to develop, both in terms of technology and sales, and to discover the needs and expectations of various customers. We use these insights in our work to this day.

Currently, we focus our activities and experiences on selected micro segments and we address our activities accordingly. We try to take full advantage of account-based marketing. The knowledge we have allows us to prepare content that's precisely tailored to the target group of our choice. Personalized messages are much more effective than messages sent to mass recipients of lots of segments.

5. What growth hacks have worked for you? You've mentioned Capterra, referrals, and Quora as some relatively successful ones.

I would like to share 3 very specific growth hacks that have worked well for us, and which may be an inspiration for the reader.

Cold mailing

The first one is outbound. It's all about frameworks and processes. In order to be able to carry out outbound activities well, you should first take care of a team consisting of narrowly specialized positions. We tried to automate as many processes as possible. As a result, we managed to automate the sending of emails or obtaining databases, but we did not manage to automate the most important element of our outbound activities – personalized video. The script formula remains unchanged today.

Instead of using a method of mass communication, we focused on personalization and it was a bull's-eye. Of course, this action was accompanied by many others, such as outreach on LinkedIn, remarketing campaigns for people who entered the link or follow-ups.

The key to a good outbound is a good base. In addition, you should monitor cost effectiveness, if a CAC (customer acquisition cost) is less than 1/3 LTV (lifetime value), then it's worth scaling that outbound activity.

Alternative to campaign

We have learned from our clients who previously used Intercom that they left due to increasing costs after one year of use and due to the difficulty of using CRM. We based the entire campaign on this information.

The first step was to prepare the Intercom customer base. To accomplish that we used a tool that allowed us to find companies which we want to target. When we had the list of companies, we used a tool to obtain the data of contact persons. We then used cold mailing techniques and were reaching out on LinkedIn and ABM ads using Albacross. We also created a dedicated landing page, where you can find testimonials of people who switched from Intercom to User.com.

In addition, we also introduced changes to our product. We have developed a special data migrator for Intercom customers, to keep the data transfer process smooth, and step-by-step educational materials explaining the process of using user.com instead of Intercom. What's more, we created a special team whose task was to support clients in the migration process.

Global Event

We've reached 1.5 thousand new leads thanks to the organization of the SaaS Growth Summit.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting necessity of transferring business events to the online sphere significantly facilitated reaching the greatest experts in individual industries. It was also much easier to organize a larger scale event and to get in touch with potential interested parties from all over the world. What made us succeed?

- partners from the US
- clearly defined goals connected with KPIs
- getting the greatest experts to speak. When we managed to get one really great speaker, it was easier to get more
- a detailed promotion plan and schedule of activities

6. Now we'll get a bit technical, but I'm sure that our IMPACT readers will have no problem keeping up. I would like to ask you, how you hack remarketing tags because I've read that you've found a really good way of doing this?

Today, when the years of digital transformation were reduced to months, as the pandemic forced a rapid transition to digital channels, it's especially important for data from the offline world with data from the online world to intertwine.

If you use CRM on a daily basis, you have certainly felt the inability to automatically add a tag with information about signed contracts in the offline world more than once. It's not easy, but let me show you how to do it.

We will use User.com in this example, but don't worry, you can use any other marketing automation tool. For this, we need GTM (Google Tag Manager), GA (Google Analytics) and User.com. User.com stores information about customers that's not necessarily available in Google Analytics, and vice versa. Combining these two tools means combining two powerful data sources. User.com can use the API to retrieve specific data and save it accordingly. If you want to dive into technical details, check the instructions we've prepared here.

7. What's your experience with freemium models. Good or bad idea?

As for my personal experience, it's not the best, but I know

that for many people the freemium plan works great and is effective.

We at user.com also had it for a while. The GA showed that embedding the user.com logo in a chat window or on a web-push prompt is a source of valuable registrations and good leads. It seemed to be a reasonable bet to offer our solution to as many free users as possible just to get this traffic. Unfortunately, we did not obtain the economies of scale that I hoped for.

8. Please explain the difference between quantity and quality metrics, and why they're both important?
In my general experience, people usually don't understand metrics, don't know how to draw conclusions from them, and this makes decisions more difficult. And yet the data is supposed to help with this!

There are two types of data in web analytics - qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative metrics focus on the features presented by the research subject, whereas quantitative metrics focus on measurable variables that can be expressed numerically.

Qualitative data cannot be used separately from quantitative data. They can only help us understand what happened. If they complement each other, they make it possible to draw reliable conclusions.

Unfortunately, the misunderstanding of data sometimes reaches an absurd level in marketing, like when a marketer goes for a walk, statistically, both the dog and the marketer have an average of three legs.

9. You've said that analytics should be a marketer's best friend. Why?
Data is the new oil, especially in internet businesses. Having access to unlimited data, we can draw conclusions from it. Obtaining data from a potential customer is even more important in the context of the changes announced by Google in 2020 and planned to be introduced in 2023. We are heading towards the so-called cookieless future. The possibilities of targeting users will be limited. This is the result of Google's planned withdrawal of third-party cookies in Chrome. Instead of third-party date (and paid media), you should bet on first-data party (owned media) and improve its collection. This is crucial as they will allow you to understand the behavior of users visiting your website in order to be able to send them a more effective, personalized message.

It's high time to implement appropriate mechanisms for capturing such data as, for example, data from behaviors, from actions and from demonstrated interest of the user on the website. In today's world, it's expected that the role of personalization in a marketing communication strategy will become even more essential.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact is about making a difference. Even a small one. And although having impact can be applied to many spheres of life, it's most visible in business. As an entrepreneur, you're not just responsible for yourself. You bear the burden of responsibility for your employees, customer relations, business results, and many more.

Importantly, you're not only an entrepreneur, but also a manager, leader, expert, and strategist. If you want to make an impact, you have to put in some effort. But it's worth seeing the difference.

Winning BIG with Data

Author AVINASH KAUSHIK

AVINASH *helps executive teams leverage innovative strategies to outsmart competitors. He's the author of two bestselling books on digital analytics, and leads Global Strategic Analytics at Google. Acting on his passion to teach, Avinash has delivered keynotes at major global conferences and taught at Stanford, ULCA and Santa Clara University.*

His weekly newsletter, The Marketing Analytics Intersect, raises funds for Doctors Without Borders and The Marshall Project.

In a (business) world where data flows freely like a gushing river, it's heartbreaking that a vast majority of decision-making continues to be based on faith.

A complex set of realities contribute to this. Most reports and dashboards remain glorified data pukes. Most senior leaders fail to articulate, and execute, clear business strategies (making it impossible to identify what success – or priorities – look like). The torrid pace of new data generation shows no sign of slowing down and we're constantly trying to catch up.

Still, delivering both customer delight at scale and convert it into long-term profit remains crucial. I recommend the following simple adjustments to win BIG with data.

1. Outcomes, not activity.

Most teams are obsessed with activity metrics. How many impressions/reach/page views/store visits did we get? All this data is easy to find, and it's liberally splayed all over our dashboards.

The problem is that on the brightest day, none of this activity is any indication of whether your customers are happier or if you're making money. Worse, these metrics create incentives for your employees to behave badly.

Let the activity metrics be used for minor diagnostic purposes. Switch your focus to an obsession with outcome metrics: Customer task completion rate. Economic value. Revenue. Lifetime value. Loyalty. And more.

The end result will be less data (YES!), sharper execution focus, and better incentives for your employees.

2. Insights, not data.

Data is simply what happened. Even the most amazing outcomes data is solely what and not why.

It's ok as an executive to be curious about what happened. What you desperately need to know is why did it

happen? And what in the name of Thor should we do? Stop asking for data. Start asking for insights.

Go one step further, tell your analysts/organizations that you only want text-based output in English, Swedish, Hindi – text that says in plain terms here are the top five reasons for the business performance of our outcome metrics, and here are the top five actions the data recommends taking.

The impact on your organization will be instantaneous and magnificent.

3. Experiments, not opinion.

Years ago, at a company I worked for, a term was coined the term HiPPO.

The highest paid person's opinion.

It was coined from the observation that in any given meeting, data was frequently ignored in favor of the opinion of the highest paid person in the room. Sad face.

Opinions are good, they can open new possibilities or fill in gaps in our thinking. Yet, opinions are unexplainable expressions of faith. I believe X. It's good you believe X. Perhaps you have lots of experience. Take those opinions and, if you feel they will have a HUGE impact on the business, make sure they are executed as experiments.

The HiPPO can have an opinion. When you execute it as an experiment, you **1.** lower risk to the business, **2.** create an opportunity to learn, and **3.** build an ideal democracy. Collectively, experiments build a resilient data-influence culture.

4. People, not tools.

Twenty years ago, I'd created this rule for analytics: If you have $100 to be successful with data, invest $10 in tools and $90 in big brains!

Every passing year since, the 10/90 rule has proven itself over and over again. World-class analytics tools are free (ex: Google Analytics), world-class visualization solutions are free (ex: d3js.org), and world-class analytics hacks are free (ex: search analytics on Github).

What you really, really, need are smart people to make sense of all that data, to help you focus on outcomes, and to help you execute complex experiments. They remain extremely expensive. So pay for them. Don't be the leader/company that puts all its faith in tools, or worse yet, spends 3.5 years implementing a complex analytics solution that is out of date 1.5 years before completion of implementation.

People are the solution. (Yes, AI is coming. But not for a while.)

5. Use data before and during – not just after!

For the overachievers reading this book… Almost all use of data in your organization is likely after the money has already been spent (on Sales, Marketing, Service, HR). It looks backwards.

The most sophisticated use of data is **before** you spend money (to ensure you've done everything humanly possible to ensure positive business outcomes for your company) and **during** the process of spending money (to ensure you take money from what's not working and put it towards what is working).

At the point, the backwards looking analysis after the money's gone is almost boring. You already know what happened: You. Won. Big!

Obviously, this is not easy, but *it's this living on the edge of analytics that builds a competitive advantage*.

Carpe Diem.

Impacting your audience

Author BERNIE BORGES

BERNIE BORGES *is VP, Global Content Marketing at iQor, a leading BPO. He's co-founder and Advisory Board member at Vengreso. He is the host of the Midlife Fulfilled podcast.*
Bernie's career spans three decades in B2B marketing roles and sales roles in tech. He founded and led the digital marketing agency Find and Convert, which after 15 years merged into Vengreso in 2017. He speaks at marketing industry events and is the author of Marketing 2.0.

1. You started as a sales representative and then focused on content marketing. What made you change your career path?
I graduated with a marketing degree and aspired to be a marketing leader. I was already in a sales position when I graduated from college, so I stayed in that position. About 10 years into my sales career, I was offered a marketing position with the company for whom I was a regional sales manager due to my frequent conversations with the marketing leaders about ideas to consider to help the sales team sell more effectively. Eventually, after progressing through various marketing positions, I started my own digital marketing agency. I launched a blog and a podcast to create awareness for myself and my agency and I discovered the power of content marketing.

2. What is content for you?
Content is anything that is consumable by our target audience that is "selling without selling." I mean that it is "selling" through its utility to the customer. Content that educates, enlightens, or entertains in a relevant way is perceived as valuable and potentially memorable to the customer so when they are ready to buy, your brand is top of mind.

3. When is the right time to start a company?
The right time to start a company is when three things are in place. 1. You recognize a legitimate need in the market and you have a solution for it. 2. You are willing to push through "no" for at least one year because you know in your heart that you're solving a problem. 3. You have the financial means to get the business off the ground even if your business has no revenue for one to two years.

Notice that I don't mention anything about age, location, state of the economy, etc. Solve a problem with a long-term viewpoint and possess the financial means to get the business off the ground, period.

4. Many aspects of digital marketing are changing relatively quickly, how do you stay on top of things?
It is not easy to stay current on digital marketing trends particularly since digital marketing disciplines are becoming increasingly more complex and specialized. I try to limit my study to the topics that are most relevant to me. I read blogs, listen to podcasts, and watch YouTube videos from my go-to digital marketing thoughts leaders such as Andrew Davis, Ardath Albee, Jay Baer, Ann Handley, Robert Rose, Michael Brenner, Chris Penn, Paul Roetzer, among others.

5. What are the actionable metrics you are using to measure the success of content marketing initiatives?
Of all the metrics I watch on content marketing, engagement is at the top of my list. We need to understand how our content is resonating with the people we want to reach. The quantity and quality of engagement are the metric that most measures the efficacy of our content.

6. Can you explain: why thought leadership is important for a company's content marketing strategy?
Thought leadership content is "selling without selling." Effective thought leadership content is consumed with emotion. Even B2B content has an emotional impact on the audience when you provide them with helpful insights that somehow make their life a little better, easier, or more efficient. In B2B content marketing, usually senior leadership is part of the buying committee. As such, thought leadership content has potential to create positive brand affinity with senior leaders as they participate in the buying journey.

7. AI is advancing tremendously. What is your opinion on companies using AI generated written content for marketing, is this a good idea?
I'm watching the advancement of AI generated content. It appears to be improving but I believe it has a lot of room to improve. The more specialized a topic is, the more the human touch is needed to tell the story beyond the facts, to elicit a human response to the story.

I'm hopeful that AI generated content will reach a point that creates a good story, even in the most technical topics.

8. What overused terms or buzzwords should marketers stop saying?
I don't have a problem with buzzwords as long as someone doesn't repeat them too often. If I had to pick one word to stop saying it's "perfect". Often people use this word for simple things such as arriving at a mutual date and time to meet. That's not perfection, that's simply a good time to meet.

9. Finally, this book is all about impact. What is impactful content to you?
Impactful content is content that "sells without selling." No one wants to be sold. However, buyers need to buy a solution. Buyers spend considerable time educating themselves. Impactful content informs the buyer throughout their journey. When the buyer is ready to buy, if your content was helpful, the buyer has a favorable perception of your brand and the chance of being considered is much higher than alternative offerings whose brand only became familiar to the buyer through advertising.

Getting up to speed quickly

Author WIKTOR SCHMIDT

WIKTOR SCHMIDT *is the Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of Netguru, the consultancy, product design, and software development company recognized for its growth by the Financial Times, Deloitte, and Forbes. Wiktor is responsible for the company's external presence, co-running key initiatives such as supporting diversity in the company, developing Netguru's social footprint, and implementing sustainable growth strategies. He is a mentor in such organizations as Endeavor, YPO, and Kozminski University.*

1. You've managed to build a very impressive company and organization, and I read that you have focused a lot on recruitment and sales. Can you tell the readers more about what you've done to get where you are today?
I started Netguru with Kuba Filipowski over 15 years ago. We were focused on many things, including recruitment and sales, but at that time we had little idea of what we were doing. If I had to name one thing that we did right, it'd be fostering ownership. Every single process, best practice, service line, and pretty much everything we are today is here because someone showed initiative and championed it by taking ownership. We were fortunate to draw this kind of people to Netguru from early days.

2. How do you build a great sales team & processes?
As mentioned above, it's all about ownership and trust. I believe that with the right people and mindset, you can build a strong sales team and related processes. The sales team needs to see their impact. As a leader, you need to give them the freedom to make decisions and wait for the results. As a leader, you can be there for them and listen to their concern but never force your ideas and approach.

3. How is enterprise sales different from online sales or SMB sales?
SMB and online sales often involve one or two decision-makers, simple procedures, and the ability to pay with a credit card, even for SaaS. Enterprise sales, on the other hand, deals with a large number of stakeholders. Aside from that, there are other processes, ranging from communication to crisis management, audits, and purchasing-paying strategy. Add to that a comprehensive purchase order system, and you have a clear description of enterprise sales.

While internet sales are mostly self-sufficient, enterprise sales need considerably more effort. First and foremost, identify your stakeholders and begin creating relationships and bonds with them. If you're going after a single firm,

strive to have many touchpoints. It will aid in locating the finest go-to individual and pitching them services.

4. How have you worked with innovation at Netguru?
As an end-to-end innovation consultancy, we walk our clients through the whole process of innovating, depending on what they need or where they want to go to. The Netguru innovation journey starts with an idea, an opportunity, or a challenge, and goes through designing and building a product that people want to use. It actually never ends; instead, products are developed, iterated, or adjusted to new market conditions, users' behavior, and so on. Whatever stage a company is at, Netguru consultants can jump in to provide support and expertise to increase the chances of solution delivery.

As one of our innovation consultants used to say, "collaboration with an innovation consultancy can get companies up to speed quickly without jeopardizing their regular business. It enables them to get the most out of the organization's knowledge and use proven tactics to develop their innovative idea into a successful product."

5. You are a certified B Corp. Why?
Whatever your goal or idea is, it's impossible to make an impactful change without technology. Luckily, technology is what we at Netguru are the best at, and we want to use this expertise to give back to the world.

Our vision is a sustainable digital world where everyone can realize their full potential. As a company, we're committed to changing the world for the better, and using business as a force for good. The B Corp certificate allows us not only to measure such activities, but also to set ambitious goals, and to raise the bar for the industry and for ourselves. It's also a great community of like-minded business people.

6. In 2020, you co-founded Tech to the Rescue. Can you please tell us more about this project?
Tech To The Rescue is a global platform that matches IT companies and nonprofits. It creates opportunities for unlocking technology resources and the potential of global collaboration to create positive social impact. Netguru has been involved in Tech To The Rescue's projects since day one, with the recent focus on supporting the Tech For Ukraine nonprofit initiative with our talents and skills. During only the first two years, we managed to help over 1 million people across 12 countries worldwide.

7. This book has contributors from all over the world. Netguru is based in Poland. What have been the benefits and potential negative impacts about Poland being your home country?
We built Netguru to be a global brand, well-positioned, adaptable, and successful in the digital world. We structured the company in a way that allows us to be fully remote, with hundreds of experts working across different time zones.

One of the key benefits of being based in Poland is the access to top talent recognized globally, but at the same time we extend our hiring locations to other countries which helps us develop a more diverse community of experts.

8. What is impact to you?
Impact is about making a change at a larger scale. Whether it's about giving voice to the underprivileged, lowering CO_2 emissions, or building financial awareness through education, you need to use the tools and means that will engage a larger number of actors, and influence their behavior for longer. Otherwise, it's just scratching the surface without making a difference at the core of a problem.

That pesky disruption dilemma: replacing or complementing legacy behavior?

Author HANS HARTMAN

HANS HARTMAN *is chair of* Visual 1st *and founder of* Suite 48 Analytics*, a market research firm for the photo and video industry. He also publishes the bi-weekly* Visual 1st Perspectives *newsletter, which includes analyses of trending imaging topics as well as a roundup of photo and video industry news. Hans was senior director of market research at* Nero*, and director of product strategy* Quark*. He co-founded* Piczo *and was director of professional solutions at* Live Picture*.*

It's tempting to assume that the latest and greatest technology trend is going to take over the world, while underestimating the adaptation capacity of legacy solutions – and their users.

As a market analyst for the imaging industry, that misconception came to a boiling point for me this summer when *Instagram* appeared to have abandoned its photography roots in an attempt to transform itself into a *TikTok*-like video platform. The questions that jumped out to me: Is video indeed the next big thing? And how do you balance pursuing what's trending with not abandoning your loyal users?

But before we get there, I'd like to point out that this question of whether the next big thing is replacing existing photo behavior is one the imaging industry has faced many times before.

Two examples:

Is **photo printing** down and out with sharing of digital photos having become the norm? Ever since there was no longer a need to pay for printing photos in order to just view them (as we had to do in the days of film photography), many an industry pundit has predicted that the photo printing industry was about to enter an unstoppable decline. Digital photos are free and can be easily stored and shared, correct? But no, the photo printing industry is still doing quite well, thank you.

Innovation in producing photo print products (how about laying your head on a pillow with your remote lover's photo printed on the case?), smartphone-kiosk integration, AR apps for additional content when pointing at a printed photobook, and a new breed of instant print cameras that cater to the user's instant print gratification needs – just to name a few of the innovative ways that this old-time industry has successfully adapted and stayed relevant.

And have **smartphones effectively killed the camera industry?** While traditional compact and DSLR cameras are definitely in an ongoing decline trajectory – as they've failed to adapt in time to the mobile-first era – this is not the case for a variety of long-tail use case cameras. 360 cameras, drones, vlogging cameras, instant print cameras, and action cameras have all managed to successfully attract smartphone photographers by enabling them to capture photos and/or videos in a way not possible through smartphones.

Let's zoom in on today's very much debated question of **whether videos will replace photos**. This summer we saw this question being discussed all over the internet and even the mainstream media. While carrying the digital equivalent of pitchforks, Kylie Jenner (having 360M followers on Instagram) and her half-sister Kim Kardashian (with 326M followers) successfully mobilized the masses of photo-loving Instagram users. Their message: "Make Instagram Instagram again (stop trying to be TikTok. I just want to see cute photos of my friends). Sincerely, everyone."

Instagram Head Adam Mosseri responded by releasing a video (!) to explain that his company's TikTok-like full screen implementation was actually just a test, and a bad one apparently. But, in the matter of photos vs. video, he stood firm in his belief on what the future will bring: "We're going to continue to support photos, it's part of our heritage… That said, I need to be honest, I do believe that more and more of Instagram is going to become video over time."

So, will videos indeed replace photos? Are we going to share 80% of our visual memories through videos and relegate the rest to photos, as Instagram might be thinking behind the scenes?

The jury is still out to this question. Interestingly, leading photo-first app developers are following a more measured approach toward adopting video than Instagram has taken. They very much keep their options open, while waiting to see how the answer to this question will pan out.

Some of these photo-first developers have taken baby steps towards video, such as by enabling their photo customers to produce video-like animated slideshows along with music, as for instance **Magisto** has done before they morphed their offering into a more full-fledged video creation app. Others, such as **VSCO**, have added video effects and editing capabilities while striking a balance with their app's original photo features. Yet others, such as **Lightricks**, released dedicated video editing apps in addition to their photo apps. And finally, others like **Picsart** have added video editing features to their original photo app while also releasing separate video editing apps.

In other words, these photo-first apps have been able to embrace the need for video features without upsetting the users that have put them on the map. Realizing that we're at a point in time in which the jury is still out as to whether video will indeed be the new norm and replace photography – or turns out to be just another content type to complement photos for those instances when videos are simply more effective in storytelling or capturing memories.

And that's exactly the measured approach any innovative technology company needs to take at times when it's tempting to be swayed by hearing the equivalent of the "the next big thing is around the corner" declarations from all directions.

> **It's tempting to assume that the latest and greatest technology trend is going to take over the world, while underestimating the adaptation capacity of legacy solutions – and their users.**

HANS HARTMAN
Founder at Suite 48 Analytics
and Chair at Visual 1st

Tenacity and adaptability: The dual forces behind impactful innovation

Author TOM MORE

TOM MORE *is the Founder & CEO of Promo.com, previously at Slidely.com. He is a self-taught entrepreneur who enjoys turning ideas into reality, while combining creativity and technology. Tom focuses on driving impact through innovation in every project he is involved with. With a background rooted in art, design, and music, Tom enjoys orchestrating the different facets of the business, much like different instruments in a song.*

Introduction

In the ever-evolving story of my startup and my personal journey as a founder and CEO, two qualities stand out as guiding lights through both triumphs and trials: tenacity and adaptability. These aren't mere buzzwords; they're the lifeblood of any venture aiming to leave an indelible mark. From taking Slidely.com to over 180 million users worldwide, to generating around $100 million in revenue with Promo.com, and now as we gear up to launch PromoAI, these qualities have been the backbone of our story. They are the reason your idea may live to try another way.

The Genesis: Slide.ly / Slidely.com

Slide.ly was more than just a platform; it was a masterclass in team-building, scaling, and focus. Amassing almost 200 million users worldwide, it became a cherished platform for self-expression, helping users around the world craft and share personal visual stories. In another universe, with a few different choices, Slidely might've danced alongside giants like TikTok in the realm of creative social media networks.

The Serenity Prayer served as a constant reminder during this phase, urging me to accept the unchangeable and find the courage to change what I could. It was about distilling wisdom from every setback and missed opportunity, turning them into lessons that helped distinguish between what can and cannot be changed.

Our experience with Slidely paved our path toward the B2B frontier. It was about adaptability and seizing a new opportunity. A chance meeting with Mark D'Arcy, then Facebook's Chief Creative Officer, and his advice to leverage Slidely's strengths to meet the emerging business needs around visual content and videos, was the catalyst we

needed. Bruce Lee's philosophy, "Be like water making its way through cracks... it can take any shape in which it is placed," became our mantra. We learned to be fluid, to focus on our strengths, and to adapt our approach.

The Pivot: Promo by Slidely to Promo.com

Launching 'Promo by Slidely' was a calculated move, signaling our core purpose for businesses: promotion. Despite initial skepticism, Promo flourished, evolving from 'Promo by Slidely' to Promo.com, and amassing $20 million ARR in under two years with very limited capital. Our success wasn't just in numbers; great customer reviews, and accolades from platforms like Producthunt.com, where we won awards for product of the day, week, and B2B product of the year, validated our efforts. This phase underscored our ability to focus, transition, and evolve.

But as we chased growth and prepared to raise more capital, an unforeseen challenge loomed: COVID-19. The pandemic blindsided us, stalling our plans. Yet, with persistence, adaptability, and a bit of luck, we navigated these turbulent waters, with Getty Images joining our board and investor list.

The Evolution: PromoAI

As we prepare to share PromoAI with the world, the initial feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive. Our vision is clear: to automate visual content creation, publishing, and scheduling. We aim to help entrepreneurs to reclaim time for their ventures and personal growth. The journey of PromoAI is a reflection of the wisdom embedded in the Serenity Prayer and Bruce Lee's philosophy. It's about discerning when to adapt, when to change, and when to forge ahead with unwavering tenacity.

A Personal Reflection

My background, a blend of technology and product, is deeply rooted in art, design, and my first love: music. This eclectic mix has profoundly shaped my approach as a CEO, doer, and dreamer. Every story has its crescendos and diminuendos, its verses and choruses. While ideation is enchanting, execution is where the magic truly unfolds. As a self-taught individual, I've worn many hats, from designer to coder, marketer to musician. This journey has underscored the importance of balance, of orchestrating different facets of a business harmoniously, much like instruments in a symphony.

Conclusion

The entrepreneurial journey is a rollercoaster, filled with exhilarating highs and daunting lows. Surrounding oneself with a reliable team, a knowledgeable board, and appreciative customers is invaluable. Yet, through all the challenges and triumphs, it's the tenacity to persevere and the adaptability to pivot that often determine the difference between fleeting success and lasting impact.

As we venture into new territories, it's crucial to keep sight of the bigger picture: to create a ripple effect that extends beyond just business. Whether it's a modest contribution to a charity you hold dear or a significant gesture of goodwill, these moments genuinely count. After all, at the journey's end, the impact we leave behind is what truly matters. To make a lasting impact, we must focus not just on the dream but on its realization.

IMPACT

CHAPTER 4

"WE ARE ALL PART OF THE PROBLEM":
Six steps to growing your positive impact and regenerating our planet for future generations

Author XENIA DUFFY

XENIA DUFFY *is an award-winning leader with 20 years of experience in business development. In 2017, Xenia left corporate to become an entrepreneur working to change the way we think about work, organizations, and doing business. She and her team at zeal help leaders develop companies with sustainable impact, leveraging the benefits of the circular economy, and enabling long-term profitable businesses.*

You are part of the problem. You didn't intend to be. None of us did. But the world is not sustainable. Our activities leave a significant negative footprint. Individuals as well as business entities have an impact on their surroundings. Unfortunately, most of that impact is negative, unintended, and unknown.

Do you know what your most negative impact is? And where your most positive contribution lies? Do you know your potential risks, weaknesses, and threats from a sustainable development perspective? Do you have a comprehensive overview of your total impact?

My team and I developed a model that helps individuals, startups, small-scale and global businesses shine a light on their current impact. We built the Sustainable Business Model Canvas (SBMC) on well-researched, proven concepts and insights. Building on what's already there, saves time and resources. The model uncovers where you can improve, repair, restore, and regenerate your current business model.

Let me guide you through the six steps to a positive impact that contributes to the structural and systemic recovery of our planetary boundaries.

Step 1: Know your Impact

The word 'impact' means effect or influence. The more you focus and narrow down your intended impact on the world, the easier it is to prioritize and make decisions to grow and increase it.

We impact the world with our activities – intentionally and unintentionally. So, what's the intentional positive impact of your business? How does it change your industry? Does it make a difference to your clients? Does it innovate its product/service category? Does it change the lives of

people in your community? Does it save energy, resources or time for the people impacted by your activities? Why should your business exist in a sustainable world?

Step 2: Build for Circularity and Shared Resources

What are the key resources (people, materials, and energy) and key activities (developing, producing, facilitating workshops, etc.) relevant to delivering the value and impact of your business? How might you leverage existing resources and activities? What waste or residual flows could you tap into? Could you share equipment, location, transportation with others? What existing communities, platforms, services or products could you partner up with? Who could you market alongside?

Find synergies in activities and resources with those who solve a similar problem, have similar customers, build similar solutions, are in the same location(s), serve the same communities. We cannot create fundamental change alone – but together there is nothing we cannot do.

Step 3: Take Responsibility

Taking end-to-end responsibility for your business is key to sustainable development. This means reflecting on whether the energy, resources and time invested are utilized optimally. Could it add more value or could you prevent further negative impact?

How might you join forces with your key channels to overcome barriers, structural or systemic challenges potentially impeding the impact you aim for? How might existing platforms help you reduce energy or recycle resources? How might you leverage the interaction with your clients/ end-users to bring about changes in their behaviour, provide awareness, or give them new information?

Impact doesn't just happen with the product or service itself. Every interaction – with vendors, suppliers, retailers, manufacturers, and partners – is an opportunity to push the change, you want to see. Who might be the best allies to grow and expand your impact?

Step 4: Support People

Is the value created distributed equally and fairly across all stakeholders (time saved, benefits given, taxes paid)? What are the social costs of your activities? How might you reduce the negative and increase the positive effects on people impacted by your activities?

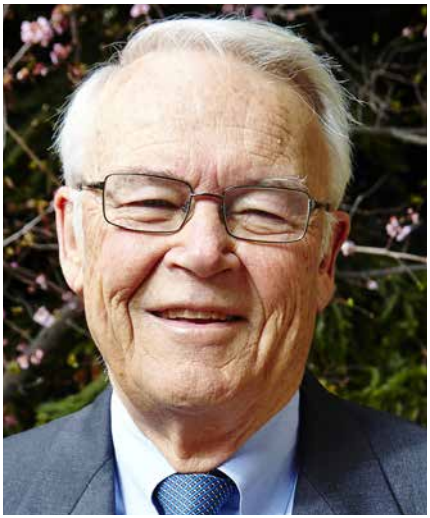
Step 5: Protect the Planet

What are the environmental costs of your activities? How does your impact compare to local ecosystem tolerances? Are you taking a fair allocation of energy and resources? What are you doing to lower your negative footprint? Are you making long-term investments in the natural resources, you depend on?

Step 6: Share Profits

Who benefits from your activities? Is financial value equitably distributed? Are you investing in others with compatible values when choosing suppliers and collaborators? Are you circulating financial value towards the systems, structures and people you want to see grow?

Now go save the planet – for yourself and for future generations!



Make your firm a social purpose leader

Author DAVID AAKER

DAVID AAKER, *Vice-Chairman of Prophet, has received five career awards for contributions to the practice and science of marketing that include being named to the NYAMA Marketing Hall of Fame and receiving the Sheth Foundation Medal. He has published over 100 articles and 18 books that have sold well over one million copies and include Aaker on Branding, Creating Signature Stores, Owning Game-Changing Subcategories, and The Future of Purpose-Driven Branding.*

In my book, *The Future of Purpose-Driven Branding*, an assertion is made that in the future, a firm to be successful, indeed to be relevant, needs to become a social purpose leader. To achieve that goal, two strategic directions need to be pursued.

First a business needs to have a serious, committed effort to address real challenges facing society. Simply have a program of grants, volunteering and energy goals is not enough.

It starts by creating a social purpose as part of or adjacent to a business purpose and adapting the organizational culture to support social efforts.

This strategic direction is imperative because:

- Societal challenges that include climate change, inequality, health issues and more are so visible and threatening.
- Businesses with resources, insights, and agility can contribute and governments cannot do it all.
- Stakeholders, particularly many employees and customers, demand it.
- Businesses, especially those with mature, bland offerings, need the energy and image lift they provide.

Those firms that break-out of the clutter and sameness and become a social program leader will enjoy a favored position among employees and other stakeholders. The "leaders bump" will not come to those that make parity efforts and those that are perceived to lack will or ability to make a difference will lose in the branding space.

Second, a business should recognize that societally relevant programs should not be an add-on appendage, but rather should be integrated into the business strategy. An add-on status makes the program a dead weight on the organiza-

tion taking resources away from needed strategy and tactical investments and thus vulnerable to downturns or new firm leadership. Those risks are much reduced when the programs are known and valued within the organization. The glue of the integration process is the symbiotic relationship between a business and the social programs, each will materially help the other.

A social program, which can be internal or an external nonprofit, can affirm the purpose and culture of a sponsoring business and lift its energy, image and connection with employees and other stakeholders. It can provide respect, admiration, pride and even inspiration. Any business needs such an enhancement and some with mature functional offerings may be desperate for it.

And a business, as a strategic partner, can materially help the social program whether it is internal or external. It can by endorsing the social program provide credibility and a sense of commitment. It can also provide a steady flow of financial support and access to resources including its expertise, marketing budget, employee volunteers, market insights, and customer base.

The lynchpin driver of the integration will be one or more signature social programs which will jump out of the perceived sameness of most firms and become the core of the communication effort. A signature social program is one that:

- Will address a **societal challenge that touches people**, connects emotionally, and comes to life with stories and facts. It aims to make the world better than just striving to operate up to legal or ethical standards.
- Is **credible, impactful, and committed**. That means that the program has the resources and competence to succeed and has or will generate proof points that it will make a difference...
- Will **lift the energy and image of a business**. The interest and respect that it engenders will benefit a business partner brand.
- Has a **visible, inspiring brand** that will guide the program, motivate the staff, and lead its communication task to drive the program and to lift the business partner.

Signature Social Programs can be internal or external programs. With internal programs there is program ownership and control over the management and future of the program. It can supply the resources needed and help through challenges. The problem is to find social needs areas that are "not taken," broad enough to be relevant, and ones in which a firm can contribute. External programs can come with a track record of success and a strong brand. The problem then is finding the one that fits and to carve out an ownable niche and to create a visible link form your business to the social program. Not easy. But the payoff can be large.

Storytelling with Impact

Author KRISTINE NAGLE

KRISTINE NAGLE *is the Founder and Sustainability advisor of Impact House. Impact House is helping fast-growing tech companies launch and scale sustainability. Her experience includes managing accelerator programs at Startup Wise Guys, gaining a global network as the CEO of TechChill, and recently building a sustainability strategy for the first Latvian unicorn, Printful.*

When companies first think about their sustainability strategy, many questions come up. There are discussions about the actions to take and the meaning behind them. There's concern about the potential risks and the timeline for getting ROI from the investment. But one aspect that is very often left out is the story your company will tell.

If your company is working on your Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or sustainability, communication is an inevitable part of it. You will need to tell your investors, customers, and employees what you are doing and why. I believe that for an impact story to be impactful, you must start with the end in mind. And thanks to this book, I will share with you some useful ideas on how to make the most of it.

1. Who cares?

And what do they care about? When you're telling your company's impact story, you should consider each audience's interests. Your employees and local community may have different expectations from your company than your customers or investors.

For example, many tech companies are pursuing the journey of carbon neutrality. That is one of the most important aspects of any company's sustainability journey, but it can't be pursued at the expense of taking good care of employees.

For a software company or a startup, the actual carbon footprint is tiny (in comparison with a company in the transport or manufacturing industry). The most important ingredient of any tech company is its talent and people. So having publicity because you've reached carbon neutrality is nice, but not if your employees are burning out because of the work culture or lack of inclusivity.

2. Understand what metrics add value to your story

Whenever you say anything regarding sustainability publicly, you have to have data to back it up. Claiming your solution is green without the data to back it up is greenwashing.

Based on the industry you're operating in and the business model, you should develop a set of metrics you measure internally.

For example, if your company is offering solutions for the manufacturing industry, start measuring how much energy, water or materials you help save your customers. If your solution improves the efficiency of a car fleet, track how many liters of fuel or km of driving you've helped to save.

3. Turn data into impact and make us care

Any of the metrics I mentioned previously can be turned into CO_2. And once you have that, you can easily compare the impact to something your target audience understands. Liters of water can be turned into pools of water, and kg of aluminum could be turned into a number of shipping containers full of it. CO_2 footprint can be explained using km of driving a car. Turn the metrics into something tangible, and it's easier for me to care about the positive impact you have.

Every company has its story. The story of why the company exists and how it was founded. Your company's story has to resonate with your audience, it has to make them want to work with you. And if you claim to have any positive impact on the people or the planet, it has to have proof.

You can do it, but should you do it?

Author SONIA ARRISON

SONIA ARRISON *is an entrepreneur, investor, and best-selling author. She is founder of 100 Plus Capital, Chair of the Alliance for Longevity Initiatives, advisor to Felicis Ventures, and advisor to Bioverge, which invests at the convergence of biology and technology.*
Previously, she was co-founder of Unsugarcoat Media (acquired by Medium), an associate founder of Singularity University, a director and Senior Fellow in Tech Studies at the Pacific Research Institute and a weekly columnist at TechNewsWorld.

Imagine having been married for 125 years. You are 150 years old, and your youngest child has just turned 110. You're happy and healthy. Life is good, and even though the clock is still ticking, you have much more time left than today. No reason to worry or even panic about death yet.

This might sound like science fiction to some, but to the bestselling author, analyst and board member at the Thiel Foundation - Sonia Arrison - this is not a futurist mirage. This is going to happen - rather sooner than later.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Sonia about the impact of technology on human life and innovation, and the first question to her was…

1. How will technology improve our health and impact the health sector in the future?
In the future it will be completely natural to live much longer than today. We will also live a healthier life, and even though we might be thinking less about death than we do now, we will continue to live meaningful lives, motivated by forces such as creativity, love, and honor.

When you look at the radical innovations going on in both labs and in clinical trials, everything is happening so fast. In the relatively near future, deaths from diseases like cancer and heart disease will be much lower, and we will live considerably longer and healthier.

One of the things impacting the health sector and our health as individuals is going to be artificial intelligence. As we speak, AI is beginning to outperform doctors in areas such as radiology and predicting the onset of medically significant events such as heart attacks. It's pretty incredible.

2. So, AI is going to play a vital role in the future. What about the field of regenerative medicine?
Regenerative medicine opens up the possibility of repair-

ing people rather than just keeping them alive and sick. This will drastically reduce our medical expenses and leave room for investing in other parts of our society.

3. When technology is going to play a huge part for humans, will it also make us feel less human? E.g., a neuroscientist at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, has proposed that brain implants might be used to store and retrieve memories. His prosthesis would be intended to help those whose brains cannot form long-term memories, because they are damaged.
Actually, I don't think that this kind of technology will make us feel less human.

I still feel human, even though I Google things. I also feel human, even though I might need a hearing aid – or glasses for that matter. Vaccines are another example of us influencing the human body with technology, but in these cases, it doesn't impact our feeling of being human. So, my initial answer is no, but of course you never know until you get there.

4. Let us imagine that we have cured aging. It doesn't sound that futuristic anymore. If we live forever, or at least don't die due to aging, do we then still need God?
Well – some would argue that God gave us a brain. Perhaps we're using the tools that He gave us to improve our lives. Whether or not we need God … I don't think it has much to do with aging in the sense of life and death to be quite honest. If you study religion, you will see that it is mostly about life, not about death. Religion is concerned with how to live the good life. Religion is a way of seeking guidance for your life. So, the longer you live, the more guidance you might need, and the more religion might actually play a role.

It appears that humans are wired for spirituality, so I don't think that religion will ever really disappear from our lives. We're just entering a future, where our hearts and our minds will get more time. Literally speaking.

5. Our hearts and minds will have much more time. That sounds nice, doesn't it?
Absolutely. Increasing health spans will give you much more time to reeducate yourself, dream, and innovate. Go on more holidays. Spend more time with people that you love. Have people around you longer.

6. No problems in this?
Every new development has its problems, but it's hard to precisely predict them and how they're going to show themselves.

7. What about this imaginary problem – namely a company, where some staff members are 150 years old, and others are 25. How do we deal with this massive age and generation gap?
On one hand companies of the future will benefit from experienced staff members, but on the other hand, you're right that tensions might arise. Think about it: does a person who is 100 years old share meaningful cultural stories with someone that is 30? It's hard to say how it will play out. If we are fortunate, we will be around to participate in the debate.

8. We have established that technology will impact our aging, our health and our organizational environments. What about the impact on innovation in general?
Studies show that innovation peaks much later in life than most people think. We're so used to hearing the Silicon Valley "young entrepreneur "story featuring people like Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs, but it turns out that innovation typically peaks around the age of 40. One of the reasons for this peak is that at 40 we're still healthy, yet

we have also had quite a lot of time to get educated and look at things in many different fields. This enables us to start making connections between different areas, which generates novel ideas. As we get older, we become better at connecting the dots.

However, shortly after the peak-age, our innovation abilities start to decline again – likely due to health issues as people age. So, if people could be healthier for a longer period of time, it would also mean that innovation would continue at peak pace for more years of our lives.

9. It sounds like the brain could become the tech market of the future?

Absolutely. We already see edtech exploding, and educational services are all about our brain and different ways to strengthen the brain.

Virtual reality, augmentation and artificial intelligence are other examples of the importance of the brain for future innovation and business. For instance, Elon Musk has repeatedly made the argument that in the future we will need brain implants to stay relevant in a world which, he believes, will soon be dominated by artificial intelligence. Proposing the artificial augmentation of human intelligence as a response to a boom in artificial intelligence may seem a bit much, but it underscores the role of the brain as the tech market of the future.

10. Are there any ethical dilemmas in this as far as you are concerned? Some examples where creativity becomes too creative?

Of course -- and we will have discussions about this now and in the future. We already have, when it comes to genetics.

When it comes to different vocations and markets, we should accept the concept of 'creative destruction'. This basically means that it's not always a bad thing, when old ways of doing things fail and therefore die. If a business isn't fulfilling a need, and people don't value it anymore, it's okay that it dies.

For example, I like newspapers, and I'm willing to pay for the news, but I also accept that industries like the media industry need to be shaken up on a regular basis. Napster did the same to the music industry, and it still hasn't settled completely.

With the human brain and body of course, this is an even more delicate area, and there will be moral dilemmas that require serious and careful thought. In Silicon Valley, where I live, we have dreamers and doers, and often they're combined. This has led to the saying: If you can dream it, you can do it. The obvious additional question is of course: You can do it, but should you do it?

> **...it's not always a bad thing, when old ways of doing things fail and therefore die. If a business isn't fulfilling a need, and people don't value it anymore, it's okay that it dies.**

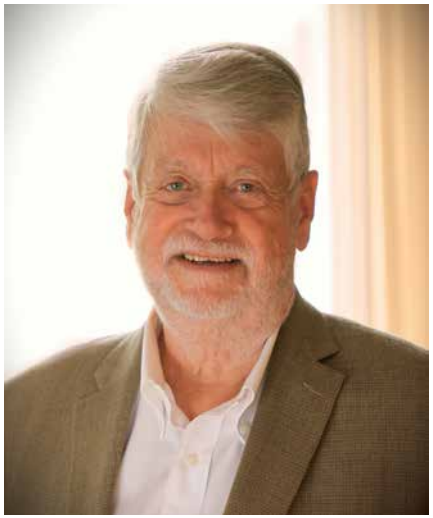
SONIA ARRISON
Entrepreneur, investor & best-selling author

Circular Economy - generational insights

Author JESPER JARLBÆK

JESPER, *born in Denmark in 1956, has lived in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. He was educated as an economist and accountant and had a long career in global professional service firms.*

Since 2006, he has been a Business Angel investor, a Board Member of six listed companies in Denmark and the US, and an adviser and chair of private equity funds.



A Danish philosopher once said, "life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards". The older I get, the more I understand the wisdom of these words.

It's February 1964. I was eight years old. I was standing on the observation platform of the Empire State building with my twin sister, little sister and parents. Stopping in New York while emigrating from Denmark to New Zealand. I look out on the Hudson River. Two tug boats were each pushing gigantic barges out to sea. In the barges were many tons of garbage from the city residents. Once the barges were 50 miles out to sea, the contents were dumped.

I cannot explain why this image has stayed in my mind, but it illustrates that in the world's most advanced industrial nation, there was a perception that nature possessed limitless resources, and so, nature could swallow the waste of the big city. A further three decades passed before this kind of waste dumping in New York was ceased. But the practice of dumping waste in landfills continues to this day.

There are historical examples of how self-destructive human behavior can be when resources are finite. One of the most famous is Easter Island in the South Pacific. The Polynesians arrived here by sea in the 13th century. Among historians there is debate as to whether it was humans or the rats they brought with them that caused the destruction of all the forests on the island. Perhaps the original settlers numbered only 50. After 100 years, the population is estimated to have reached 3,000. The number of rats grew even more explosively. The overuse of the land caused the ecosystem to collapse.

When Europeans arrived in 1722, the population had dropped by 95%. The transition period following the collapse was characterized by war and cannibalism. The island was still there. The humans and rats were still there. So, it was only a reset of the ecosystem to a new level, able to support a much lower population.

Today, there is a recognition by many people that the

Earth's population has grown to a level in which the Earth is heading to an Easter Island-like scenario. It has been termed the Anthropocene age. The concept was coined in 2000, a long time after I was born. It shows how slowly mankind has come to understand the effect that he has on the planet.

This is a major paradigm shift in my lifetime – from a time in which we were subject to the ravages of nature to a time in which nature is subject to the ravages of man. And as they say, "there is no Planet B". So, we must take responsibility for stewarding this little blue spaceship we call Earth.

I was educated as an economist. I was taught in the classical fields of financial management, accounting, and performance measurement. Today I understand that teaching I received was based on a very narrow perception of input. Sure, even three decades ago, there was talk of two or three bottom lines. But all the attempts then and now, have been hampered by a lack of norms. If every company or country has its own conceptual framework, any comparison becomes impossible and market forces cannot operate effectively.

The key issue is how we define profitability and how we measure results. We need a uniform methodology of including all resources in our models and we need to learn a new common business language. And this time is not sufficient to view this as a supplemental bottom line to the classic annual financial statements. It must be the central model for evaluating business performance.

Three economic superpowers dominate the world today: the US, the EU, and China. They represent three very different views on societal models. In more ways than one, the EU sits in the middle. Not a total belief in unfettered capitalism nor a belief in an all-powerful state. We in the EU believe in human rights and democracy, but we also recognize that the state needs to set the framework under which private enterprise can work to implement circular economy models. This can only be done by the EU creating a level playing field inside our common market that cannot be undermined by external dumping or environmentally damaging production methods.

In a way, it's the same desire that created the EU's predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community, in 1952. We need to ensure that production and consumption inside the EU is based on sustainable circular economy models.

In terms of legislation, the EU is quite far along. This Includes the taxonomy directive, the purpose of which is precisely to challenge the common economic language issues described above. Also, the EU is forcing the financial sector to take a lead. Through the proverbial carrot and stick, all private sector companies will come to experience that financing their business is dependent upon proving the sustainability of the business model to the banks. Inherent in the EUs approach is an understanding that only the private sector can create viable cradle to cradle business models.

So, what are the calls to action for private companies?

- First of all, obtaining a basic understanding of the characteristics of circular economy models. This requires formalized training for all managerial levels in the company.
- Secondly, the company needs to understand how their current business model needs to be adapted to become circular. This requires implementing many new measurements, both inside the company itself but also the companies' partners in the supply and distribution chain.

- Thirdly, I will somewhat boldly state that no company, however large or small can master a self-contained circular model. Also, I will assert that in many instances the other actors needed to complete the circle simply do not exist currently. They must be invented or created.

My point is to illustrate that all of us must embark upon a journey to play our part in securing a responsible stewardship of the planet. The journey will often be difficult. And often long. But it's an imperative. Very Darwinian; adapt to the circular economy or face extinction.

The key issue is how we define profitability and how we measure results. We need a uniform methodology of including all resources in our models and we need to learn a new common business language.

JESPER JARLBÆK
Investor, Board Member, Economist & Accountant

We can do more together

Author MICHELLE TUNNO BUELOW

MICHELLE TUNNO BUELOW *is the founder of Bella Tunno, the purpose-driven baby brand on a mission to end childhood hunger. She serves on several philanthropic boards and volunteers with various local organizations. Michelle was named one of Inc's 100 Female Founders and Forbes Next 1000.*

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what your business 'Bella Tunno' is all about?

My business 'Bella Tunno' began as a passion project in 2005. I wanted to start a charitable fund to help vulnerable kids, so I started sewing bibs and burp cloths. From the very first sale, donations were made to children in need.

It is a purpose-driven baby brand on a mission to end childhood hunger. For every product sold, we donate at least one meal to a hungry child, through partnerships with Feeding America and Global FoodBanking Network. To date, Bella Tunno has donated more than 10 million meals to families in need. It is a female-owned giveback brand, committed to spreading kindness and making the world a better place.

2. Your products are now sold in over 3000 different stores. How did you scale up your business?

In December of 2008, I got an email from the Target Innovation Team that said, "we are interested in your brand and would love for you to come present to us." I immediately called the number on the bottom of the email. On a Monday in early January of 2009, I received an email asking me to come to Minneapolis that same week to present.

I had no idea what to present or how mass retail worked, but I knew I was going. I bought a ticket that same day and hopped on a plane with every sample I had and just showed up. After I displayed my line, they peppered me with questions all containing acronyms I'd never heard before, but based on their tone, the answer to all their questions was supposed to be yes. So, I said yes and hoped I'd figure it all out later. I committed to a line in Target with no mass production leads, no idea what case packs were, and no clue how I was going to deliver. But somehow, I did it and we still work with Target today.

Several years ago, Baby GAP asked us to create a diaper bag. At the time, we didn't do diaper bags. I referred them

to a few companies that made amazing bags, but they said they loved our mission and wanted the bag to come from us. I had one week to deliver the bag from NC to CA. I called every home seamstress I knew to see if they could construct a bag from a drawing. They all said no. I called every small factory within driving distance to ask the same question. The answer was still no. Not being one to take no for an answer, I drove to a fabric store and bought upholstery weight fabric, then to the hardware store for a staple gun. I tried constructing over 10 different styles of bags and finally, with one day to spare, I stapled a diaper bag together with great form, excellent functionality and a sleek look. I overnighted it and the minute I dropped it at UPS, I realized the absurdity of sending a stapled diaper bag. I truly never expected to hear from Baby GAP, and assumed I just gave them a good laugh and lost $81 on overnight shipping.

Believe it or not, they called, and they loved it (as long as it could be made without the staples of course)! I was thrilled to hear the news, but told them I didn't have a way to get it manufactured. So, they introduced me to their bag factory in China, held my hand through the entire process, and together, we launched one of the most successful diaper bags Baby GAP had ever sold.

3. You are a supporter of a purpose driven lifestyle. Why were you drawn to it?

While I was busy climbing the corporate ladder 2 rungs at a time, chasing accolades and promotions, my brother and best friend was in a downward spiral of drug addiction. He had been struggling for 14 years in and out of rehab programs. Just as my life was lining up to be the exact life I envisioned, his was literally crumbling. On August 5, 2003, in the middle of the night, I got the call I always feared, but prayed I'd never get. My brother was dead. It was an accidental overdose.

I didn't choose to start a purpose-driven life. That life chose and saved me. I wanted to start a fund in my late brother's name that could do two things: 1. Leave a legacy for people to remember all the good about him. He was so much more than an addict and I wanted the world to associate his name with all of the good. 2. Protect as many families as I could from going through the pain I felt.

4. Passion and focus are both big parts of purpose driven leadership. How do you keep your employees passionate and focused?

In order to keep my employees passionate and focused, I set brand values and use them to guide the decision making. Our company values are:

- SOCIAL IMPACT - The commitment that we will use our company to make people's lives better.
- CONFETTI THROWING - The celebratory art of uplifting and recognizing goodness.
- COLLECTIVE POWER - The shared belief that we can do more together.
- UNAPOLOGETIC CURIOSITY - The need to constantly question the norm in order to rise above it.
- LEARN & TURN MENTALITY – failure is part of learning and learning is critical to success.

5. What qualities should a leader have to be successful?

I think that the critical qualities for entrepreneurial success are: being comfortable in the uncomfortable, resilience, and scrappiness.

6. At "Bella Tunno" you have a focus on philanthropy with the 'Buy one, Feed one' initiative, where your organization has provided over 10 million meals to children in the US. What made you adopt this initiative and how did it transform your business?

In the first 7 years of the business, our giving was all directed toward drug and alcohol rehabilitation efforts. This was my passion and my personal story, but there was a huge disconnect from our target audience. When I came across the link between food insecurity in childhood and addiction in adulthood, we immediately redirected the mission and created a fully-aligned brand story.

We were selling feeding products for children, and donating meals to children in need for every product sold. This alignment became a story that not only made sense to our customers, it made them want to share the story themselves. That newfound alignment between our products and our purpose went even deeper, and it united our team. Now that our purpose aligns with our product, our customers are proud to use our brand and excited to join our mission.

7. You sit on the board of Fashion & Compassion. Can you tell us what this organization is focused on and what is your main role?

The board of Fashion & Compassion is an organization committed to transforming the lives of women in destructive situations in 7 countries and is deeply committed to Education Equals Hope. This organization exists to provide for the education of those living in desperate and difficult situations. I have traveled to multiple countries in Africa with this organization and many others to witness the impact firsthand.

8. What does success mean to you?

Success is not just about the money. For our brand, success is measured in meal donations. When your success is linked to something beyond the numbers, your passion and drive and confidence become explosive. Meal donations drive everything we do at Bella Tunno, because that's how WE measure success. It is meals donated, not dollars earned. The money has to be there, and the two things are directly related, but measuring success in meals is so much more impactful.

> **I didn’t choose to start a purpose-driven life. That life chose and saved me.**

MICHELLE TUNNO BUELOW
Founder at Bella Tunno

Making sustainable businesses with acceptable purpose

Author METTE FLØE NIELSEN

METTE *works as an investor and advisor of impact businesses. She uses her years of experience within the digital sector to aid businesses scale and utilize their impact. As CEO of M.I.L. Invest, a privately owned investment vehicle and General Partner in the Impact-born venture fund VÅR Ventures, she engages with technology driven businesses driven by purpose.*

1. ESG, SDG, Impact, Sustainability. There are many big words & terms in the current discussions about 'the future of business'. What is your take on this? Are these buzzwords or tangible methods & words that we need in order to make a difference?
I believe that in order to work towards a common goal, we need a common language.

Words, terms and abbreviations. We need them and loathe them for obstructing the focus, in this case to make sustainable businesses with acceptable purposes.

We have a lot of "hype" within the terminology of sustainability, with the ever so annoying greenwashing as an eternal companion, but with no common language at all, we cannot ensure sufficient attention and effort to reach our goals.

As someone with a technology background, I have lived with and through bundles of languages, "buzzwords" and frameworks like Lean (project management), ITIL (service management) and Agility (development). These were all just words and frameworks, but they aided in the rapid rise of the IT era from the turn of the millennium to now. And they had a large stake in the speed at which we have seen technology mature.

Without this common language, the development of a multitude of technologies we take for granted today might not have been that easy to realize and definitely not at the speed we have seen over the last 2 decades.

The important thing here is to understand that the words and terms of today only represent frameworks for us to fulfill with our own opinions, methods and ways to work.

A common mistake on the importance of e.g., the SDGs is that they represented the full and whole truth. That they, together with their sub targets, are the holy book for all to follow towards a better tomorrow. We have learned though, that we still need to fill out the strategic, tactical and operational parts on our own for this framework to be of any use.

2. You've worked a lot within the tech-space. How does technology and impact walk or maybe even run hand in hand in the future?
Technology is just a commodity.

With technology evolving into a commodity, we cannot ignore its role (that being software or hardware-based technology) in the transition to a more sustainable world. A world where means are re-used rather than just used, and where the population of our planet share the resources at hand on an equal basis.

What we must not do is ignore the fact that technology is based on data. Data is the gold we need to dig, analyze and use in order to build the products and services needed for us to build a sustainable future. Without data we cannot establish a baseline, track and report on progress, and we cannot celebrate our successes when we accomplish our goals.

So in short – it's not technology as such we need, we need data.

3. Personally I like the term impact, because it is an effect or influence. It differs from similar terms like "purpose," because it's more than an aim to be reached. However, there is still the question of WHEN you actually make a positive impact. How do you know, when you're doing more good than evil? E.g., when you work with technology like AI.
I actually like the word "purpose", since it implies a personal obligation.

Again, the words are of no importance if we do not use them alike. So whether we work with impact, sustainability, purpose or something else means nothing. The self-realization of when you "do good" or perhaps more importantly are not "doing bad", is of graver importance.

So. How do you know you are doing something that is not harmful and will lead to a positive effect? You have to rely on data. Data that can point you in the right direction, data that can support your actions, data that shows you when you have moved in the wrong direction and data that tells you when you have succeeded.

Data is however only collected via structured and proven methods, and these we are in a deficit of when it comes to sustainable development. For now, we need to rely on methods in use, such as CO2 calculation methodologies, in-person mapping of social effects, and frameworks provided by government and/or inter-territorial associations. In the near future, we could see ourselves using the power of true AI for these measurements, but for now we should extract all data possible from the existing methods, and make a commitment to ourselves to use this data actively in pursuit of purpose.

4. Sometimes it seems like it's almost become a bad thing to simply run a good business. As long as it doesn't harm the world, isn't it okay? Or is that an old-school way of thinking about startups and entrepreneurship?
Running a good, profitable business has always been good and will always be exactly that.

Many people forget that we for decades even centuries have relied on organically grown businesses supporting not only the industrial but also the technological revolution. A solid, profitable business that supports its local community is an impact business in itself.

Profitability is a means to growth and growth is a means to evolution. I am naturally in full support of the thesis of not doing bad (albeit areas of business where "bad" is predominant most likely will never disappear), and here we have the technological revolution to thank for our possibilities to both implement, follow and report on indicators of "bad". With the implementation of local and global legislation, and initiatives like the EU Taxonomy, we will see a surge in the need for data and the openness about actual results to guide not only the businesses themselves toward a more positive modus operandi, but also to help consumers in taking decisions that are best for the planet.

In short, it is more than ok to build and run a profitable business. The requirements for business owners to prove their do-no-harm factors will just increase.

5. I read a definition of impact that I really liked. It was from the Center for Social Impact Strategy:
"The activity of any sustained venture — a business, a non-profit, a government, a university — has an effect on the world. These effects are more than economic; there are social, environmental, even geopolitical ramifications."

What is impact for you?
Impact for me is exactly that. When you can measure and showcase results that not only relate to your imminent sphere of influence, but also beyond. When comparing to another meaning of the word impact, namely "to collide", then the impact you or your business need to make is something that makes a dent or even a crater in the area you seek to affect.

To make a substantial change, a change for the better. That is impact for me.

6. Impact entrepreneurs are often guided by the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Are all of these goals equally important, or how do we prioritize?
I like that you say "is guided by" the SDGs. This is exactly what we need to view them as. A guide, a framework or even just some loose intentions we ourselves need to further develop and operationalize. With that in mind, no goal is more important than another. I would even go as far as to say that none of them are important, unless they are implemented and operationalized.

As mentioned earlier, I view the SDGs as a fine starting point for business owners to realize their own potential and impact possibilities, nothing else.

The 17 goals have served their purpose well, but we have now entered a phase where the "missing SDG" namely operationalization is in high need. Not all entrepreneurs have the a- or possibility to create processes, procedures or even basic checklists for the turn towards a sustainable outcome of their product. I believe it is time for government and private sector as one, to make sure that these tools of operationalization are available (in open source naturally) for all to use.

Only then will we see true outcomes of the SDGs.

7. How do you measure impact? For instance, impact entrepreneurs are action-oriented, but as anyone knows a little too well… actions can have unintended consequences.
You measure impact from A-Z and from Z-A.

Not only on imminent effect ("I sell plant-based meat, thus I am helping people to change to a plant-based diet"), but on the entire chain of events you affect when creating your product: where is your plant-based raw material from, how is it transported to your production facility, who is involved in the pre- and postproduction of the raw material and final product, how are your final production facilities setup, equipment, cooling, building structure, etc., how is the final product sold, how is it transported to the consumers and much more…

It could be stipulated that this is one of the areas we already now have operationalized with LCA methods, but much is lacking before the LCAs of today also include social and interrelated aspects of sustainability.

We are getting there, but slowly.

8. Isn't it enough just to do good? Do you really need a plan and a set of complex ways to measure it?
It is always good to do good.

The issue lies in understanding when you are actually doing good or whether you are entering harm's way while attempting to do good. A plan might be obsolete, but without data collecting, measuring and reporting on your endeavors, you will not know whether your actions are of benefit to anything else than your personal agenda.

9. The subtitle of this book is "From buzzword to business". How would you suggest doing this as an entrepreneur or as a leader? How do you turn ideas into impact?
Operationalize without overcomplicating!

All the fine words in the world are of no use if you cannot change them into something you can use actively in your everyday life when building and running your business.

I am a strong advocate of small easy books ("pixi-books") where a message or method is communicated in the most basic way. Making things complex is a thing we as humans master to perfection. Making them simple, not.

This is why frameworks like the SDGs and many before them are of no use if they are not followed by clear instructions on how to benefit from them via operationalized procedures. What we need in order to turn ideas into impact is clarity, easy-to-use checklists, and step-by-step guidelines. If the governmentally run institutions issuing the frameworks cannot provide these, then the private community will need to make them.

10. Is impact entrepreneurship charity or business?
It's business.

Without financial outcome your impact is limited. You might choose to implement a circular economy model in your business where proceeds are used for non-for-profit means, but you need to make a surplus to do that, so focus on profit is of the essence.

Modern and progressive business policy is about social responsibility

Author SIMON KOLLERUP

SIMON KOLLERUP *was appointed Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs the 27th of June 2019. He has been a member of the Danish Parliament for The Social Democratic Party since 2011.*

How do ideas become reality, and how can politics contribute to create a greener future? Although these are some big and difficult questions, which I will try to answer in this relatively short chapter, it is absolutely necessary that we as politicians dare to speak, discuss and reflect on the major agendas. I therefore hope, that my contribution will give an insight into how I, as the Minister of Economic and Business Affairs, view the interplay between companies and our society and how the community is the way to solve the great challenges.

In Denmark, we as a government together with the Danish parliament, have set as a goal to reduce CO_2 emissions with 70% by 2030. Therefore, throughout the past three years, we have made a number of green political agreements that have contributed significantly to the climate effort, and even though we have come a long way, we have not reached the goal yet. One of the things that is absolutely crucial to getting to the finish line is collaborating. We need a strong collaboration with businesses, so that the good ideas can come true.

That is why, for example, we have set up 14 climate partnerships, which cover the entire business community. The Danish business community has a key role in the green transition. With the climate partnerships, the government wants to enter into close cooperation with the business community and find ways to contribute, to solve the climate challenges. The climate partnerships have proven to be a strong collaboration that has not only helped to focus on the companies' green transformation, but also contributed with concrete recommendations to the government and roadmaps for how we achieve goals in the business sectors. Together, we must create the best opportunities so that the business community can become greener and more competitive.

For me, the climate partnerships are a good example of how the green transition must be solved in cooperation. I would like to highlight this as one of the things we are good at in Denmark. To cooperate. Neither of us can reach the finish line alone, nor can we sit back and wait for things to change by themselves. We must have a strong innovative power at the companies. And we must have the political will to cooperate with other countries.

Modern and progressive business policy

As I said, I believe that the great challenges must be solved together. For me it is like one of two legs, when we talk about a modern and progressive business policy. The second leg is about companies also being able to show that they are taking social and sustainable responsibility. That they can drive the business to take social responsibility. I would also like to emphasize this because Danish companies are far ahead here.

Now take, for example, ESG reporting. ESG stands for Environment (climate / environment), Social (society) and Governance (management) information. ESG data has evolved to become a tool that companies can use to provide a nuanced picture of their company's work on sustainability. Here, companies can show to the outside world and their investors that they are taking a green, sustainable and social responsibility. That social responsibility can become an economic lever. Because the future investors not only look at the financial figures, but also at how companies take responsibility for the society of which they are a part of: They look at companies that take social responsibility because they believe that it is also a good business.

Therefore, I also believe that working with sustainability and accountability becomes a cornerstone of being a competitive company, and a sustainable and responsible value chain is already in demand by both investors and other companies when trading business for business.

This means that there is a potential for companies to be able to report and document the responsibility that many of the companies already take today. I'm not saying it's going to be easy. For many, it is a huge transformation, but I believe that if we succeed in making corporate social responsibility transparent, then many of the world's investors will curiously turn their eyes to sustainable companies. And many companies, for example in Denmark, have already run and taken great responsibility for their production and value chain.

With that lead, more companies are already able to put on the sustainable driver's jersey, which is neither produced by child workers, nor environmentally harmful materials. So, to put it briefly: Sustainability and social responsibility are modern, progressive business policies. Here, for example, Danish companies are already far ahead on the agenda, and therefore, a sustainable change will quickly become part of a healthy business and thus, be able to create the green change that we seek.

A shift from “me” to “we”

Author JUSTIN ROSENSTEIN

***JUSTIN'S** aim is to help us transition to a thriving, equitable, ecological civilization by unlocking the potential of human collaboration. He is currently focused on the companies One Project and Asana. Previously, he was co-invented of Google Drive, Gmail Chat, Facebook Pages, and Facebook's Like button. Justin is also a founding advisor to the Center for Humane Technology and a student of Nature, philosophy, meditation, yoga, qigong, and cats.*

I'm amazed that I happen to have been born right now, at this unprecedented moment in life's multi-billion-year history. In just the last century, one species has developed tremendous capabilities, enough power to transform systems at global scale. Collectively, humans have radically altered food, ecological systems, and climate systems. It is now possible for a few kids in a dorm room to have an idea, and within a decade to transform how we communicate, or produce instantaneous access to all the world's knowledge.

Our collective power is staggering. We currently leverage that power in a chaotic way, one that seems to hurt humanity and the Earth as often as it helps. But what could we be doing with this power? If, spontaneously, every human saw themselves as working together for a common purpose—to help humanity and Earth thrive—I hypothesize that we would succeed in solving our biggest challenges and achieving our greatest ambitions.

For example, we already have enough food to feed the global population. If each person at each point in the supply chain was supported by an economic system compatible with the compassion, we all feel for the hungry, you're still left with a massive logistics problem, but not one substantially greater than those that Amazon and Walmart have already solved. Logistics we can do.

If humanity collaborated toward a common mission of creating a thriving world, we could do more than solve problems. We could collectively choose where we wanted to take the world. We could co-design and co-create a planet in which each of us had not only everything we needed, but access to an abundance of material delights, loving community, and opportunities for personal creative expression.

But presently, most people do not see collective thriving

as their primary goal. Even among those who've had their own material needs satisfied, many default to the search for personal wealth and power, which is in turn celebrated by Western society. Businesses are typically judged, internally and externally, only for fiscal growth. But economic value often correlates poorly—or even negatively—with human value.

Fortunately, a shift is already underway. A shift from identifying with the interests of our individual bodies and minds, to identifying with the interests of life as a whole. A shift from "me" to "we." The shift is being accelerated (1) by our increasing awareness of our interconnectedness, thanks in part to the Internet's enabling us to learn about people across the world; and (2) by growing numbers of people having direct experiences of universal love, thanks in part to increased access to spiritual practices, global community, and transformative experiences.

But a shift in consciousness is not enough. To achieve humanity's potential, love must be applied in a deeply pragmatic way to make substantive measurable impact on real-world systems. I'm heartened by the growing number of organizations working to do this. Sungevity and SolarCity are using innovations in finance and satellite photography to provide zero-money-down solar paneling. Coursera is helping anyone in the world with an Internet connection get a first-class education. Lyft is trying to decimate the number of cars a city needs through ridesharing. These companies and others are repurposing technology for good.

By collective will alone, we can repurpose all our institutions—technology, business, governance, media, health, justice, …—through the applied efforts of a critical mass of a critical mass of collaborators. We must become pragmatically expert in each global system, and then rewrite the norms, stories, and behaviors of each of our institutions. These are ultimately human institutions (all created relatively recently) and together we can reprogram them in a way consistent with universal human values.

We can do this together, as one global team, as one global project, unified not by a central leader or ideology or office building, but by a shared decision to participate, to contribute our unique gifts to the cause. Not by treating philanthropy or service as side projects, but by devoting the bulk of our efforts to soul-aligned work with the potential for significant positive impact on the world.

Together, that team can transform our world, one step at a time, into one of abundance, harmony, sustainability, wisdom, and boundless creative human expression.

Sustainable action and impact accelerators

Author ANTHONY DAY

ANTHONY DAY *helps organisations, governments and start-ups to understand the benefits of using exponential technologies like Blockchain to create and grow commercially viable digital businesses. He brings experience of combining other capabilities and exponentials like AI, IoT, Digital Identity and Cloud as part of the toolkit that organisations can work with. Anthony also hosts the Blockchain Won't Save the World Podcast which provides easy-to-understand examples of real-world projects or stories around an entire nations' experiences with Blockchain technology.*

One of the few benefits we have seen emerge from the recent COVID-19 pandemic is an amplification of focus and desire for accountability around corporate and government sustainability, or "ESG" (Environmental, Social and Governance) metrics.

However, sustainability must move beyond commitments and transition into action. Sustainable action. Sustainable from process, technology and commercial standpoints; and helping those in a position of power (who have not traditionally been used to prioritising investments based on ESG metrics) to make difficult choices to drive action.

Furthermore, as we look at "earth system" trends like CO_2 emissions, surface temperature, ocean acidification, tropical forest loss and many others we see exponential increases in harm and damage over recent years. In other words, acceleration.

Speaking of action, if we are to make any dent in these exponential trends, we need to aim for a more profound impact than incremental improvements to individual corporate metrics such as a10% reduction in plastic packaging, 15% increase in use of recycled materials or move to hybrid vehicle fleets. Aiming higher and working together across entire value chains is key and so is creating systems that enable collaboration, tracking, reporting and remuneration. The latter is important as businesses must remain commercially sustainable, or we will not see participation and investment amongst small and medium-sized enterprises...

Despite what some vendors say, there is no "single app" that addresses the wide spectrum of sustainability requirements as the use cases are varied and more will emerge.

Many corporations are embarking on internal "data gathering" exercises to assess their Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions from owned or controlled sources) so they can have a fact base from which to then take action in a couple of years. Often, they are quietly hoping Scope 3 emissions (other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain) will go away. In my opinion, this approach is far from the immediate and meaningful "action" needed to drive change.

At the core, we need to enable more connected supply chains from which we can develop and co-create applications that share, automate, track and integrate with a multitude of different processes and IT systems.

Blockchain and distributed ledgers have proven themselves to be appropriate architectures for these multi-party platforms as they bring together identity, standards, automation of activity, aggregation of data, scalability, transparency and, importantly, incentivisation. That's a lot more than just a "fancy data store."

We can re-use or take inspiration from existing multi-party systems that are already addressing known climate and social issues, work together as networks of companies to have greater impact. And we can start today, not in two years' time when we've completed our internal data audit. Here are some examples of where distributed ledgers, and Hyperledger Fabric in particular, are already being used to address ESG issues that are cross-industry, cross-border and can be used as impact accelerators.

Waste Reduction – *Nearly half of all fruit and vegetables produced globally are wasted each year* (source: United Nations): IBM Food Trust originated as a platform for managing food safety, but the data stored on the platform across farmers, transport companies, manufacturers and retailers allows for more granular tracking of freshness, dwell time, conditions in storage and transit, which can be used to optimise distribution, reduce waste, and even extend shelf life.

Material Circularity – *Production of materials we use every day account for 45% of the CO_2 emissions* (source: EuroParl): Plastic Bank has created a circular economy platform around collection, processing and sale of "Social Plastic" to large manufacturers, with a focus on empowerment and financial reward for collectors in developing countries. Mitsui and Asahi Kasei have also recently announced development of DLT-based circularity marketplaces to record, track and incentivise their suppliers and customers to increase re-use of plastic and chemical feedstock and provide transparency to regulators where taxation of imported plastics is coming into force.

Social Impact – *Almost half of consumption-related emissions are generated by just 10% of people globally* (source: Project Drawdown): Farmer Connect has its origins in traceability of commodities such as coffee and cocoa and provision of self-sovereign identity applications for farmers. Interestingly, Farmer Connect is using its "first mile" digitisation expertise to bring customers (and brands) closer to social impact projects in developing countries and enable crowdfunding of local projects.

Renewable Energy Consumption – *Share of renewables in global electricity generation was 29% in 2020* (source: IEA): Renewables present an opportunity for low-cost, abundant energy but have challenges in scaling, particularly in balancing supply and demand. Equigy is a multi-country "crowd balancing" platform comprising energy companies in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy. Equigy

uses blockchain technology to access, via aggregators, new sources of electricity from the owners of consumer-based devices and is working towards incorporating use of de-centralised storage with private or commercial vehicles and batteries.

Carbon Capture – *In practice, some sectors will simply not be able to achieve net-zero emissions without carbon capture* (source: IEA): Newlight Technologies recently launched a range of "regenerative, carbon-negative" fashion products made from air-captured carbon, and with the origin of the carbon capture and authenticity of individual products stored and traceable on a distributed ledger. While manufacture of sunglasses is not analogous to all sectors, the ability to track, certify and share material properties in increasingly regulated supply chains is becoming a critical core competence and can be a further step towards scaling voluntary carbon markets.

The important factor here is not that blockchain applied to these domains solved a problem but rather that these climate and social issues are multi-party problems that require entities, activities and processes to be supported by technology to drive and sustain change.

Hopefully, in this article we have demonstrated that the problems are clear, real and addressable; that multi-party collaboration platforms are feasible to implement; and that there are technology accelerators available to enterprises and governments that are proven and scalable. So, there should be no further cause for inaction…

Sustainability must move beyond commitments and transition into action. Sustainable action. Sustainable from process, technology and commercial standpoints...

ANTHONY DAY
Blockchain Leader, Podcast Host & Keynote Speaker

Why Natural Intelligence (NI) should be at the forefront of business innovation

Author LEEN GORISSEN

LEEN GORISSEN, *Ph.D. in Biology, is specialized in ecology, transition science, regenerative development and bio-inspired innovation. She is the author of the recent book 'Building the Future of Innovation on millions of years of Natural Intelligence' and the founder of Centre4NI. She is a frequently asked evaluator of innovation projects by the European Commission, a thought leader on innovation for a better world, a practitioner of regenerative design and a strategist & business innovation process facilitator.*

As humans, we created and achieved incredible things. We conquered every piece of land and mobilized every bit of resource for human expansion. We overcame the harshest conditions, from mining the deep sea to flying into space, but our progress came with serious side effects such as resource depletion, climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation and pandemics —to name but a few. That is because most of our innovations start from a degenerative value logic.

To make stuff, we extract resources from nature, use massive amounts of energy to heat, beat and treat those resources into materials, which we use to make products that, pretty soon, end up as waste. Innovation-as-usual therefore extracts value from nature and generates waste. It is a degenerative value system. Not only are our manufacturing processes highly inefficient —the circularity gap report estimates that our entire industrial system operates at less than 10% efficiency— they also severely degrade our life-support-system. So much that we are now facing collapse of entire ecosystems and complete meltdown of the climate conditions that allowed humans to evolve and flourish in the first place.

Why not innovate like nature, based on millions of years of field tests?

Nature has been dealing with dynamic change for 3.8 billion years and is constantly perfecting approaches for survival & resilience. That is because nature's blueprint for innovation is regeneration, a biological process of renewal that leads to a higher level of health, wealth, vitality and viability. The opposite of what we do now. It is about adding more value than we extract. Mushrooms make rain, plankton create clouds, termites green the desert and

whales cool the climate. In nature, regenerative value creation is the key to long term evolutionary success. Like Jay Harman, pioneer in bio-inspired innovation and CEO of Pax Scientific says: "If you are not sustainable, you are terminal". In other words, innovation-as-usual is lethal. It is anti-life because it diminishes health, vitality and viability.

Once you understand how life works, you will see that sustainability is the byproduct of regenerative value creation. Leaving it better than you found it. So, let's reinvent the way we innovate. Let's use nature's giant library of solutions to upgrade the way we make things and the way we organize ourselves and our value systems. Let's do well by doing good. If we can learn to align with the way life works, we can create conditions that are conducive to life. Let's bring NI, not AI, to the forefront of business innovation.

The Net Positive Effect - How prioritizing long-term value over short-term gain will save our economy

Author JEFFREY HOLLENDER

JEFFREY HOLLENDER *is a CEO, author, speaker, consultant, professor, activist and leading authority on sustainability. From his time as CEO of Seventh Generation to teaching sustainability at NYU Stern School of Business, his mission remains the same – to inspire business leaders to become radically more sustainable, transparent and responsible.*

Increasingly, we are seeing more and more companies make bold, public commitments toward sustainability. Companies of all sizes and sectors are investing in innovative solutions to reduce their environmental impact, while simultaneously divesting from practices that cause environmental and social harm. Whether this is the latest trend or a shift toward a new normal, only time will tell. What I will say is that adopting a net positive approach – prioritizing long-term value over short-term gain – is a step in the right direction and will be critical in transforming our economy.

As individuals and organizations, we need a new vision for the future — a vision driven by what we want rather than what we want to avoid, what we aspire to rather than what we seek to prevent, what is best for tomorrow rather than today, what is good for "we" rather than "me." This is the essence of what it means to be net positive.

In today's economic landscape, businesses mainly aspire to minimize harm and inequity, rather than build a world where everyone has equal access to opportunity and capital. This distinction is key to understanding the true goals of a net positive framework.

Often, this misunderstanding has led businesses to aspire to be "less bad" as opposed to "good," having fundamentally confused the two. Companies who can't see past being "less bad" – emitting less carbon, creating less water pollution or paying a minimum wage rather than a living wage – will be comfortable contributing the bare minimum. In the net positive framework, "good" means regenerative – providing restorative and positive impacts on people, planet and society.

Traditionally, business has rationalized its goals and be-

havior around either the fulfillment of legal and regulatory requirements, or the need to maximize short-term economic gains. However, the growth that short-term economic gains require fails to account for its full impact on people or the planet. The unmeasured negative impact, or externalities, are off-loaded onto the public who unknowingly pay the cost when they breathe polluted air or drink water contaminated by toxic chemicals.

Together, the business community must redefine sustainability. In a net positive economy, sustainability means the rate at which we use and consume our natural resources globally is never faster than the rate at which those resources can regenerate themselves. This means, we can't cut down trees faster than new trees grow. Equally important, the products we manufacture and the services we consume must be more than sustainable – they must be restorative. Instead of just repairing our planet's natural systems, they must make them healthier and stronger.

To participate constructively in the creation of this new vision, business must commit to new operating principles that fulfill the needs of the common good above all else. Morality and ethics cannot remain the province of religion and academics. Morality and ethics must become part of the organizing values of business.

As the CEO of the American Sustainable Business Network, we encourage business members and partner organizations to approach everything from a systems perspective — transitioning toward a perspective that allows us to see the larger whole. As opposed to our current view of a fragmented, compartmentalized world – seeing just what we want to see from our own point of view and reality – adopting a systems perspective allows us to see a world that is endlessly interconnected, in which everything we do affects everything else.

Businesses with net positive aspirations must change the rules of the game and challenge the policy, legislative, tax, legal, and accounting rules that provide the system of incentives and disincentives that guide current business strategies. Without redesigning the field upon which business plays to reflect these new operating principles, we cannot achieve meaningful progress.

What is currently required of business to ensure that the future provides the planet and its inhabitants with equity, justice, health, and well-being is totally misaligned with the purpose and objectives of the vast majority of the world's companies. This misalignment is built into the rules that govern business, and has been designed into the very laws, tax codes, and regulations that govern how the game of business is played. These rules often permit and even encourage the destruction of our planet and jeopardize the future of humanity.

Over my career, I have learned that one of the most positive and disruptive contributions we can make to the business industry is to offer up a new model and possibility for the role that business can play in society. I know it will take time to make the complete business case for such drastic changes to the traditional way of doing business. However, as consumer demands for sustainability increase and more businesses assess their environmental, social and governance impacts, the role of business will need to shift in order to remain competitive.

Together, we can create a future that accounts for both people and planet – a future in which sustainability is more than just a trend.

Impact trade as a key to ecosystem regeneration - How businesses become planetary stewards

Author NILLE SKALTS

NILLE SKALTS *is a founder and executive director of B Corp in the Nordics. She is a corporate activist, strategic advisor, movement builder, systems architect, and change agent facilitating the transition to a regenerative economy. She is the co-founder of Danish change agency Märk, a certified B Corp, she serves as a board member in several design companies and is a lecturer in Corporate Activism at Copenhagen Business School and The Royal Danish Academy for Architecture, Design & Conservation.*

Life regeneration is our responsibility

I am one of those business leaders who only believes that business has a right to exist if we help society and the planet flourish. I have led the Nordic B Corp movement for the past 7 years, transforming one by one the DNA of 100+ companies. I have asked again and again, *'why are you here?', 'who do you serve?' and 'how will you be in business?'*. I have seen what happens when companies acknowledge interdependence with the global commons. When they elevate purpose and build impact business models, shifting impact from *'limiting the harm'* to *'enhancing and restoring the health of ecosystems'*.

And we need that!

Humanity has unity in destiny in a unique planet Earth. The entire human civilization is dependent on equilibrium of complex natural systems: the atmosphere, ocean currents, soil, forests, the planet's webs of life. Yet, this is not what we see, as planetary impoverishment is visibly manifesting globally. Our life supporting systems are under pressure, we're dangerously close to irreversible points beyond which we will inevitably suffer.

We can keep arguing what tipping points might be... or we can start doing something. For that we need to open a new space for action, one that induces hope with actionable paths to follow.

Change at large scale should be market driven, but a market driven by a different governing logic

The 1972 UN Conference in Stockholm made the link between environment and poverty and placed it at the fore-

front of the international agenda. Five decades later, Olof Palme's iconic words
'a healthy planet for the prosperity of all is our responsibility' have never been truer.

'Our' in the 1970s referred to Governments, the market was not seen as part of the solution, albeit business is the most numerous forms of organization and commercial transactions the decisions we most frequently make. Today we open this space for business. The World needs concrete, massive, commercial pathways to include global life supporting services in our economies for healthy, regenerative futures. We need new business models and trade patterns where preservation and regeneration are ingrained in costs, prices, and value. We invite the entire market to be a part of the solution. As 50% of average GDP is related to international trade, billions of people could be part of the solution in their daily commercial actions if the DNA of business was geared towards regeneration of ecosystems, of a sense of community and reduction of inequalities.

Creating actionable paths to follow

The good news is, that market-driven regeneration is already practiced by the global B Corp movement. B stands for Benefit for All, and certified B Corps are leaders in the global movement for an inclusive, equitable and regenerative economy. The +5500 certified B Corps are prototypes of a new form of impact business, with very diverse value propositions all harnessing the power of business to solve the world's most pressing challenges.

Three elements are key: 1) B Corps *elevate the purpose of business*. Positively impacting the well-being of society and the planet is core and they build impact business models and maximize for triple impact, both ecological, socio-cultural, and economic value. 2) B Corps *honor interdependence* and see themselves as truly nested in a wider system for which they assume responsibility, extending the caring capacity of the firm and creating multistakeholder value. 3) B Corps *expand fiduciary duty*, legally declaring their intention to serve all stakeholders not just the shareholders, making the commitment to triple impact legally binding.

A B Corp that has found commercial pathways to include global life supporting services in the business model is Guayaki, a natural, certified organic company that produces the energy drink Yerba Mate. This is a product made from the leaves of the evergreen Paraguay holly plant, which is hand-picked and dried by Indigenous people in the South Atlantic Rainforest. In sustainable factories, the drink is filled into cans that are brought out to the shops in electric cars driven by ex-convicts.

Life regeneration is core business, protected in the legal mission, the driving force behind everything Guayaki does and what decisions are optimized for. What must be regenerated is the South Atlantic Forest, where only 8% of the original forest is still standing. Guayaki pay 40-60% more than the market value of yerba mate, but only if the trees are left standing, hence factoring in the costs of the ecosystems support service for the common good, by acknowledging the water pumping functions of the South Atlantic Forest and regarding it is a service to the world to keep it standing.

Key impact measures are the regeneration of forest and the livelihood and cultural ability to thrive for the local communities. The more Guayaki sells, the more forest is regenerated. To date an area of 60,000 hectares has been regenerated, with 1,300 indigenous and *campesino* families having returned to their communities and livelihoods.

Is it philanthropy?! No, it is enlightened self-interest! It is not just about being responsible, but about being responsive to the needs of the global commons, ensuring that the planet can supply at the same level of plenitude and abundance. It is not about being good, it is about enlarging the caring capacity of the firm, acknowledging that we're depending on each other and responsible for each other and future generations.

And it makes sense economically. The past 6 years shareholders have seen 600% increase in share value, as a reminder that optimizing for a different kind of yield - growth in biodiversity, in carbon sequestration or wellbeing – will also be economically sound.

The B Corp Movement is the Trojan horse that has infiltrated business and shows how it can be run with respect for nature, people, and local communities. Like beneficial viruses, the good examples will sneak in, slowly mutating the genetics of business.

Let's act together

It is an exciting time to be driving a movement of changemakers like the B Corps. I am constantly reminded that the work towards an inclusive, equitable and regenerative economic system is vital for a flourishing society and planet. It is a living expression of what 'our' responsibility meant for political leaders 50 years ago, which today is emerging through business.

Let this be my invitation to all of you: We still have the possibility to regenerate life. What we have seen go away, we can see come back, this instinctual resilience lives in our DNA. But this change goes painfully slow, one business at a time. We need to act together. If we activate the world's 125+ million businesses, we have a place for renewed hope. We need hope. The moment you feel that enthusiasm, it becomes contagious to every person who crosses your path.

The B Corp Movement is the Trojan horse that has infiltrated businesses and shows how it can be run with respect for nature, people, and local communities. Like beneficial viruses, the good examples will sneak in, slowly mutating the genetics of the business.

NILLE SKALTS
Founder & Executive Director at B Corp in the Nordics

A wealth of new opportunities

Author PASCAL FINETTE

PASCAL *is the Co-Founder of be radical, EY's wavespace Advisory Board Chair, and a member of Pearson's Digital Advisory Board. Previously he held leadership positions at Google.org, Mozilla, and eBay, built technology startups, and launched a Venture Capital firm. He is the posse leader at TheHeretic.org, and is a general upstart when it comes to creating meaningful change.*

PART 1

"May you live in interesting times." ~ Chinese Proverb

This (somewhat liberally translated) Chinese proverb is something you hear often in Silicon Valley these days. Some say it is a curse. Regardless, nobody denies its truth when it comes to the change technology brings to our world.

Driven by the exponentially accelerating rate of technological progress we now have (literally) supercomputers in our pockets, access to the world's information at our fingertips, can sequence genes in our kitchen labs and 3D-print prototypes on our desktops. Gordon Moore's fifty-year-old predication that "the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit doubles approximately every two years" (know commonly as Moore's law) holds up to this day and has long spilled over into other technologies and industries: Your iPhone 5s has 1,000 the computational power of a Cray 1 supercomputer from the mid-70s at about 1/50,000th of the cost – a staggering fifty million times price/performance improvement. Sequencing the human gene took us a decade and $2.7 billion at the beginning of the 21st century.

Today it takes us now mere hours and costs less than $1,000. And solar energy reached parity in its price/performance ratio to conventional sources of energy like coal – turning a scarce natural resource into something which will be abundantly available at little to no cost in the near-term future.

Experts will gladly tell you that computational power is already abundant, as is storage of all that data our connected systems produce. Sequencing our genome will be close to free within the next ten years or so. And you will soon pay

a small flat fee for being connected to the electric grid but not pay for the actual electrons anymore.

All this progress, at an ever-increasing pace, creates a wealth of new opportunities and disrupts existing markets faster and more forceful than ever before. Ray Kurzweil formulated this in the "Law of Accelerating Returns": Once an industry becomes information enabled it moves on an exponential curve. Thus, finding industries which are not yet information enabled (and there are plenty) and bringing these into the information age, is one of the most promising business ideas these days.

PART 2

"We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive." ~ Albert Einstein

At the same time humanity faces pressing and severe problems.

The United Nations predicts that by 2050 our planet will be populated by 9 billion people, which makes food supply a fundamental issue. Today, with about 7.2 billion people living on Earth, we technically have enough food – it is just not equally distributed (which by no means is an easy problem to solve). To feed the projected number of people we need to grow our agricultural output by 2% year over year. For the last decades we grew output by 1%. Which makes one look at the current GMO debate from a very different lens.

Global Warming is already a major contributor to unpredictable and often devastating changes in weather patterns. A large number of experts suggest that by the turn of the century the sea levels will rise by as much as two meters. Whole countries such as Bangladesh will be flooded, should we see such a dramatic rise of our oceans. This will result in mass movement of people as they are fleeing to higher ground. If you want to get a taste of what this looks like, just look at the Syrian refugee crisis in the European Union.

Or take water – without access to clean drinking water most other interventions such as better learning tools, access to electricity or economic opportunities are moot. And despite technology being available to make even the most polluted water potable, more than 800 million people globally don't have access to clean drinking water.

All these, and many other, challenges are large-scale, often intertwined, complex and pressing. And technology, particularly the technologies which move on an exponentially accelerating curve, can and almost certainly will be our best tool to solve these global grand challenges.

PART 3

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man." ~ George Bernard Shaw

Let me introduce you to my friend Nithya Ramanathan. Nithya teaches Computer Science at UCLA. A few years ago, Nithya started to fixate on a problem which affects millions of people, mostly children, worldwide: Spoiled vaccines.

Most vaccines require proper cooling and handling on their journey from point of production to consumption. They need to be kept at a specific temperature without too much variance. This logistic chain is called the cold chain.

And 75% of vaccines in the developing world show signs of freezing, with an estimated one-fourth to one-third of all vaccines which are administered being ineffective.

Nithya, together with a small team, developed an Internet-connected temperature sensor which travels with the vaccine fridge through the cold chain. Constantly measuring the temperature and sending information about irregularities to both the nurse and doctor who are administering the vaccine as well as a cloud-based software, Nithya's device provides, for the first time, real-time insights not only into the status of an individual batch of vaccines but also an aggregated view into where the problems typically occur.

The device is now used in six countries; in 3 states in India alone there are now 11,000 devices in the field, saving the lives of millions of babies each year. And trust me – Nithya has barely just begun.

The remarkable thing about Nithya's solution is that her device is incredibly simple: By leveraging a readily available "exponential" technology – a cheap, $30, Chinese-manufactured Android smartphone combined with a tiny bit of simple, custom hardware, a temperature sensor and a bit of software, Nithya's team built the most successful intervention in the field today.

PART 4

"Work is love made visible. The goal is not to live forever; the goal is to create something that will." ~ Kahlil Gibran

Here's the reason why I am telling you all this: Everybody can do this. Everybody can be Nithya, get up, assemble a small team, pick a big, hairy problem and tackle it. Even if are not a software developer, hardware hacker or bio engineer – I am confident that you know people who are.

Collectively we are creating a world of technological abundance. Readily available, cheap and easy to use. It is on us to use it in the best possible way. It is on us to ask ourselves: What does it take to make the problem go away?

There is a lack of systematic assessment and feedback on the success of decisions, which prevents people from learning and improving the way they make decisions. All of this results in poor decision-making processes. These decisions made poorly have a significant financial impact.

PASCAL FINETTE
Co-founder at ''be radical''

Driven by the fight against climate change

Author LUBOMILA JORDANOVA

LUBOMILA JORDANOVA *is the co-founder and CEO of Plan A, a leading corporate carbon accounting, decarbonisation, and ESG reporting software solutions provider. Lubomila is also co-founder of the Greentech Alliance. Prior to Plan A, she worked in investment banking and venture capital as well as the fintech industry in Asia and Europe. She has been recognised as Obama Leader Europe 2022.*

Photo: Nadine Stenzel

1. What excites you, when you work on new ideas?
I am a person that is driven by fixing problems. Ideally the big ones. I became acutely aware of the problem of climate change through the issues of waste management and biodiversity. This triggered a year-long research phase where I looked on both the problem and solution side.

Only then was I able to ideate adequately and developed Plan A, a company dedicated to accelerate and target corporate sustainability. I consider deep trends as equally important to my thinking. In the case of Plan A, we followed the thread of two trends: digitalisation and sustainability. By providing companies with a tool capable of measuring carbon emissions, support planning and execution in reducing this footprint, and report accurately and thoroughly on these sustainable actions.

2. How can one move from dreaming to doing? Any advice from your experience as founder of Plan A?
These two steps are not so far from one another. Acting on a dream consists first and foremost in getting started – and not letting go. You cannot expect to realise a dream in one day, or even one week. The realisation that building a dream comes along the way and that what you have in mind today will very likely translate into a different reality is also paramount.

That flexibility on the details, but not the vision, is a very powerful mix. It allows you to push forward on what you know, whilst clearing out questions, deepening your vision, or finding the help you need to bring these pieces into reality.

One more thing, that dream eventually needs to be shared. It's fine to not have everything figured out. You will need help realising numerous pieces of that dream. For that reason, the dream needs to be clearly stated out.

3. Are there any people who inspire you and you consider as role models?

There are two ladies that I consider to be my inspirational leaders. One is Vanessa Nakate, an activist from Uganda. I normally shy away from being focused on activism, but I was really impressed having met her at COP26 and listening to her because she demonstrated a level of leadership I sometimes miss even in adults. She is 25 and she speaks with a lot of eloquence about the structural challenges that lie ahead of us when it comes to climate change, especially on the divide between global south and north.

And as one of the reasons why I started Plan A is my love for wildlife, Jane Goodall, who studies chimpanzees, has been a big inspiration for me and is a great role model. It's the small but incredibly tangible actions that create big change.

4. What motivates you to keep working hard?
I am driven by the fight against climate change, that I have decided to put at the centre of my personal and professional life. I find satisfaction in growing our collective action in reducing the consequences of this crisis.

I am proud to have co-founded Plan A and the Greentech Alliance, two organisations that focus on fixing climate change. Growing these organisations, their impact, and the positive influence they have on this end-goal is paramount to me.

Finally, I must highlight my love for the human component of life. Even through Corona and since the beginning of my professional career, I have always found particular motivation and satisfaction from working with bright and brilliant humans.

5. How do you define success?
Success is defined by the impact you can have on your objectives. How fast and how much you can move the needle on the topic you wish to influence is the most important part of success for me.

I have found success in many different forms, from the amount of carbon we manage and contribute to reduce, as well as in the interactions with the people I am lucky enough to count in my team.

6. How would you describe yourself, are you detail-oriented or a big picture person?
Firm on the vision, flexible on the details! It is impossible to determine perfectly what the end results of years of work is going to be. Being really clear on where you want to land, and what effect you want to have is paramount to your success. I have always tried to combine having a clear vision to supporting others to contribute and add onto this vision.

The details are also very important. Countless organisations have fallen short at the execution and detail phase of projects. I look closely at the details of execution and the scientific foundation of our work, as it is the foundation of our theory of change and how we plan to contribute to the fight against climate change.

7. As a successful founder, do you have any tips for building a great team?
Define what qualities you look for. It is one of my biggest prides: being surrounded by brilliant, dedicated professionals with their heart in the right place. From the first to the latest joiner, we have always focused on this aspect of team building.

Building a great team is also about understanding yourself and your way of working. The most helpful hires will not be copycats of your own profile but rather complementary profiles, individuals that will compensate for your short-

comings and expand the skillset palette in the organisation.

8. How has your business on sustainability shifted over time?
Plan A worked with many stakeholders of sustainability to understand the place that data and science could play in the transition. We developed for example a data-driven platform to channel funding towards the projects that had the most urgency according to an algorithm we developed.

With these experiences, we understood that private companies were the most agile organisations to both finance change and reduce emissions. Not only do they contribute significantly, but they also have the innovation and flexibility to dramatically improve their impact. This is why we shifted our business to develop a data-driven, science-based tool with our SaaS platform to empower businesses to achieve their CO_2 reduction goals and improve their EGS performance.

9. What are you currently working on at ''Plan A"?
We are currently working on expanding the potential for impact of our Plan A Sustainability Platform.

In depth: We add granularity and customisable features to our platform.

In width: We expand our platform coverage to more and more use cases spanning across industries and geographic needs.

Carbon accounting and corporate decarbonisation are rapidly expanding fields. We also work to bring methodological solutions to complex carbon management questions to shape and accelerate corporate sustainability at large. We still have a lot of ground to cover for our economies to accurately measure environmental impacts and invent better ways to reduce those emissions.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact is the power to move the needle on a subject matter. Impact can be wider - affecting more people, geographies or fields - and deeper - sharpening the change you are provoking on the affected population or geography.

It is important to precise what kind of impact. Impact does not mean positive impact or environmental impact. It is merely the power to create change and provides a measure for the level of change. It is fundamental to sustainability that we become more precise on what kind of impact we mean when we say things like "impact investment" or "impact company". As a company, we link impact to indicators that are able to tell us if we are deepening, widening or reducing our impact on a specific vertical or subject.

Acting on a dream consists first and foremost in getting started – and not letting go.

LUBOMILA JORDANOVA
Co-founder & CEO at Plan A

The Ocean has been my playground

Author CHRISTINE SPITEN

CHRISTINE *is a tech entrepreneur, expedition sailor and co-founder of Blueye Robotics. She has also worked in the World Wildlife Fund, and was part of their global innovation, team targeting circular economy and developing plastic smart solutions in collaboration with international key-players. Recently she moved into finance, at Fearnley Securities, positioned to accelerate the green shift in the blue economy and bridge the gap between early-stage investments and industrialisation.*

1. You have a big heart for the Ocean. Why?
The Ocean has been my playground, and the place I go to for joy, peace of mind and inspiration since I was a little kid. I accidentally fell in and nearly drowned when I was four years old, and although my mom describes this as a trauma - what I recall is the first meeting with a world unknown. Since then, curiosity has driven me to study underwater robotics, and to co-found Blueye Robotics to bring the ocean to all - and to solve the great challenges it´s facing today.

2. You co-founded a very successful underwater drone-company called Blueye Robotics, but decided to leave it to work for the WWF and a mission to stop the ocean's plastic problems. How come?
Well, I saw a LOT of plastic on the seabed, and what harm it caused marine wildlife. I dived into the history and usage of this material, and investigated the possibilities to replace it with other materials, or avoid the usage altogether, in some cases. When a position in WWF opened, I jumped on to project lead their national Plastic Smart Cities and Plastic Smart Sports-projects, and work as a senior advisor on circular economy. I believe we need to tackle the problem where it origins; in our behavior patterns, as well as our waste management and recycling systems.

3. Most people agree that this plastic problem is huge, but how do we solve it? Is it about technology, less consumption or a combination of both?
As a technologist, I love to see new solutions or improved technologies come to life. However, at this stage, we cannot continue to consume at the level we do today - and I think binding policy agreements must be in place for us to act quickly enough. Let´s say we have the technology to

clean beaches and the surface of the ocean, and stop it from entering at the river outlets - we are unable to clean at the pace we´re polluting today. We must place a value on plastic, and ensure that the cost of producing it, includes the cost of keeping it in the loop.

4. You're one of relatively few women within investment banking. How have you experienced this?
It's still a new world to me, and I love the high pace and the opportunities I get to dive into companies and industries developing solutions. I am part of the team working with renewable- and cleantech companies - so during a week I can meet with experts within everything from batteries or nuclear, offshore wind and carbon capture to vertical farming.

I got to work with our analyst and research team the first months to learn financial modeling, and feel like I've now got a new pair of glasses in which to look at technologies and companies. I think this adds to my toolbox of startup- and impact investment experience.

5. You obviously know a lot about drone technology. What industries will be mostly affected by drones in the future and why?
I would bet on the power grid industry. We are at the starting-point of a huge development job on our grid, and the infrastructure around. Drones, I believe, will be one of the tools we will need to inspect and monitor conditions around our power lines.

6. I've read that you live in a sailboat. Is that correct, and what made you choose that very unconventional home?
I did, yes! For about 4-5 years, a 33-ft sailboat called Viva was my home :) It might be unconventional, but for me it was very convenient as I work and spend a lot of time by the ocean. It was a way of implementing the ocean into my daily life, as something more than work: the best way to de-connect from a very busy lifestyle, was to throw the lines and take my boat out on the fjord. It was a very simple life; I had only room for the truly necessary things, and when others vacuum clean, I took care of the boat. It's always something to do - and I let my mind flow as my hands did the simple work.

I will definitely live on a boat again someday. Perhaps a bit bigger ;)

7. This book is all about doing and going from dreaming to doing. What is your best piece of advice to readers out there, who dream of having a more positive impact on the world?
The best feeling is to do something that helps others. So go find your way to do that. It might be within technology, but it may also be simple daily acts. I think curiosity is the best starting point; for me it was curiosity about the ocean and marine life. Just never hold back your questions, and ask: "how can I make the world a little better from where I am today, with what I have?". And share - when you find a way, pass it on.

Disrupting the single-use industry

Author ISABEL AAGAARD

ISABEL AAGAARD *is a Co-founder and Designer at LastObject. Isabel graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2016. Her mission is to create durable and well-designed products that are reusable. When she and her team discovered the harmful effects of single-use cotton swabs on the environment, they started working on a solution to fix it. In April 2019, they launched LastSwab, the first reusable alternative to cotton swabs.*

1. You launched your first product LastSwab in 2019 on Kickstarter and experienced an overwhelming interest. What would be your advice to other companies and entrepreneurs considering using Kickstarter for their funding, sales & promotion? What are the strengths and weaknesses of crowdfunding?

First of all, do it! Kickstarter is a great way of testing out your ideas, getting them validated or unvalidated. You can get a reality check on your business idea or design/service. That is the main strength. The second strength is that you get good at explaining your product or the problem you are trying to convey in text, imagery and video. This is unbelievably useful. One of the weaknesses is that your design is then live, so the copying begins if it's a really good idea. So as soon as you are alive you have to keep moving.

2. Your focus is to design products that eliminate single-use items. When did you become passionate about this approach to sustainability?

Designing has always been a huge part of my life, but it also affords more shopping and therefore, consumption. The idea of designing something that could replace hundreds and thousands of something else would instantly be better, so the approach was simple and the impact massive. Seeing the effects of the single-use industry on our environment is devastating, so realizing the huge impact we could make with creating reusables fuels my sustainable passion.

3. For the readers that have never heard about LastObject or LastSwab, can you please explain, what your company is all about?

LastObject was born to disrupt the single-use industry with reusable products that work better for you and do better for the planet. We want to save our planet and oceans from single-use items and be part of the solution to the climate crisis. We create products that you love to use and reuse so that sustainability becomes an easier choice. So, we make reusable alternatives to single-use.

4. For the benefit of our readers, can you share the story, and outline the steps that you went through, from when you thought of the idea, until it finally landed on the store shelves? In particular we'd love to hear about how to file a patent, how to source a good manufacturer, and how to find a retailer to distribute it.

Together with two amazing designers, we started outlining what sustainable design is, researching what it took to make a huge difference, and sadly it was not to design, not to produce, not to package, not to ship. Until we thought of the idea of eliminating a massive amount of something with one something. This is where the magic started and we were designing reusables to replace single-use.

The data on single-use products was devastating and the list of single-use items was long. So, we just started from one end, looking at where we could have a big impact, but that wasn't too drastic like toilet paper (we will get there some day). We put the first ready-ish design on Kickstarter which was LastSwab, a reusable cotton swab. We were overwhelmed by the sales, after a month we had 20.000 customers and hundreds of stores waiting to get stocked. Then the journey began to build a company.

5. Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

We made plenty of mistakes. I don't know if any of them were particularly funny, but we learned a lot from them. Every time we have made a choice to make something more complicated it always backfires. So, keeping things simple, choosing fewer colors, a few good people, and fewer choices. Every time we said "no" it became a really good idea.

6. The early stages must have been challenging. Are you able to identify a "tipping point" after making your invention, when you started to see success? Did you start doing anything different? Are there takeaways or lessons that others can learn from that?

About two to three weeks before the Kickstarter campaign we did an email collection setup. This is when we saw we had hit the nerve on something. We did ads on social media that divided the waters from "ew that is disgusting" to "omg I need this" which means the interaction and shares were off the charts. This created an email list of over 40.000 before we even went live. The lesson from this is community is everything and pre-everything before going live.

7. Do you think products influence consumer behavior, or is it consumer behavior that leads to new products?

That is kind of the chicken and the egg dilemma. We have designed products to change behavior, but they are designed from our behavior. Our products are as close to the single-use alternative as possible so that the behavior is minimal, but the hidden effect is huge.

8. What's next for LastObject and how can people get in touch if they want to get involved?

More product and more scale! We have already eliminated over 3 billion single-use items, so the path is paved. We need to just keep walking/running and add products on our way.

9. Is there a particular book, podcast, or film that made a significant impact on you? Can you share a story or explain why it resonated with you so much?

The Universe Has Your Back by Gabrielle Bernstein. An amazing book about finding a clear direction in life and leaning into it.

10. This book is all about doing and going from dreaming to doing. What is your best piece of advice to readers out there, who dream of having a more positive

impact on the world?

Do it! It is the most rewarding thing I have ever done in my line of work. Being able to commit your life to a bigger purpose is worth it! Then the long hours and work-life balance compromises are worth it.

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We have designed products to change behavior, but they are designed from our behavior. Our products are as close to the single-use alternative as possible so that the behavior is minimal, but the hidden effect is huge.

ISABEL AAGAARD
Co-founder & Designer at LastObject

An industry not set up for the primary consumers

Author CIARA IMANI MAY

CIARA IMANI MAY *is the CEO and founder of Rebundle. She's creating space for Black women in clean beauty with the first US-made, plant-based, and non-toxic braiding hair brand. Ciara's combined passion for sustainability and understanding of health disparities in personal care products inspired the vision for Rebundle.*
Ciara earned her bachelor's in business management from the University of Missouri-Columbia and her master's in social entrepreneurship from the University of Southern California.

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what Rebundle is all about and what your role in the company is?
My company Rebundle makes plant-based braiding hair. We are the first US-made braiding hair brand making our products out of banana fibre, that is both non-toxic, eco-friendly, and biodegradable after use. I started this company back in 2019, after my own experience wearing braid extensions and realising that plastic hair was not only irritating my scalp but also contributing to plastic pollution in a way that I have not accounted for. We are laser-focused on providing a sustainable alternative to traditional hair extensions, while also addressing the environmental disparities in the hair extension industry.

2. Rebundle products are plant-based, non-toxic and eco-friendly. How important is this for your customers?
What we have found is that our products are providing, and addressing a need, that has gone unaddressed for decades and some of our customers come to us because they are used to experiencing scalp irritation and are looking for a non-toxic, itch-free alternative, while others are trying to live as conscious consumers and have been looking for an eco-friendly alternative.

Sometimes our customers are the same person, who are looking for both non-toxic and eco-friendly, and it's really important to them, for their journeys to live a sustainable lifestyle, and also to be conscious of the impact plastic hair is having on their bodies.

3. You are an advocate for sustainability. Can you walk us through the sustainability process at Rebundle?
Sustainability is at the core of our mission, and is executed in a lot of different ways throughout our business. For

example, through our manufacturing practices, we are intentional about finding ways to reduce our consumption in some areas, waste in other areas, our impact in our manufacturing as best as we can. In other ways, we focus on making sure that there is no plastic present in our products as well as in our packaging, and providing as minimal packaging as possible to our products.

4. You highly value transparency, why is that and how does it affect your business?
This is something I learned early on in the customer discovery process, in that other hair extension brands, especially those that are associated with scalp irritation, it is very difficult to contact these companies and get answers as to what is causing the scalp irritation. Something that I personally experienced and something that I heard a lot talking to other customers.

And so, it was important to hold transparency as a value for us, as a direct response to what the industry is known for, and what other companies are responsible for.

There is not a lot of information about plastic pollution that hair extensions cause, either. The single-use waste is primarily undetected, and there is no transparency about how the products are made, and how to dispose of them. So, with that, it's important for us to communicate with our community about what the impact could be to use plastic hair extensions, and also what the impact could be of using our alternative, a plant-based hair extension.

5. When starting, most companies are afraid their products won't sell. Your products sold out within a month. What promotion activities did your company take to achieve this?
We were very confident in our story, in our brand, and in our idea. We didn't set out to go viral. We didn't set out to sell out immediately. Our one goal was to get this product to market and to own the narrative around the problems that exist in the hair extensions industry. And the customer received that, and loved that message. We spent quite a bit of resources on the campaign itself, but also used social media as part of our strategy to spread our message and to achieve word of mouth, which we were able to do on platforms such as Instagram and Twitter.

6. The hair extensions industry had not been focused on sustainability until your company came along. What are your observations on this? Why didn't some of the market leaders adopt sustainable products earlier?
It's a really good question and I think that part of the reason is having a seat at the table for myself, someone like myself – a Black woman who wears hair extensions, has not traditionally been an option. The industry is not set up for the primary consumers – Black women – to have a voice or to have a say in where the products are made, how the products are made, how they are distributed, where they are sold, how they are consumed, etc. So, there has not been an opportunity for sustainability to be at the forefront of the conversation from the perspective of someone who values sustainability.

I think that there still is a long way to go for the industry to become more sustainable and we only have been the tip of the iceberg of what needs to happen for this industry to move forward into the green economy. I do hope that leaders of other hair extension brands take notes of what we are doing, and acknowledge the response that we are seeing from the customers that there is a need for this initiative, and to drive sustainability in this space.

We will continue to do so on both the 'plastic hair extension recycling program' and by providing a plant-based alternative.

7. What advice would you give to businesses that want to be more sustainable but don't know how?
There are a lot of resources out there that I have been able to read and learn about how I myself can be more sustainable, and how that translates into how I run my business. It's the way that I think about and approach problems now, and have been for some time, about how this is impacting the environment and what alternatives exist to traditional products and traditional practices that I have not considered.

8. You are a successful female founder. What would you say to aspiring Black women who want to pursue a similar career path?
I would say that there are many hurdles and obstacles that may come your way to be a full-time founder, and to come up with an idea that has had even the impact that mine has. But I think that it has been well worth it. And you need to believe in the idea enough to pursue it and also find the right team at the right time to execute on your vision. I think that has been a huge learning lesson for me in my journey; to always focus on the people.

The problem is obviously important. Selling the vision is important. But the people who are going to help you execute on that are sometimes even more important. So, my advice would be to make sure you have the right team at the right time to execute on your vision.

9. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
I think that impact is, or could be described as activities or a moment, or assurance, that your life's work, your belief in your vision, now lives outside of you and has a place in the world and has been received by others as important. And you can have impact in a lot of different ways, both positively and negatively, but what makes positive impact so important is you have the opportunity to change the future, to impact the future, and to encourage others to absorb the lessons that you have learned and absorb the beliefs that you may have about how you want the world to look once you are no longer here.

The problem is obviously important. Selling the vision is important. But the people who are going to help you execute on that are sometimes even more important. So, my advice would be to make sure you have the right team at the right time to execute on your vision.

CIARA IMANI MAY
CEO & Founder at Rebundle

How generative AI can be used to create social impact

Author SHIRAN MLAMDOVSKY SOMECH

SHIRAN MLAMDOVSKY SOMECH *is the founder of Listen to My Voice, an award-winning, AI-based media campaign against domestic violence, a social tech entrepreneur, and an AI Impact Leader at tech companies. Shiran harnesses her passions for creativity, technology, and humanity by leveraging generative AI for good through global, diverse projects. She also has a years-long experience in volunteering to help women at risk. Shiran graduated from the Kellogg Executive MBA program at Northwestern University.*

I would like to share with you how we used generative AI creatively to create social impact and battle domestic violence, and give you some inspiration and practical tools based on that experience.

Developing an idea

I come from the high-tech industry. Throughout my whole career I have been working with cutting-edge technologies and supporting entrepreneurial women as well as women at risk.

The idea of the campaign came to me as a result of several circumstances. *First*, working at Drive TLV, an innovation center for smart mobility and sustainability, brought me into contact with a truly avant-garde generative AI tech company D-ID, that enables businesses and creators to generate photorealistic digital presenters from text and still photos. *Second*, while working with D-ID, I met a survivor of domestic violence. Her husband tried to kill her but she survived and shared her story with the whole country. By doing so, she dramatically increased the awareness of domestic violence. *In addition*, at the same time period, I was introduced to the *Michal Sela Forum*, which encouraged the use of technology in combating domestic violence.
The survivor's story led me to the thought that, tragically, the women who were murdered cannot be heard. But if they could be, what would they say?

As a result of this chain of thoughts, an idea popped into my head: these murdered women needed a voice! This is how the Listen to my voice, *Listen to Your Voice* AI-based media campaign was born.

At that moment, I was unsure of whether this was a brilliant idea or an insane one!

I shared it with my colleagues at D-ID and with a friend

who was the managing partner of DIBOOR advertising agency. Luckily, they all supported it, and from this point on, **I had a mission**. To dedicate myself to it, I quit my job and together we created a truly life-saving campaign.

What we did and how we are combating domestic violence

Using D-ID's AI technology, we ''brought back to life'' five very different Israeli women who were murdered by their partners. We animated and dubbed their still photos to create a ''video'' of them telling their own story. To show that domestic violence *can* happen to *anyone, anywhere*, we chose victims from different backgrounds in terms of age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

These videos went viral thanks to their powerful message and the illusion of a real interaction with the victims that triggered a strong emotional reaction. Thanks to this effect, we have increased the awareness of dangerous relationships and the importance of safe separation.

The impact

The campaign was an outstanding success by every measure: it reached 10M views in only 3 days. It was aired on the national news and went into overdrive on social media. It was backed by almost 100 local municipal leaders around the country, presented in Knesset committees, covered by the international press as BBC and Reuters, and featured at the UN and NATO. We have also won international advertising awards, such as three Golden Drum awards.

The campaign's engagement rate was 5 times higher than the average, with men being almost half of the audience. I see it as a great achievement because to create a change, we needed to engage with all genders.

Our campaign has already saved lives. While the campaign was promoted, the clicks on the helpline numbers and the risk assessment questionnaire reached 1,000. We also received real-time emergency inquiries from young women and teenagers through social media.

What gave the campaign so much power?

In short, the right partnerships. We brought together three very different sectors:

Non-profit organizations that contributed their professional knowledge, and connected us to affected families;

Leading high-tech companies (D-ID, Meta, Natural Intelligence, Outbrain, etc.) that either contributed the technology, media, or sponsored the campaign;

The public sector (the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel) that helped us to expand our outreach to almost 100 municipalities and their citizens, including the Arab community.

Summary

So… how to leverage generative AI for good?

1) Dream big. Don't be afraid to think big and be ambitious;
2) Listen actively. Listen to what people have to say about your initiative, take the relevant insight, don't take no for an answer;
3) Try to solve a problem that you're passionate about and is close to your heart;
4) Find the right partners that **complement** you;
5) Communicate with your target audience and the impacted population, listen to what they have to say.

Social entrepreneurship and the livelihood impact

Author MADHUBAN PANDEY

MADHUBAN PANDEY *is the Co-Founder and COO of SCORE Livelihood Foundation (SLF). SLF is a New Delhi-based social enterprise focused on job creation, enterprise, and local economic development. Over the last twenty years, he has worked at national and international organizations in the development sector. A Master Trainer for the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) program of the International Labor Organization and Professional Fellow of the US State Department in the area of Local Economic Development.*

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what SCORE Livelihood Foundation is all about?

SCORE Livelihood Foundation (SLF), a not-for-profit section 8 company registered and functional since 2017 in New Delhi, India, is committed to Social Development across India and South Asia aligned to SDG goals.

Its vision is "Establishing an eco-system for enabling and enriching livelihood".

Key highlights of SLF:

- Committed to building the resilience of individuals and communities and empowering them through innovative and inclusive sustainable livelihood models including entrepreneurship;
- Focus on holistic development by addressing cross-cutting issues encapsulating health, education, gender mainstreaming, skill gaps, livelihood, etc.
- Adopt an inclusive policy and target women, adolescent girls, children, youth, farmers, and entrepreneurs;
- So far transformed the lives of many - Capacitated 80,000+ women and adolescent girls through imparting training in entrepreneurship, financial & digital literacy, and leadership. We promote a community cadre who takes lead in mobilizing others and facilitates community-based initiatives. Strengthened local capacity helped restore dignity and voice as many became self-reliant.

2. Could you describe what are the activities you perform as a Social Entrepreneur?

As a social entrepreneur, I am always immersed in the thought of building and strengthening SCORE as a social enterprise, and driven by a passion for building resilient communities, particularly within vulnerable segments.

The following set of activities are performed:

- Ascertain and map the issues or challenges on the ground, needs, and aspirations of the local residents;
- Take a deep dive - comprehend the complexity of the issues and vulnerabilities;
- Use a community of practice as a sounding board and connect with the thought leaders to elicit alternative views and perspectives which eventually helps in making any community-based model robust;
- Design the possible solution/business model focusing on the value proposition for the targeted population;
- Prototype the solution for further value addition, refinement, and proof of concept;
- Mobilize the required resources (financial, technical, and human) to operationalize the solutions envisioned as a social enterprise;
- Promote entrepreneurial ecosystem and facilitate building micro and collective enterprises;
- Monitor the social impact, outreach, and scalability of the tested solutions;
- Explore partnership opportunities for achieving the scale and creating an impact.

3. SCORE has a very structured value creation framework. Could you please explain it to the readers?

SCORE (Table 1) works towards creating value at the triple bottom line (social, economic, and environmental).

Our strength lies in defining the right solutions for stakeholders based on situational analysis by leveraging relevant expertise and resources.

4. You envision ensuring a livelihood impact for more than 200,000 people by 2023. How close are you to this goal?

Covid-19 was a problem and an opportunity in terms of

Table 1: SCORE value creation framework

Process	Situational/ Need Analysis	Solutions Packaging and Modeling	Program Realization (Pilot and Scale)	Value Impact Monitoring and Measurement
Key Components	• Problem definition • Community needs, demands and aspiration • Baselining	• Innovation and leading practices • Customized solutions design • SoPs and value indicators	• Program implementation • Communication, consolidation • Continuous improvement	• Key indicator Monitoring and reporting • Impact measurement • Case studies
Enablers	Program Management, Governance & Quality Control, Multi-stakeholders Management and Institutional Synergy, Digital platform			

reaching closer to the goal we had set for the organization. We grappled with isolation, limited mobility, and uncertainty, but never gave up our hope of rebuilding the future. We adopted various strategies to ensure the health and safety of the communities we work with, provided necessary guidance and moral support to cope with the unprecedented crisis, and created alternative supplementary income choices, especially for the poor.

It has brought a certain degree of optimism, as many people started exploring opportunities to start something of their own to earn their livelihood. The response of the government and private players at this stage is worth mentioning in terms of saving lives and reimagining livelihoods. We designed some programs in collaboration with the Govt. and the Corporates which were quite successful to restore life and livelihood and create an impact. Up to July 2022, we have reached around 1,000,000+ people helping them earn/sustain their livelihood and rebuild trust.

5. What are the activities you perform to achieve the above-mentioned goal?

The goal we have set was very much aligned with the institutional mandate and vision. Furthermore, it was broken into three thematic areas:

1) local knowledge convergence;
2) entrepreneurship and enterprise development;
3) resilience and access models.

Considering the needs, demands, and aspirations of the people, programs were designed and required resources were mobilized to pilot them. Some of the programs are:

- **SARALsamudaay** – Sustainable Action for Resilience and Advanced Livelihood through integrated community development programs,
- **SHEudyami** – women empowerment through holistic livelihood interventions,
- **SHEsamriddhi** – financial literacy to economic empowerment,
- **SMITA** – Sustainable Model for Innovation & Target-market Access focuses on the formation and strengthening of collectives,
- **ENJOY** – Entrepreneurship Journey of Youth to drive self-reliance,
- **A2-A3- Agriculture alternatives** – assessment, advocacy, and adaptation focused on farmers.

To ensure a long-lasting impact, all these programs are being implemented in public-private partnership mode. Digital platforms are designed to track/monitor the progress of each program. Third-party impact assessment is also carried out to capture evidence of success and understand the gaps if any as well as required changes to be made in the implementation strategy & approach.

6. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

The genesis behind the formation of SCORE was about impact creation. 'Begin with the end in mind,' is the mantra for every family member in SCORE. I believe in 'you get what you give,' so for me, impact is all about legacy.

Impact to me is the mark we leave through our actions, and how it touches the lives of those who generally remained alienated and deprived of choices in life. Tangible and intangible change manifests itself through choices people make, informed decisions they take, and the self-confidence they demonstrate.

This is made possible through engaging a variety of stakeholders and ensuring their effective engagement in the

journey of building community resilience.

SCORE stands for Stakeholders Co-existence for Resilience and Empowerment.

As Mahatma Gandhi said: *"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning"*.

Measuring impact through happiness

Author MEIK WIKING

MEIK WIKING *is the founder and CEO of The Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen. He's a research associate for the World Database of Happiness, member of the Advisory committee to the Global Happiness Policy Report and Founder of The Happiness Museum in Copenhagen. In addition, he's a New York Times best-selling author and has been translated into 38 languages – and has been called the happiest man in the world by The Times.*

Would you choose the red pill or the blue pill?

The red pill is a cure for strokes and the blue pill is a cure for Parkinson's disease. If each cost the same to develop, which one would you choose if you wanted to improve quality of life for human kind? Or would it be better to reduce loneliness, diabetes, or air pollution by 50%? Where's the biggest happiness return for human kind?

Almost a decade ago, the UN passed a happiness resolutions asking all the countries of the world to focus more on well-being and see what they can do to improve quality of life. And some countries are taking the lead. In New Zealand, the treasury now evaluates new government policy in terms its ability to improve well-being among citizens. And we're seeing subjective well-being being put at the centre of policy making in countries like the UK, France, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and famously Bhutan with their gross national happiness index.

The bad news is that we are failing to convert wealth into well-being. While GDP is on the rise, so are sea levels, stress levels and inequality. Never before has global trade been so connected and never before have we felt so alone. We're richer than ever before but we have decoupled wealth from well-being. Whether we look at the US or China, both countries have increased GDP per capita over the past decade, but at the same time, subjective well-being levels have gone down.

So, we need to understand better how we convert wealth into well-being. How do we invest in happiness? I would argue that we need to put well-being at the core not only policy making but also in our decision making when we're making investments. How do we get our bang for our bucks when it comes to investing? How do we secure the greatest return for happiness on investment?

And that brings us to what we have developed together

with Leaps by Bayer. The WALY metric. Well-being Adjusted Life Years. A metric that can measure the happiness return on investment. A metric that can function as a common currency. That means we can start to compare across vastly different investments as Leaps by Bayer has invested more than 1.4 billion euros to impact ten huge challenges facing humankind – from curing cancer to reducing the environmental impact of agriculture.

By using a huge dataset, we have insight into the lives of more than 100,000 senior people who have been followed for over a decade. Now with such a large group of seniors, people get sick. They are diagnosed with Alzheimer's, with strokes, and with Parkinson's disease.

One of them is a woman in her 50s who usually reports 9 or 10 when it comes satisfaction with life. The year after she was diagnosed with Parkinson's and she now reports 5 on a scale from 0 to 10. She's just one of more than a 1000 people in the study who were diagnosed with Parkinson's. So, we begin to understand what the average impact on life satisfaction of having Parkinson's is. What's the actual experience? And this is key.

Well-being Adjusted Life Years are based on empirical measurements of people experiencing different diseases. And we can also go beyond the patient because the data also shows gives us insight into the lives of spouses. So, what's the effect on your life satisfaction if your partner is diagnosed with Alzheimer's?

That means that we can make comparisons based not on what we think is best but based on the actual experience of human beings and their loved ones. And we can also go beyond health. We can measure what the impact on happiness would be if we reduced the air pollution in Paris to zero.

So, my hope is that we're going to be able to predict which SDG is going to give us the biggest leap forward when it comes to happiness. My hope is that we can put well-being measures at the core of decision making – because what we measure matters – so we should measure what matters.

Caterpillar brands

Author GABRIELE CARBONI

GABRIELE CARBONI *is the co-founder of Weevo and a leading expert in international digital marketing strategies. He was mentioned by Philip Kotler as the "North Star of Impact Marketing''. He is a digital strategy consultant for Lamborghini, iliad, Danone, Aboca and many others. Gabriele is a keynote speaker, author and creator of the most downloaded marketing canvas in the world. He's one of the five major Italian marketing influencers according to Digitalic. Furthermore, he's a guest professor for several Italian and international universities.*

Brands have become caterpillars. They are looking for the next leaf to bite into and consume, just like the next customer. They lack the big picture, a vision of the future, and an idea of their evolution. Above all, they generally do not perceive the negative impact they cause on society, the environment, and the economy.

Other companies, on the other hand, are satisfied with the comfortable chrysalis of values they have woven through marketing and advertising. They tell about vision, mission, and purpose, but what's under that shield? Did they take the next evolutionary step, or did they fall prey to profit, which consumed their values and left an empty void?

Sometimes, the predators are the shareholders, who are only interested in maximizing revenues, regardless of the adverse effects a company can have on people and the land that hosts us.

The audience to be satisfied, however, is broader. The tree, the entire garden, is full of stakeholders who want to know if the brand is ready to transform itself into a butterfly and take flight, generating a positive impact guided by its purpose towards the common good.

Capitalism, the very concept of the economy, has become synonymous with consumerism, waste, and competition in the worst sense. We have companies, entrepreneurs, executives, and managers who look exclusively to profit. A profit that is often to the detriment of others, whether it's the competitor, the supplier, or sometimes even the customer.

Often confused with advertising or communication, marketing has become this system's main lever, helping organizations to influence consumers negatively. Then, even worse, marketing has become the auction on which to flag issues of social responsibility, sustainability, and purpose exploited for the sole ambition of generating more profit.

We need a new capitalism, a civil economy, and sustainable and virtuous marketing practices. From a concept of marketing as a profitable satisfaction of needs, the need for new marketing is emerging: a strategic process involving all stakeholders in generating a positive impact, which results in profit.

The pandemic has undoubtedly accelerated the process. We realized how difficult it is to remain distant from others. Nevertheless, we got closer. We rediscovered the importance of taking care of each other and the environment around us.

The recent war in Ukraine has done the same. It has pushed the fast forward button on the awareness of people and businesses. Most of the world has come together in support of a cause.

That does not mean that profit must take second place. It means transforming it into the result of the positive impact that the organization has on the community in which it operates; a community comprising customers, suppliers, partners, company employees, talents, families, banks, investors, the press, administrations, governments, and non-governmental bodies.

Organizations that go beyond mere product sales connect with their stakeholders' ideals and generate deeper relationships.

To do that, the company must remember its genesis. The reason it was born, or it continues to exist; what vision does it have of the future and of the world it helps to improve.

Then, who are the companies evolving from caterpillar to butterfly?

Taking that step requires an effort directed toward multiple objectives, most of which answer the question: How can our organization participate in the construction of the common good? In terms of this answer, we discover the meaning of the butterfly.

Disability is a market you do not want to miss!

Author SIGNE HARTVIG DAUGAARD

SIGNE HARTVIG DAUGAARD *is Founder & CEO of Great Minority - a media company which works for a better and wider representation of minorities. Last year she founded the first Entrepreneur Bootcamp for young adults with disabilities in Denmark. Signe won the Sustainable Development Goal prize 2022.*

When I lost my hearing at the age of 12, I never imagined in my wildest dreams that my hearing loss would become the foundation of the business I live by today. In the time after I became deaf, I grasped for a new identity and tried hard to find reference points and role models that would convince me that life as a deaf person also had something to offer. Unfortunately, I didn't find anyone I could see myself in – at least not in the media.

Maybe you think that's not the case today. Now, themes such as diversity and minorities are higher on the agenda than ever before. But try to think back... How many times in the past week have you seen someone with a visible disability appear in the media? On SoMe? In the fashion magazines? In an advertisement?

If you don't immediately remember coming across examples, it's not that you haven't been aware of what information you've been bombarded with. No, despite the fact that there are 1.3 billion people with disabilities worldwide, the representation of that same group only takes up 1 percent of advertising in primetime. Thought-provoking when this particular group has a purchasing power of about $ 13 trillion.

Nevertheless, few companies know how to exploit the huge business potential of these consumers – the world's largest minority group.

If you as a company make an active choice that your company should be inclusive of this minority, you will create impact among both current and potential customers. In addition, you will have access to a loyal customer group that will reward you for meeting their product and service needs and show the outside world that your company is inclusive and provides space for diversity.

If you would like to know more, here is my top-3 list that can help you become a relevant company for people with disabilities:

1. Show the person - then the disability

There are very few people with a disability who want the focus to be solely on that. First and foremost, focus on similarities, what we share and what binds us together, let the disability be secondary.

2. Style and tone are important

Disability is, as a starting point, nothing to laugh at, but therefore the mood can be lightened with a little humor. However, it requires that it comes from the characters themselves, and that it may be implied humor. So, get help from your target audience, because it is crucial that you get your style and tone right.

3. Pay attention to accessibility in your service, your communication, and your branding

Do you also lose patience when you have to buy a product online, and it turns out to be difficult because the website is not user-friendly? Do you stop the purchase? A lot of people with disabilities do! If you as a company understand to work with digital accessibility, which makes it easier for blind, deaf and people with cognitive impairments to find their way around, then you create a revolution - Then do the same in your customer service, be patient in your meeting with people with disabilities, familiarize yourself with their needs and they will love you and come again, simply because they have learned that you can give them a uniquely good experience.

Photo: R. Mathiasson

Better solutions for maternal health

Author BJORN LOMBORG

BJORN LOMBORG *researches the smartest ways to do good. With his think tank, the Copenhagen Consensus, he has worked with hundreds of the world's top economists and seven Nobel Laureates to find and promote the most effective solutions to the world's greatest challenges, from disease and hunger to climate and education. For his work, Lomborg was named one of TIME magazine's 100 most influential people in the world.*

In the next two minutes, one woman will die from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. She will die from entirely preventable causes during one of the most beautiful moments of human life, giving birth. The good news is that there are some solutions that are inexpensive and effective.

In a world besieged by problems from COVID-19 to climate change, it's hard to pay attention to the many other challenges that still remain. For the vast majority of the world's population, these are simple problems of survival: not dying from tuberculosis, getting enough food, breaking free of poverty and getting adequate education.

Vying for scarce resources, these problems often lose out because they don't have enough media attention, famous spokespeople or viral imagery. The harsh truth is we can't afford to fix all problems. That is why we have to ask hard questions: how big is the problem, what is the solution — and crucially, how much will it cost compared to its effects? The tragedy of pregnant women and their children dying has been on the global health community's radar for a long time. In the year 2000, the UN promised to address the issue. But progress to date has not been enough. Yes, maternal deaths declined about a third from 451,000 per year in 2000 to about 295,000 in 2017, but we had committed to more than a two-thirds reduction by 2015. Since then, we've promised to reduce it even further to around 100,000 deaths by 2030.

But commitment without action doesn't save pregnant women and their children. It takes financing and simple procedures.

Mothers in the hardest-hit developing countries are still 80 times more likely to die than their rich-country counterparts. And their newborns also die — even before the Covid pandemic that limited access to health services for many people, 2.4 million children died in 2019 in their first

28 days on earth. They die because many women either give birth in their own homes, without access to skilled birth attendants, or in facilities with limited basic emergency care. The mothers die from infections that abound with low hygiene, and high blood pressure, that can lead to seizures. Severe bleeding that can happen after childbirth kills 46,000 mothers every year.

Clearly, something needs to be done. Development professionals have put forward many proposals on how to address this global crisis, but trying to fix everything everywhere comes at a cost of over $30 billion per year, and it is unlikely that such funds can be mobilized.

Instead, my think tank Copenhagen Consensus, supported by funding from Merck for Mothers, worked with leading maternal health experts to use cost-benefit analysis to find the most cost-effective policies first.

The research focused on the highest-burden 59 countries that account for 91% of all maternal deaths globally. Using the recognized LiST (Lives Saved Tool) model from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the researchers analysed more than 30 different ways to help and found that while all would have an impact, some would help much more per dollar spent.

Two interventions stood out as the very best investments for additional resources. These are straight-forward, without requiring cutting edge technology, but perhaps that is exactly why they are not well-known, lacking for celebrity endorsement and media coverage.

To drive the greatest impact for investments, the world should consider focusing on what is known as Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) along with family planning. An estimated 217 million women who want to avoid pregnancy still don't have access to safe and effective family planning methods. Scaling up access to 90% in the 59 countries would mean that fewer women would become pregnant, avoiding 87,000 mothers dying every year.

Getting more mothers into more facilities while also improving the quality of those facilities could help them and their children survive at a greater rate. In practice this means ensuring that adequately trained staff are present with the right equipment and medicines to deliver simple and well-known life-saving procedures. These include immediate drying and thermal protection of the newborn, controlled cord traction, skin-to-skin contact of newborns, assisted vaginal delivery along with neonatal resuscitation. All of this will entail costs. Midwives and nurses have to be educated, recruited, and salaried; management expanded; drugs procured; and infrastructure paid for. Moreover, women also have to be incentivized to give birth in facilities. But overall, BEmONC and family planning would cost just $2.9 billion per year — less than a tenth of the $30+ billion typically asked for, which would save only a fraction more lives.

It would save the women we have already promised to save at a very low cost: in total it would save 162,000 mothers every year along with 1.2 million newborns. If we measure the total value of these efforts, each dollar spent would achieve $71 of social benefits per dollar spent, making it one of the best investments in the world.

While you read this, at least one more mother died. We owe it to her and all the millions, whose lives we can save, to invest $2.9 billion smartly to bring hundreds of billions of dollars of economic and health benefits to people around the world.

Is the glass worth filling?

Author NAVEEN JAIN

NAVEEN JAIN *is the author of the award-winning book Moonshots: Creating a World of Abundance. As a serial entrepreneur, he previously founded InfoSpace, Intelius, and TalentWise. Moon Express is the only company globally with permission to harvest resources from the moon. In addition, he is the Vice-Chairman of the Board at Singularity University. He is also on the Board of the XPRIZE Foundation. Naveen has been the recipient of many honors for his entrepreneurial successes.*

A conversation with serial entrepreneur, billionaire and philanthropist Naveen Jain.

When I'm listening to Naveen Jain talking describing his plan to create big business on the moon, it's hard for me to grasp that Naveen was once a poor child in India.

Today Naveen Jain is a billionaire and a very successful entrepreneur. His own recipe for success is, amongst other things, not knowing much and not being very good at anything. To me that sounds like the opposite of what business-life normally requires, yet Naveen isn't joking, and his track-record proves that he is not wrong either. After all the young boy that grew up in poverty in India is today changing the world as we know it and has Sir Richard Branson and Google-founder Larry Page as two of his good, personal friends.

1. I find it so inspiring that you have used entrepreneurship not only to change your own living conditions, but also changed the lives of millions of other people. So, I'm curious: What do you actually mean, when you tell me that it's important now to know too much?

When you're really good at something, you have a tendency to only be able to improve it a little bit.

We see this all the time in companies with great skills and experience that still lose market shares to fast-growing startups, because the people in the old-thinking companies might be skilled, but they are also trapped by all of their knowledge in a particular field and only manage to produce incremental innovation. Not radical or disruptive one.

On the opposite, when you don't know very much about a particular field, you're truly able to challenge it. This forces you to ask all the curios questions that children love to ask. The questions that we sometimes name 'stupid questions', but that are often brilliant and eye-opening, because the person asking them is genuinely curious.

In my own case and career, I've never started two companies in the same industry. I'm not really an expert or guru

in any particular field, but what I am is an entrepreneur, and what I love to do is challenge the status quo in industries that I become interested in or fascinated by.

2. You often hear that entrepreneurs are the kind of people who view the glass as half-full rather than half empty. Do you agree?
No. To me entrepreneurship is not about being overly optimistic. If you're too optimistic, you risk making bad decisions, because you think that everything you do will succeed.

The reality is the opposite. Entrepreneurs fail all the time. The challenge is not to avoid failing, but to fail fast and cheap. So, to me entrepreneurship is about asking the question: Is this glass worth filling?

3. Nice metaphor. A bit like Simon Sinek who talks about starting with WHY. Meaning what is your cause, what is your belief, why does your organization exist. Is that a relevant comparison?
Yes absolutely. When I start new companies, I always start with WHY, and I combine this with thinking big. I call it MOONSHOT thinking.

Moonshot thinking is about solving big problems that are worth solving. If you manage to do so, you become highly successful – both when it comes to your feeling of meaningfulness and on your bank account.

I never aim to solve problems that effect less than 100 million people in the world and preferably more. This might seem like too big a challenge to give yourself, but in fact big problems are often not more difficult to solve than the smaller ones.

So if this is in fact the case, and you're going to spend thousands of hours on your project no matter what, why not aim for the moon to begin with?

4. As I've understood your latest business venture, aiming for the moon is no longer just a metaphor for you, but to be understood literally and as a potentially lucrative business opportunity for you?
Yes that is true. My company Moon Express is about going to the moon, not like the US did many years ago for scientific purposes, but with a business intention.

The moon is a potential treasure chest that has vast amounts of iron ore, water, rare Earth minerals and precious metals, as well as carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen and helium-3, a gas that can be used in future fusion reactors to provide nuclear power without radioactive waste. Experts concur that the value of these resources are in the trillions of dollars.

The moon can also serve as a fuel depot station for interplanetary space exploration. It has massive amounts of ice (H_2O) trapped on the lunar poles that can be used for rocket fuel.

5. The moon is big business because of its metals?
Yes but not only this. It's also the possibility to develop a multi-planet society for us humans. Think about what would happen, if a large asteroid hit earth? Most likely we would all die. Become extinct overnight.

Currently we don't have any strategy or action plan for dealing with this threat that might not be happening in the very near future, but could do so in the generations to come.

When we're not addressing this, we're acting like the dinosaurs did millions of years ago. However, unlike the dinosaurs we're able to act in a more reflected and entrepreneurial way. I mean:
Where was the entrepreneurial dinosaur, when they needed him?

6. A multi-planet society. Wauv! Again, I have to remind the readers that you grew up in a poor family in India. You were curious, wanted to fill glasses worth filling, and now you're talking about reinventing the moon for humans. Does this also mean that we will see regular people like myself travelling to the moon in the future - not only billionaires like Naveen Jain?
Yes of course. Think about the word 'honeymoon'. Instead of going to Paris for a week, why not give your new husband or wife an actual honeymoon?

The moon has always had romantic connotations, and who knows if we're not also going to disrupt the whole diamond industry with Moon Express. I mean: Who would want something so boring as a diamond, when you can give your wife an actual and beautiful rock from the moon?

7. I think in Scandinavia, where I was born and raised, this sounds fascinating on one side, but also overwhelming. I mean… Going to the moon and creating a business out of it? It sounds like a sci-fi movie rather than something, you would ever be able to do as a Dane?
Denmark might be a small country, but that is really just an excuse. In today's world distance doesn't exist. There are no geographical boundaries, and everyone is available to you, if your business idea and business model is good enough. For example, you and I didn't know each other just one month ago, and now we're Skyping and e-mailing about entrepreneurship, innovation and disruption. So, the world has gotten so small, and this makes it even more meaningful to think big.

8. I'm very curious about how we can train young people to become entrepreneurs, like we are. Some people in my home country claim that the education system is broken. Do you agree?
No I don't actually. The education system works precisely like it was designed to work. The problem is that the world has changed so drastically, but the way we educate people hasn't.

Our education system was developed for an industrial era, where we could teach certain skills to our children, and they would be able to use these skills for the rest of their lives working productively in an industry. We are now living in a fast-paced technological era, where every skill that we teach our children becomes obsolete in the 10 to 15 years due to exponentially growing technological advances. Meanwhile, new categories of jobs are being created because of these technological advances.

It's hard to imagine that half of the jobs that exist today didn't exist 25 years ago.

9. Our education system today uses the mass production style manufacturing process of standardization. We are using the same process to teach our kids today, grouping them by their date of manufacturing (age). Once a year we use standardized testing to see if they are ready to move to the next grade of an education advanced assembly line. How do we then rethink this?
Rethinking education starts with embracing our individuality. Our life experiences are very different from one and other, and yet we seem to think everyone of us can learn the same way. Some of us learn experientially, while others are more attracted to logical or conceptual learning. Why are we limiting ourselves to one format or curriculum, when we know that each individual is going to learn differently? Further, why are we advancing children to the next level, or grade, on an annual basis, as opposed to when each is ready?

Just think of the opportunities we can unlock by making

education as addictive as a video game. This type of experiential, addictive learning improves decision-making skills and increases the processing speed and spatial skills of the brain.

10. You're a frontrunner within the moon-race, but I understand that also within the health industry, you and your team are trying to disrupt things?

You're talking about my company Viome, which by the way is another example of an industry that I knew absolutely nothing about, before I started working in it.

When we started Viome, the most important thing when founding the team, was not skills, but trust. This is also one of my key learnings that I would like to pass on to other entrepreneurs: The importance of hiring great and skilled people that you really TRUST and LIKE. Those are the two key-words.

In Viome we're curious about, why people get sick, and how we can control this in the future.

What we have discovered is that genetics play a very small role in our complex human body. Even identical twins can turn out very differently, and when we give people the same kind of drugs, they work differently on the individual.

At Viome we believe that this is due to the fact that our body is in fact only 10% human and 90% micro-bacteria. Our body is in this sense a climate, and whilst there are only 20.000 genes in our human DNA, there are 10 million genes in our gut. We need to understand this complexity better.

Historically we have believed that the causes of Parkinson, depression etc. were primarily neurological or originate in the brain, but recent research indicates that depression's root cause may be directly related to bacteria found in the gut.

Doctors and nutritionists have always known there is a connection between the brain and the gut, but we understand the gut better now, and it seems like the gut has a mind of its own called the enteric nervous system.

If we're right about these assumptions, and if we manage to crack the code, Viome has the potential to profoundly impact the medical field and be a major step forward in effectively treating and possibly curing people plagued by depression, Parkinson and other diseases. While changing a person's bacteria is still a stretch for doctors, it is easier and more straightforward than trying to change an individual's genes.

11. Last question to you Naveen: Going to the moon and solving life-threating diseases. Is this big money or big impact for you?

It's both. They are not each other's opposites, but should instead be closely linked. The billionaires of the future are the people who manage to solve problems for billions.

And at the end of the day everyone reading this article could become one of them. However, don't have money as your key motivating factor. To find your true passion, instead ask yourself the following question:

What if I had billions of dollars and everything that I wanted in life… What would I do then?

Find your answer and follow it!

Making AI accessible

Author LOUIS BOUCHARD

LOUIS BOUCHARD *is a researcher, YouTuber, and community manager. He is co-founder of Toward's AI and owner of "What's AI".*

1. What is AI (to you)?

This is a great ongoing question. To me, artificial intelligence (AI) just means the use of machines to do a task that typically requires human knowledge. Such a task includes many different approaches involving, or not, machine and deep learning, but those are definitely the currently most hyped approaches.

Expert knowledge approaches using regular coding and conditions based on knowledge from experts in the field is also a type of "artificial intelligence" as it allows a machine to answer questions or take related actions based on inputs.

2. What does it mean to make AI accessible?

Making AI accessible means two things. First, it means sharing what AI is capable of with everyone, not only professionals. AI technologies surround us, and they will only take a larger part of our life. I believe it is important to know what it is and at least understand how it works at a high level to keep the control and not be scared or have realistic expectations.

A second meaning is to share new research and progress in the field with anyone interested in the field in a more technical manner. This is just as important as I believe such communication helps progress in the field, allowing all researchers and professionals to be up-to-date with the different works in the field and learn from it.

3. This book is all about impact. How will AI impact the world?

Oh wow, that is a large question. I can only say that AI will, and already do, impact the world in many if not all possible ways. It is already in most industries and controlling some of our behaviors through recommendation systems and such. You can try to think of the industry that is the least susceptible to using AI, and it will already have a use case where AI can help. Think of agriculture; well, there

are already automatic water systems using computer vision and prediction systems to optimize and automate watering. Think of groceries? Just visit an Amazon Go store, and you will see how impressive a convenience store can get using AI.

4. Impact is not necessarily a good thing. How do we ensure that AI doesn't make the world a worse place than it is now? For instance, I think that it's still up to discussion if companies like Meta have in fact made the world better or not. Would you agree?
I believe making AI accessible is one way, if not the best, to use AI "for good". Unfortunately, I believe it is impossible to **ensure** (with 100% confidence) that AI is being used to make the world a better place, but we, AI researchers, will definitely try our best to make it happen. The government is best placed to control the big companies' impact, but they need to understand the technology itself and hire experts that deeply understand it.

Only experts will not suffice, nor will only high-level understanding either. Both are required, which is why popularizing AI is important and why sharing up-to-date information with fellow researchers also is. The government needs to predict what will happen next, and it needs the best researchers and information to do so. The person making the decision, in the end, should also have a high-level understanding at the minimum. Lacking better examples; Would you let someone from another country with completely different education systems and zero knowledge about education at all decide if we should add a year or not to the school curriculum? Of course not. You want someone that studied the subject and understood the issues and possible consequences.

5. Most technology CAN be built, but SHOULD it be built? What do you think about this question, when you relate it to AI generating e.g., faces and people that don't really exist?
Something that can be built shouldn't necessarily be built. For example, we can surely build a fake Obama video saying horrible things about the United States, but nobody should do that. Similarly, we can create horrible AI-based automatic shooting drones, and some already are making such weapons, but the world would be better without them. AI is just a tool we can use to improve our lives, but it can also be used to worsen the situation if in bad hands. This is why we need a good regulation by the government and why they need to understand that.

6. AI is getting better and better at restoring photos, but it can also generate deepfakes, where we can't tell the truth from reality. How do we set up global guidelines to prevent the negative impacts of these technologies, or are you against such guidelines or regulations?
AI is getting better and better at restoring photos, but this is the same technology as deepfakes and doesn't really restore a photo. In fact, if there's a scratch or a gray-tone picture, the model simply learns from images in a big database what is the most expected feature to appear below the scratch or what color is supposed to be where in the case of a gray image. It will not reconstruct the original image but will rather take interpolating from the dataset. Here, I want to highlight that it is interpolating, not extrapolating. It only guesses from what it knows and doesn't extrapolate as humans can do. Thus, if the image wasn't in the database, it is literally impossible for the model to make an exact guess. Still, it will be pretty close and produce incredible results for sure!

7. Apart from being the editors of this book, we also work within the space of stock images (JumpStory). What will AI mean for this industry in 10 years from

now? Will major companies like Shutterstock and Getty Images simply be history, because we don't need them or photographers anymore?

From what we already see with image generation models like Imagen or Dalle 2, I believe many companies will create images for users using AI rather than stock pictures. Shutterstock may or may not adapt to this change, and even better models will also appear. I couldn't even make a guess one year from now at the speed progress is going right now, and I believe life will be so different in 10 years that it is impossible to answer this question with a legitimate guess.

8. Should all companies care about AI? What if I work as a construction worker? Do I really need to understand these new technologies in order to keep my job in 10 years' time?

I don't think all companies should care about AI. AI isn't magic, and you don't always need it, nor will it always help you or your product. You need to get into AI and use it when you don't find any other solutions to a problem. Still, even in this case, I believe a construction worker should care about AI but not for the same reason. If this person has a smartphone, then his/her life is already impacted by AI in many ways to ensure the algorithms aren't controlling their behavior or at least not be scared of upcoming changes like thinking of losing his/her job in a few years. Staying up-to-date and understanding the current state of AI will maximize your well-being and minimize stress regarding this technology. In fact, AI-powered robotic arms and tools might replace construction workers a few years from now, but we don't know when. It is definitely possible and not that far away.

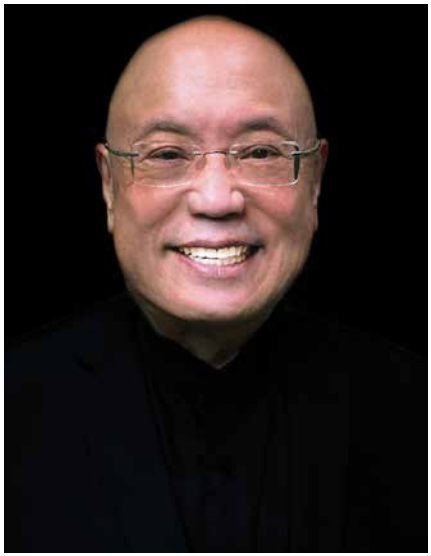
9. Machines are not very good at 'out of box thinking'. Is this also something that they will become better at in the future? Meaning that they can do things that they are not designed or programmed to do?

As I said previously, machines are currently merely interpolating from data and not extrapolating from it. Meaning that it cannot "create" new things but only merge and blend existing things. Even the hottest models like Dalle that generate amazing-looking images will not create something new. Instead, combine existing concepts and images together to make it look unique and cool, but not creative nor new. It is definitely possible that AI will be designed to extrapolate and even be conscious one day, but we will have to find a completely different approach to achieve that and not only keep scaling to larger datasets and faster inferences.

You can try to think of the industry that is the least susceptible to using AI, and it will already have a use case where AI can help.

LOUIS BOUCHARD
Co-founder at Toward's AI & Owner at "What's AI"

Digital twins with XR (AR/VR/Mixed Reality) deeply impacting 8+ billion – exponential future reality



Author STEPHEN IBARAKI

***STEPHEN** is a serial entrepreneur, investor, futurist with 300+ recognitions/ awards, in leadership working daily across 1 million+ CEOs, investors, scientists. He is Chairman REDDS Capital; Founder & Chair Outreach UN ITU, AI FOR GOOD. He is founding chair of the YPO Impact Advisory Board and previously the YPO EIS Advisory Board. Stephen is the Recipient of 21 Microsoft Global Awards (2018-2024 in AI) / 40+ recognitions. He is a contributor to Forbes / IT World Canada on leading new investments, innovation, entrepreneurship.*

What happens when the USD $10+ Trillion Digital Twins + XR (Extended Reality) driven marketplaces (described in prior years as the metaverse) intertwines with the $100+ Trillion global economy and $500+ Trillion in global wealth? The answer is profound digital reshaping and personalized precision, increasingly seamless and immersive experiences across governments, industry, academia, education, media, non-profits – culturally, societally – and in unprecedented ways. This article is gleaned from insights working daily across more than 1 million CEOs, investors, scientists, and notable experts.

What are digital twins with XR (the metaverse)?

The metaverse concept is decades old and increasingly the confluence of: 5 and 6G, mobile, 3D / WebGL, Web3, cloud computing, edge computing, exascale / zetascale supercomputing, quantum computing, analog computing, IoT, nanotech, sensors and embedded devices, wearables, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) including Large Foundation Models (LFMs such as LLMs (Large Language Models) and FMs (Fusion Models)), robotics, biomedical innovations and engineering, spatial tech / virtual reality / augmented reality / mixed reality / extended reality, space tech– digital replicas and twins of all things physical including earth ecosystems and living entities. It's a spectrum providing increasingly immersive experiences becoming more seamless and integrated in our lives over time. Much of this is the work of AI and ML. Early entry points are immersive technology, platforms and environments from Apple, Microsoft, MQDC, T&B Media Global, MIT Media Labs; interactive gaming environments; digital twins of physical worlds / assets / cities / buildings, and the myriad of companies already working in this space.

Recent innovations in AI / ML illustrate the promise. Stretch your imaginations to these large AI models which are in the trillions of parameters. As a reference point, our brains are estimated to have more than 100 trillion synapses, and the distinction from our capabilities and that found in Large Foundation Models is blurring. The growing adoption of LFMs is evidenced with Microsoft as a leading example such as in Bing AI, Azure extensive AI-related services, and Microsoft 365 Copilot where your creativity, productivity, and skills are enhanced and catalyzed in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams and more. This integration is found in Adobe in their graphics and creator-oriented suites of products. The next generations are already being worked on which provide glimpses of artificial general intelligence (AGI) – with general human-like capabilities but utilizing non-human machine algorithms and intelligence. Thus before 2030, imagine a world with seamless virtual integration with virtual realities intermixed with the physical and emersed with digital assistants/guides/companions.

To gain a deep perspective from the most famous lab working on grand challenges is MIT Media Lab. I spoke to the MIT Media Lab Fluid Interfaces research group on their projects addressing this area of human interaction and augmentation which is foundational for the metaverse. The insights are found in this in-depth online Forbes article.

The need for standards

There are billions interested in participating and the creation within the metaverse. Much like the billions using the internet, electricity, and mobile. This means interoperability so silos become interconnected, and you get global cohesion. An example is the United Nations International Telecommunications Union (ITU) which predates the United Nations. Over 150 years ago, standards were required in global communications and the ITU has its roots in facili-tating standards. Country codes used globally in telecommunications are from the work of the ITU.

Standards drive interoperability which fosters global acceptance and seamless usage. The electrical outlets and the plugs you use are based on standards. Browsing on webpages is seamless and this stems from standards.

There currently isn't this seamless capability with your metaverse experiences.

To start this work, the non-profit, The Khronos Group (which works in 3D standards) is hosting the Metaverse Standards Forum. They launched in June 2022 with 35 organizations such as Microsoft, Meta and in 2024, more than 2400 members participating. The work is so important that I did an interview with Neil Trevett, president of The Khronos Group, Chair Metaverse Standards Forum, and Vice-President Developer Ecosystems at NVIDIA. The interview appears online with Forbes.

Where is this leading?

There are continual interviews appearing with the non-profit IEEE TEMS (Stephen Ibaraki interviews). The IEEE, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, its roots dating back to 1884, and with more than 420,000 members in 160-plus countries, is the world's largest technical professional organization dedicated to advancing technology for the benefit of humanity.

Generative AI: Ingesting AI in everyone's life

Author ABHISHEK VIJAYVARGIA

ABHISHEK VIJAYVARGIA *is a seasoned data scientist with a wealth of experience in the tech industry. Currently serving as a Senior Data Scientist at Microsoft, Abhishek is at the forefront of cutting-edge innovations in the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning. In addition, Abhishek is a prolific author, a recognized influencer in the data science community, and a dedicated mentor, helping aspiring data scientists navigate the complexities of the field.*

What is generative AI?

AI is not a new term for this world. It was here decades ago. At that time, many data scientists (so-called statisticians) built foundational algorithms like linear regression and decision trees and showed the world the power of predictive analytics. But it was still limited, generating great predictions, but needed more capability than just prediction on tabular data.

Then, the researchers started spending time in NLP and Computer Vision. During this time, many great algorithms were researched. The advancement of deep learning on GPUs gave an entirely new light to these heavy algorithms. Now, the system can take text and images and predict those. But the most exciting part was yet to come.

Then came the era of generative AI, which simply means using AI to generate content. People developed algorithms to learn to generate text, images, video, or any media. They can talk to AI like a human, and AI can create a story for them, such as a complete movie or a thriller series. This enables people to use AI more as it can generate content previously limited only by human intervention.

How does Gen-AI work?

Generative AI algorithms use human-generated data and are trained on those. It understands the relationship within the content, pattern, and sequences. The more quality data this algorithm has, the better the possibility of getting the desired results. For example, if a company wants to train a sales bot that talks with potential customers and converts to leads, it can train the model with the conversations of its best salespeople. As a result, the bot can understand how to respond and how to solve the problem with maximum satisfaction.

How is Gen-AI helping us?

As with ChatGPT, it got all the limelight this year and defeated most signup records in a certain period. People started ingesting these AI capabilities in different industry verticals.

Some of the active areas in enterprises where Generative AI is showing its true capabilities are:

- Improved customer conversations with search and chat experience;
- Summarizing data for faster decision-making;
- Generating a story or script for the new campaign;
- Generating videos with a human-like, non-existent person speaking naturally;
- Creating applications by taking requirements from customers;
- Converting text to speech in all languages;
- Creative art generation and image creation from text description;
- Understanding customer needs by asking the right questions.

Right now, many companies like OpenAI (ChatGPT), Google (Bard), Meta (Llama), and Huggingface are opening many models for the public so that they can understand and fit their use cases in them. They also allow you to fine-tune these models on your data so that you can use it more precisely.

Next-Gen Generative AI (Much better future)

As the use cases advance, we cannot ignore the privacy and regulatory concerns that appear. If trained on private data, it can disclose some private information to others. Also, many countries have policies regarding the use of data, like GDPR, which cannot be ignored. That's why models trained on private data should be secured properly because that could be the single point of failure for the company and can represent the entire company's collected data.

This is just a start. The rapid adaptation of this AI capability is enabling more and more industries and areas to benefit from it. Data Scientists, Content creators, marketers, authors, business people, software engineers, and many other professionals will help AI improve and leverage these tools to help them increase productivity in their work. This means we will see the shift of professionals towards AI.

As a famous quote - "AI will not take your job, the person using AI will."

Photo: Reid Hoffmann

Entrepreneurship: jumping off a cliff and building the plane on the way down

Author NANCY LUBLIN

NANCY LUBLIN *is an innovator, advisor, investor, and entrepreneur. She has raised over $250 million in funding for not-for-profits and tech start-ups which have employed over 1500 people, engaged tens of thousands of volunteers, and impacted millions of lives. Dress for Success, DoSomething.org, Crisis Text Line, and Loris.ai have each been noted pioneers in their fields. Lublin currently advises startups and invests in new technologies. Her leadership has been recognized with many awards and articles.*

1. You founded your first non-profit organization "Dress for Success" back when you were still a student in 1996. What motivated you to start this organization?
I was miserable in law school. It was all too theoretical for me. I came home from class on a cold rainy day in February to find a check made out to me for $5,000 from the estate of my great-grandfather–who was the hard-working immigrant hero of my family. I had not earned that money. I wanted to do something to honor him. With the check in my hands in that building elevator, I had the idea for Dress for Success: I wanted to help women restart their lives the way America helped my great-grandfather restart his life here.

2. What is entrepreneurship for you and what made you create investment company Primiga?
Reid Hoffman describes entrepreneurship as jumping off a cliff and building the plane on the way down. My best friend/cousin and I started Primiga to support entrepreneurs – to be like a cousin/friend to people when they jump and build that plane.

3. As a founder who has raised over $250 million in funding for non-profit and tech start-ups, what would you advise young entrepreneurs, who seek funding?
Remember that commercial for the lottery: "You can't win if you don't play." That is a pretty good summary of seeking start-up funding.

4. The companies you have started are focused on helping people in need. What made you focus on that?
I was raised to believe that the most important thing a person can do is help other people. The people I looked up to, the books and movies I loved, the values of my religion & family, my education–every touchpoint was about eradicating inequity and fostering justice. Frankly, I was singu-

larly focused and I'm not sure I ever considered any other career.

5. You have worked on incorporating AI with helping customer service employees handle difficult conversations. How did the AI bring empathy, efficiency, and compassion to customer service?
I believe that AI has massive potential for good. Humans are imperfect. Every one of us has things we can do better. If created and deployed with sound design and equitable intention, AI can help us be the best version of our selves.

6. What did you learn from each company you started?
Dress for Success, DoSomething.org, Crisis Text Line, and Loris were each in very different fields–I learned so much from each one! I love learning new things. So, with each company I delved into trying to understand a new-to-me area.

I also learned a lot about myself. Being a CEO is different at different life stages. I was 23 when I started Dress for Success. I was new to New York, living on my own in a city I didn't know at all. During DoSomething.org I got married and had each of my children, learning to juggle working mom life. And while I was at Crisis Text Line, each of my parents had cancer.

CEO life isn't just about the high growth and changing market, it's about personal growth and the things nobody ever sees or knows.

7. Could you share with us about your leadership style? What are some of the most important do's and don'ts?
No article, list, salary, or award should ever outweigh the opinion of your children.

8. Finally, this book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact is doing the right thing when nobody's looking. All the rest is performance.

MINDSET

CHAPTER 5

The hustle playbook

Author JASON FEIFER

JASON FEIFER *is the editor in chief of Entrepreneur magazine, author of the book Build For Tomorrow, a startup advisor, and host of the podcasts: Help Wanted and Problem Solvers. He has written about business and technology for the Washington Post, Slate, New York magazine, and others.*

Want someone's help? Prove that you'll achieve your dream — with or without them.

Nobody cares about your dreams. They care about your actions.

This may sound harsh, but it must be said. I hear from too many people who are convinced by the power of their dreams, but do not realize what's actually required to reach them.

I always want to tell them: Want to achieve? Dreams don't do it. Everyone has dreams. You instead must show that, even if you don't have the experience, you have the drive — and you will bust your ass more than people with twice as much experience.

I'll give you an example.

But first, about these dreamers...

I often hear from people who aspire to big things, and their emails follow a similar format: They tell me about their background, and how they have accomplished or overcome something, and how they are now pursuing other big dreams.

One of those dreams, for example, is to write for Entrepreneur. Here's from an email that someone sent me last week:

Another big dream, I've only recently realized, is to be published. I have to start somewhere. Can you help?

That's so often how these emails end: They stress the dream, and how I can make it come true.

Now, let me be clear: I was once an aspiring writer myself, and I owe my career to the people who took a chance on

me. In turn, I have always been an enthusiastic supporter of aspiring writers. I have advised them, edited them, and published them. I have given them my time and mentorship. I love doing it, and I will continue to do it.

But you know what drives me to help aspiring writers? It's when I see how much ACTION they have already taken towards achieving their dream! They are writing for anyone who will take them. They study writing. Perhaps they study my writing. They have written something for me to consider. They have ideas, ideas, ideas. They make it clear that, with or without me, they will continue writing.

They are not waiting around for *me*.

And that is why I want to help them.

Consider the psychology of this: If you ask someone to help you, and you've done no work yourself, then you're asking them to do a lot of work for you. Nobody wants to do that! But if you've done a ton of work already, then you're like a team on its way to the championship — and everyone wants to rally behind you.

This is the pathway to success. It's how you turn strangers into fans. I learned it myself when I was a young writer with big dreams. I emailed a lot of people asking for help. I got very little of their help. Then I started dreaming of writing for the Washington Post. So, here's what I did:

The hustle playbook

First, I read the newspaper. A lot. I studied what kind of stories they were publishing, and in what sections, and where it seemed that freelancers were most welcome.

Then I came up with a story idea for the Health section, where I was seeing a lot of freelance work. I cold pitched it to a Health editor I'd never met.

That editor, Susan Morse, actually replied! (Most never did; I sent a lot of cold emails.) She asked to talk on the phone. I was so nervous. Pacing. Sweating. She asked me hard questions about the story I pitched, as well as my ability to report it. I was just 23, and had only worked at a small-town community newspaper. I had never proven myself at her level before.

At the end of that call, she told me she wasn't ready to say yes — but she wasn't ready to say no. If I wanted to do more work, she said, then she'd take a look.

So that's what I did. I interviewed maybe a dozen people. I wrote up a 3,000-word outline. I did, frankly, more work than the story itself required, and maybe even more work than anyone else who'd ever pitch this kind of story. It was all in the service of showing her that I could do the work, that I wanted to do the work, and that I'd stop at nothing until the work was done.

I wanted to make it impossible for her to say no.

She said yes.

It's how I got my first big piece. (Here's the story, published in 2004.)

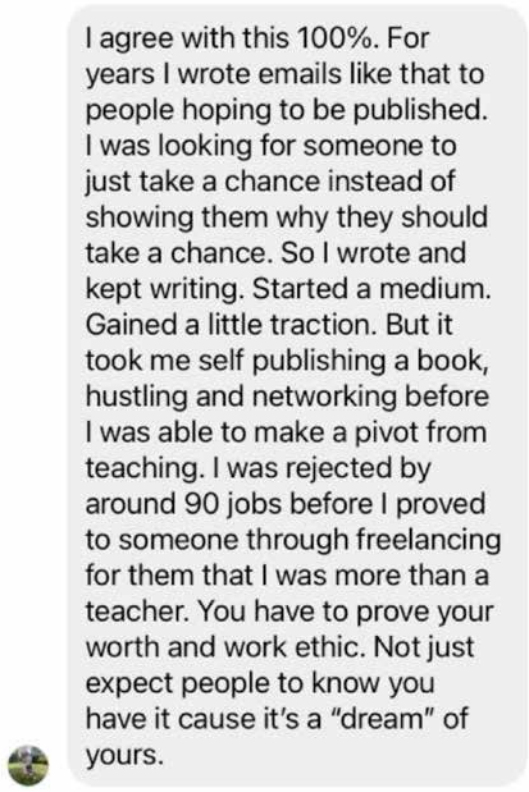
So, let's go back to it: *Nobody cares about your dreams. They care about your actions.*

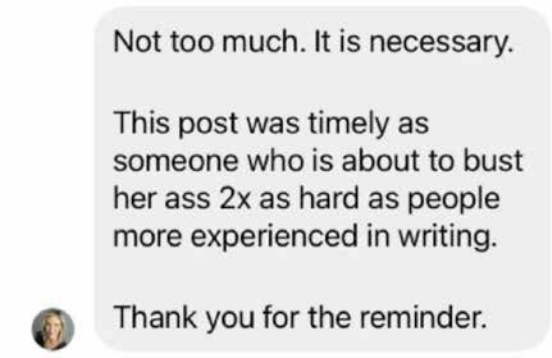
That *Washington Post editor* did not care about my dreams. Dreams are nice, but they guarantee nothing. They prove nothing. They offer nothing. But *actions*? Actions are the thing that other people can trust.

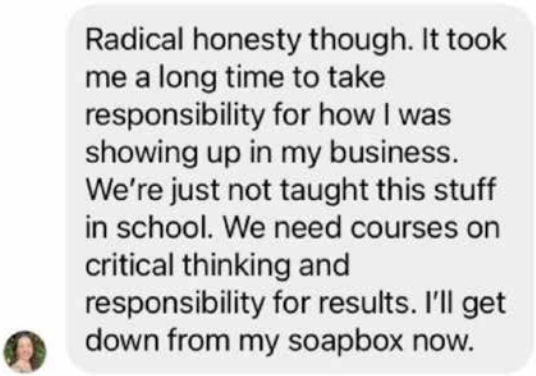
Don't just take it from me, either.

Before writing this article, I floated its core message on my Instagram. I asked my followers if it was too harsh, and dozens of people DM'd me to say they've encountered this same truth, and that others need to hear it. Here are just a few:

From Mehreen Khan:







From Natalie Sabin:
From Greg Robert:

From Dina Cataldo:
From Jesse Forte:

From Gabriela Bedoya:

And there were so many more.
Dream big, yes. But *action* even bigger.

Photo: Frank Lohmann

Do you want to get the A PLAYER's six-pack?

Author WERNER VALEUR

WERNER VALEUR *started his first business as 18-year-old back in 2001, following a number of student jobs such as mowing lawns, distributing newspapers and bottle-boy in the local wine shop.*
Today he has exited six start-ups he has been a founder of, written ten books about entrepreneurship and active blogger. He owns directly or indirectly 20 start-ups helping the founders to succeed as well.

To sum up what makes you an A player I have gathered the six key elements of an A PLAYER's orientation and conduct.

The term "A PLAYER" has been around for a while. Steve Jobs did a lot to popularize it. He's been a powerful influence in my life, and for countless others too.

An A PLAYER is a star performer. A PLAYERS are working their hearts out to do big things and make huge differences. They pour themselves into whatever work they choose, and they have a fantastic time doing it. They take ACTION. They take risks. They have lots of big ideas, and they share them. They know what it means to take responsibility for a job, and that's what they do.

A PLAYERS have more fun at their jobs than others because they take action and responsibility for creating their jobs. They don't take things for granted. They change the game or the situation if things don't work as expected. A PLAYERS don't find their dream jobs; they create them themselves. If you can dream it, you can make it. First you create your goal in your mind, and then you create it in reality. This is what separates and defines winners and losers. Winners have won before they even execute.

The only thing A PLAYERS need is a place to unleash their talent, and they will become what they are destined to be. At a traditional company, positions are usually set in stone, very difficult to change. In a startup, it's different. There's way more room for changing things and improvising and re-shaping a job. That's why startups are so keen to find A PLAYERS – they need them. A PLAYERS are perfect for startups that are creating a new space in an industry that's old and established, fixed on a set of rules they think are unchangeable.

Because of its six parts, I call it the "six-pack."
An A PLAYER is:

1. Proactive
2. Productive
3. Prioritizing
4. Passionate
5. Positive
6. Powerful

First of all, an A PLAYER is **PROACTIVE**. This may be the most distinguishing A PLAYER quality. Being proactive means being aware, observant and boldly active; it's taking care of problems before they become problems and jumping in to solve situations that call for broad knowledge, fast thinking and decisive action.

Second, an A PLAYER is **PRODUCTIVE** – turning out valuable products and services all the time. No business can afford people just warming chairs, without producing valuable products, services or support – new designs, coding, content, marketing actions, sales campaigns, customer services, administrative functions and more. No matter what your position, create. Produce. Get things done.

Third, an A PLAYER can effectively **PRIORITIZE**. If you can't prioritize, you can't succeed. To prioritize effectively, you need to know what value each task will bring the company. Once you've prioritized, you need to work on one task at a time – the most important one – never a random scramble or long list of every- thing-at-once to-dos.

Fourth, an A PLAYER is **PASSIONATE** about his job and the things he does. Follow your heart. If you're not doing that, don't look for any extraordinary results; there won't be any. Don't just chase after cash; chase the challenge, pride of accomplishment, satisfaction and happiness.

Fifth, an A PLAYER is **POSITIVE**. She is confident, certain, decisive, up-beat, energetic, helpful, open, communicative. Spread that good energy to your team and those you serve. Yes, there will be ups and downs, but a steadily positive attitude and approach will take care of the downs, too.

Sixth, an A PLAYER is **POWERFUL**. Know your tools, keep your skills sharp and expanding. Be effective in whatever you do. Believe in yourself. Take yourself, your colleagues and your mission seriously. When duty and responsibility call, stand up and deal with them as a true A PLAYER.

All together, these six elements form the foundation of your attitude, orientation and operating basis as an A PLAYER. We'll refer to them as the **A PLAYER 6-Pack**. Naturally – they're your core as an A PLAYER.

Step up to the dream

Author SANNE WEVERS

SANNE WEVERS *is a Dutch artistic gymnast. She's a two-time Olympian, having competed in 2016 Rio de Janeiro and 2020 Tokyo. Wevers is the 2016 Olympic champion on balance beam and was the first Dutch female gymnast to become an individual Olympic champion. She's known for her daring and difficult spins on balance beam. She has a twin sister, Lieke, and they were both on the 2016 and 2020 Olympic teams.*

Ever since I was a little girl, I have been looking towards the future with unlimited optimism. I am a daydreamer who quietly makes big plans. Determined, and curious as to whether these dreams can ever become reality, I begin the process by taking the first steps.

In sports, as in entrepreneurship, working with measurable goals has now become increasingly normal. I am someone who starts with a dream. Why I say dream instead of goal, is because having a dream is something magical, rather than practical. It's that one thing that makes your heart beat faster. The one thing you'd be willing to do anything and everything for. That one thing that is going to make you feel magical.

Start big, then zoom in

For me, the year before the Olympics was a very important year. I had finished second in the world in 2015 but I realized it would take a lot more effort to go from World silver medalist to Olympic gold in 2016. Despite the fact it felt impossible, I didn't want to let go of my dream of becoming an Olympic champion. So, I decided to make a plan and was willing to do everything within my power to make it a reality.

What I started with was making my dream as clear as possible. What did my dream actually entail? What was it going to take to make it happen? For example, one of the things I found out when I started looking at my dream really closely was that I needed to make my routine more difficult. Which meant I had to learn new tricks. Which in turn meant that I had to get physically stronger. Which in turn meant that... and so on. That is how you get a zoomed-in picture of everything your dream entails and what you can do today to take the first step.

Your dream requires a new version of yourself

It's painful but true. The version of yourself you are now is

good enough for the results you are achieving today, but not for achieving your dream. It was a huge eye opener once I realized that achieving my dream would require a different Sanne.

For me, this started in 2014. I looked back at everything I had achieved in my sport up to that point and wanted to find a way to go to the next level. I hadn't won a single major medal yet and wanted nothing more than to compete for the podiums. I knew I was always training hard and that the investment I was making physically was huge. But something was missing. I was searching for the Sanne who could win medals. When I first started learning and reading about personal development, self-image, beliefs, belief systems and shifting them, I began to realize that the mind has a great influence in all that we are. I realized that I needed to start training my mind and that it would take a different Sanne to win. I started answering questions about myself and creating an image of who I needed to become to be a winner.

Now let me ask you. Who do you need to be to make your dream come true? What do you need to develop? What strengths do you already have that will make the difference? What weaknesses need attention? How does that version of yourself feel? What are your characteristics and beliefs? How would you act?

Live your dream

Answering these questions allowed me to start living my dream. You might wonder what living your dream means and how you can do it. To live your dream, you need three things:

- Your dream. A very clear vision of the end result.
- An image of the version of yourself in the dream.
- A vivid imagination to start living the dream.

No less than three times a day I went through the entire Olympic final in my head. As detailed as possible. I knew what outfit I would wear, I knew how I would enter the arena, I knew where I would put my bag, I knew where the beam would be, where the judges would be, what exercise I would do, where I would do the dismount, where I would then get my score, I knew it would be a super high score and how happy I would be, I knew how it would feel to win and where I would receive the gold medal, I knew how the national anthem would sound in the arena and how magical that moment would be.

Start small and take an easy action rather than none

Author STEVEN D'SOUZA

STEVEN D'SOUZA *is a Senior Client Partner at Korn Ferry. He is an international executive educator, consultant, coach, speaker and award-winning bestselling author of five leadership and management books. Steven is a former Associate Fellow of the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford and Leadership Consultant and Executive Coach for INSEAD. He has been recognized by HR Magazine in their top 30 'Most Influential' thought leaders globally and Thinkers 50 on their Radar List for the world's top management thinkers.*

1. When you think about dreaming and executing, which one are you drawn to most?
I'm a dreamer first, then a doer. I agree with the Einstein quote that 'imagination is more important than knowledge'. It's future focused- whereas knowledge is always about the past. Dreaming allows us to innovate and create. Yet dreams, like knowledge, without action take us nowhere. They cannot be decoupled in an effective leader- it's always a case of both/and rather than either/or. I know that my strengths are- envisioning, dreaming, creating possible futures and I need to partner with others who are doers or put in the systems, structure and processes to ensure both happen.

2. What is at the basis of developing new ideas for you?
Good quality dialogue. One of my mentors said, 'good writing comes from good thinking'. The good thinking comes from high quality dialogue. The kind of conversation that is not merely seeking to exchange information but rather to be generative, spar metaphorically with each other, to go beyond what either person 'knew' beforehand and allow something fresh to emerge. These are the kinds of conversations I have that inspire me when I develop new ideas.

I also like to look for 'gaps' as opportunities for new ideas. For example, when I used to hear in the media continuously that there was a lack of positive role models for young people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the U.K. I heard the persistent complaint as a gap- I asked myself what can I do to close this gap? - and I saw it as an opportunity into which I could step and serve through storytelling. I wrote my first book 'Made in Britain' as a resource for schools to highlight such role models and it was sponsored free for schools throughout the U.K.

3. As a professional with many years of experience, if you could, would you change something in your career?
I would have persisted longer and stayed with things be-

yond the changes in my motivation. It takes time for mastery and some things are worth taking the time for. Take playing the violin for example. I enjoyed learning it from nine years old but aged eleven in secondary school music lessons competed with playing football with my classmates in break times. I didn't have the foresight to think beyond the immediate pleasure and short term to the power of consistent practice over time.

If you're like me you have started many things and then when your motivation went, stopped them. I've learned motivation is fickle and that it's not necessarily talent that succeeds, it's deliberate consistent practice and being committed to something over time. This applies to new skill acquisition, as it does to our health and fitness and business success. The value results from consistent progress rather than perfection.

4. How can one make their dreams reality, any advice from your experience?

Try to do small things to make your dreams real. Firstly, make a symbol of it. For example, for my first book when it was only an idea, I created a mock book cover and had it above my desk to show me that it could be a reality. Secondly, share your idea with others who are your cheer leaders and believe that you can do it.

Obviously, you need people that can give you critical feedback and help you avoid delusional projects, but hearing critical voices too early can hamper the momentum you need to start. It's easier to get started than refine rather than procrastinate and not begin as conditions are not perfect. No author writes a perfect first draft! Start small and take an easy action rather than none. E.g., I would commit to writing only a few sentences. When done then stop. This would build energy for further action. Lastly, find a partner, a co-conspirator so you can co-create- someone who balances your skills and can hold you accountable and provide mutual support. The poet Machado writes 'Traveler, there is no path, the path is made by walking' yet none of us really travels far alone, we need a team and companions to achieve our goals and make the journey worthwhile.

5. Have you had any role models or big influencers in your professional life, and what did you learn from them?

My main mentor is a Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Joseph Pistrui, PhD at IE Business School in Madrid. He gave me the opportunity to speak to his MBA's on a Venture Lab day even though I didn't have an MBA and helped me transition from corporate life to a career in Executive Education.

What I've learned from him is that I can also play that role for others. The world needs people who can spot, nurture and develop talent in others. Whether encouraging words, making a meaningful connection, or creating an opportunity, there's great satisfaction in developing others and helping others fulfill their potential. Who has been that person for you and could you be that person for?

6. What mental attitudes are you using in your daily work?

a) Lead with Curiosity.
b) Look for the 'other side'- what's missing, what would the opposite be to the situation and can I give voice to that?
c) Focus on being present and on an empathic generative conversation- inquiry rather than advocacy.

7. Are there any technologies that will change the field of Leadership Development?

We are seeing the use of more Learning Technologies enabling connection, collaboration and learning e.g., VR, AI and the Metaverse and using tech to provide learning 'nudges' for behavior change. Paradoxically at the same time as technology grows there is a greater demand for more development in nature, being away from technology! The global pandemic led to a huge rise in virtual delivery but I'm noticing there is also a great desire for us to connect person to person again, where possible, for true transformational and embodied leadership development to take place.

8. What are the fundamentals of building a successful and high-performing team?

Above all recognize that it will take continual work- think of a great team as a journey and not a destination to arrive at. A great team will always evolve - perform and transform. To be high-performing it must always attend to its development rather than get caught up in the day to day of managing the present that it has no time to learn and evolve to meet future challenges. A simple tip is, ensure regular development days, at least quarterly, that you attend specifically to the team's development- exploring shared purpose, team processes e.g., ways of working, decision making strategy. It's often useful to use a third party to help the team have difficult conversations and to surface hidden or stuck dynamics that may be holding the team back.

9. Do you share your business doubts and do you seek support?

Yes, I do. Doubt can be healthy and a clue for further inquiry rather than something which needs to be eliminated. The age of the 'heroic' all-knowing leader is over. I think we know that in the complex world we live in, no one individual has all the answers and that we need the support of an ecosystem to be effective.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

Impact is being touched, moved and inspired to be and do something different- that changes our results and the world. It touches the head, heart, hands and gut and its effect can be felt in storytelling as much as it can be in data.

Dreaming allows us to innovate and create. Yet dreams, like knowledge, without action take us nowhere. They cannot be decoupled in an effective leader – it's always a case of both/and rather than either/or.

STEVEN D'SOUZA
Senior Client Partner at Korn Ferry

No one can ever be a better you than you are

Author APRIL RINNE

World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and ranked one of the "50 Leading Female Futurists" in the world by Forbes, **APRIL RINNE** *is a change navigator: she helps individuals and organizations rethink and reshape their relationship with change, uncertainty, and a world in flux. She's a trusted advisor, speaker, investor, adventurer (100+ countries), insatiable handstander, and author of Flux: 8 Superpowers for Thriving in Constant Change*

1. You are the author of FLUX, which is also your first book. What were the considerations around writing it and what problems are you trying to solve?

I've been fascinated by — and increasingly concerned about — humans' relationship to change for almost as long as I can remember. *Flux* has been nearly 30 years in the making. That may make me sound old, but it is honestly my life's work.

Change is messy: We love changes we can control, or at least opt into. We really struggle with changes that blindside us or go against our "plans." And yet, there are far more changes we can't control ahead. Overall, we are woefully prepared for the future. That is the problem I am trying to not so much "solve" — because it is a lifelong quest for every person — but rather, to help individuals and organizations *improve*. **I firmly believe that reshaping our relationship with change and uncertainty will be THE skill that defines the 21st century and beyond.**

I wrote *Flux* with three perspectives: as a futurist; as a global citizen; and as a human being who has personally experienced massive flux. In retrospect, the original seed of *Flux* was planted when I was 20 years old, and both of my parents died in a car accident. In an instant, my life flipped upside down and the future I thought I was going to have disappeared. Many years later, I'm grateful and humbled to help others who may feel the same — for all kinds of reasons.

2. What is the concept behind a FLUX mindset? And who can adopt it?

A *Flux* Mindset is the state of mind that sees all change — "good" *and* "bad" changes, expected *and* unexpected changes, and especially the difficult stuff, the stuff we didn't see coming or just wish could go away — it's the ability to see *all* of it as an opportunity to learn, grow, and improve.

3. In the book, you are talking about eight superpowers for thriving in a world of constant change. Could you share those superpowers with us?
Below is a graph illustrating the 8 superpowers of Flux Mindset.

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4. You were ranked one of the "50 Leading Female Futurists" in the world by Forbes. What are the predictions and possibilities about the future that you mostly explore?
First — and I love starting with this, because it often stops people in their tracks —remember: "The" future does not exist. (Only the present does.) Moreover, there is no one "future," but rather many different possible futures… that we are all contributing to every day.

When you realize this, there are more possibilities than one can count — including futures beyond our wildest dreams.

Most futurists would agree that it's not about "predicting" the future. Predictions are fraught, inherently biased (because we all see the world through our own unique lens), and often not really that helpful. A far better use of time and resources, in my opinion, is to (1) map out a selection of *possible* futures and (2) prepare as best as you can for each of them.

That said, I do believe that our future will likely be full of more change, uncertainty, and flux. Humans will be capable of ever-more inspiration *and* destruction. We will unite and divide. The question is: Can we learn to be comfortable with — and embrace — these paradoxes and ambiguities?

5. In an article for Harvard Business School, you discuss the importance of a "career portfolio", what is that and how does it differ from a "career path"?
For the past several decades, if not longer, we've been taught that careers should look like ladders to climb or paths to pursue to ever-higher plateaus. Our professional lives are supposed to be linear, proceeding as follows: Study hard - Get good grades - Get a good job - Climb the ladder - Retire.

There's nothing wrong with career paths or ladders per se. But they're increasingly out of sync with both today's reality and the future of work. Career ladders are tilting; career paths are constraining. A lot of people want something different. They do *not* want to be on a ladder, especially a ladder that someone else built! At the same time, new career trajectories are opening up. There have never been so many ways to earn income, create a meaningful career, and contribute to the world.

Rather than a ladder to climb, the career *shape* of the future looks like a portfolio to curate, as an artist or investor would, and the future of work is the era of career portfolios.

Your portfolio is your unique combination of everything you can do. It is far more than your resume or CV. Sure, it includes what's on your resume, but it also includes many skills, capabilities, and experiences that – importantly – are not on your resume but often drive everything else! For example, parenting skills aren't typically included on one's resume (in fact, they may be actively hidden). But they can be at the heart of a portfolio — and celebrated as some of the best skills for everything from conflict resolution to time management!

What's more, everyone, including you, dear reader — already has a portfolio, even if you don't realize it. All kinds of new opportunities open up when you do.

6. You have travelled to more than 100 countries; you even had a period of your life where you had no permanent address. What made you pursue this way of living and most importantly, what did you learn and adopt from it in your work?

I've had an adventurous streak, and a love of travel my entire life. I can thank my father for planting the earliest seeds of this. He was a cultural geographer and taught me to celebrate diversity of all kinds. Even as a toddler, he reminded me almost daily that the more different someone is from you, the more interesting they are to get to know — and the more there is to learn!

So, I can't remember a time in my life in which I didn't want an international career or didn't want to travel. It took time and hard work to open those doors, but once I was old enough to venture on my own, I went as far as I could.

Around the same time, when I was 20 years old, both my dad and my mom died in a car accident.

This experience had a profound effect on my career (and of course, on my life). I learned first-hand how fragile and uncertain life is. This made me want to explore, connect with others, and celebrate our shared humanity as much as I could. My guiding question became: *If I were to die tomorrow, what would the world — not my ego or social media, but the world — need me to do today?*

This led me to make a series of atypical and non-traditional choices. I wasn't interested in fancy titles or making a bunch of money. Those things seemed frivolous and self-centered. Rather, I wanted to build bridges between humans and opportunity, break down stigmas and stereotypes, and help design a more inclusive and sustainable world. These goals continue to guide me today — and in a world in flux!

7. You are a successful author and keynote speaker fighting to make a difference. Do you have any advice for others, who want to follow your steps?

My number one piece of advice is: Be authentic. Don't follow my steps; take your own. Remember: You'll never succeed trying to be someone else. But *no one* can ever be a better *you* than you are.

8. This book is all about IMPACT. What is impact to you?

The word "impact" on its own leaves much to the imagination. The dictionary simply defines impact as "a forceful contact" or "a significant or major effect." It doesn't say if that effect is good or bad, helpful, or harmful, or anything else for that matter. War, poverty, natural disasters, and the climate crisis all have impact, right?

So, we have to go beyond the single word "impact" and dig deeper. From where I stand, impact is all about intention. *What kind of impact?* What kind of future are you contributing to, for what purpose, and who benefits?

My belief is that it is our individual and collective responsibility to have and create positive impact: To act, speak, create, and lead in ways that have a lasting, generative effect on future generations.

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In a world of dogmatic specialists, it's often the generalist who ends up running the show

Author TIM FERRISS

TIM FERRISS *has been listed as one of Fast Company's "Most Innovative Business People." He is an early-stage technology investor/advisor (Uber, Facebook, Shopify, Duolingo, Alibaba, and 50+ others) and the author of five #1 New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestsellers, including The 4-Hour Workweek and Tools of Titans. The Observer and other media have called Tim "the Oprah of audio" due to the influence of The Tim Ferriss Show podcast, which has now exceeded 800 million downloads.*

Are the days of Da Vinci dead? Is it possible to, at once, be a world-class painter, engineer, scientist, and more?

"No way. Those times are long gone. Nothing was discovered then. Now the best you can do is pick your field and master it."

The devout specialist is fond of labeling the impetuous learner - Da Vinci and Ben Franklin being just two forgotten examples — "jack of all trades, master of none". The chorus unites: In the modern world, it is he who specializes who survives and thrives. There is no place for Renaissance men or women. Starry-eyed amateurs.

Is it true? I don't think so. Here are the top five reasons why being a "jack of all trades", what I prefer to call a "generalist", is making a comeback:

5) "Jack of all trades, master of none" is an artificial pairing.

It is entirely possible to be a jack of all trades, master of many. How? Specialists overestimate the time needed to "master" a skill and confuse "master" with "perfect."

Generalists recognize that the 80/20 principle applies to skills: 20% of a language's vocabulary will enable you to communicate and understand at least 80%, 20% of a dance like tango (lead and footwork) separates the novice from the pro, 20% of the moves in a sport account for 80% of the scoring, etc. Is this settling for mediocre?

Not at all. Generalists take the condensed study up to, but not beyond, the point of rapidly diminishing returns. There is perhaps a 5% comprehension difference between the focused generalist who studies Japanese systematically

for 2 years vs. the specialist who studies Japanese for 10 with the lack of urgency typical of those who claim that something "takes a lifetime to learn." Hogwash. Based on my experience and research, it is possible to become world-class in almost any skill within one year.

4) In a world of dogmatic specialists, it's often the generalist who ends up running the show.
Is the CEO a better accountant than the CFO or CPA? Was Steve Jobs a better programmer than top coders at Apple? No, but he had a broad range of skills and saw the unseen interconnectedness. As technology becomes a commodity with the democratization of information, it's the big-picture generalists who will predict, innovate, and rise to power fastest. There is a reason military "generals" are called such.

3) Boredom is failure.
In a first-world economy where we have the physical necessities covered with even low-class income, Maslow's hierarchy of needs drives us to need more for any measure of comparative "success." Lack of intellectual stimulation, not superlative material wealth, is what drives us to depression and emotional bankruptcy. Generalizing and experimenting prevents this, while over-specialization guarantees it.

2) Diversity of intellectual playgrounds breeds confidence instead of fear of the unknown.
It also breeds empathy with the broadest range of human conditions and appreciation of the broadest range of human accomplishments. The alternative is the defensive xenophobia and smugness uniquely common to those whose identities are defined by their job title or single skill, which they pursue out of obligation and not enjoyment.

1) It's more fun, in the most serious existential sense.
The jack of all trades maximizes his number of peak experiences in life and learns to enjoy the pursuit of excellence unrelated to material gain, all while finding the few things he is truly uniquely suited to dominate.

The specialist who imprisons himself in self-inflicted one-dimensionality — pursuing and impossible perfection — spends decades stagnant or making imperceptible incremental improvements while the curious generalist consistently measures improvement in quantum leaps. It is only the latter who enjoys the process of pursuing excellence.

Don't put on experiential blinders in the name of specializing. It's both unnecessary and crippling. Those who label you a "jack of all trades, master of none" are seldom satisfied with themselves.

Why take their advice?

Here is a description of the incredible Alfred Lee Loomis, a generalist of the highest order who changed the course of World War II with his private science experiments, here taken from the incredible portrait of his life, Tuxedo Park:

Loomis did not conform to the conventional measure of a great scientist. He was too complex to categorize — financier, philanthropist, society figure, physicist, inventor, amateur, dilettante — a contradiction in terms.

Be too complex to categorize.

Look far and wide. There are worlds to conquer.

“I want a promotion.”

Author STEPHEN SHEDLETZKY

STEPHEN “SHED” SHEDLETZKY *helps leaders listen to and nurture the voice of others. A thought-leader on psychological safety and sought-after speaker, executive coach, and advisor, Shed has led hundreds of keynote presentations, workshops, and leadership development programs around the world. He is the author of Speak-up Culture: When Leaders Truly Listen, People Step Up (2023). He lives in Toronto with his wife and two young kiddos.*

I was sharing lunch and a conversation at a quiet outdoor patio with a vice president of marketing for an 8-year-old startup software company turned scale-up. Edward, the VP, leaned in. As most of my professional conversations go, we were talking about leadership and organizational culture. From Edward’s body language and facial expression, I suspected he wanted to share a – *get a load of this* – story. He started to describe a junior employee – a recent new grad who, in a very *George Costanza-esque* way, seemingly barged into his office demanding a promotion. Well, perhaps it wasn’t that aggressive, but here is what Ed shared with me.

A new grad – whose name I never found out, so we will be formally calling them “New Grad” – knocked on Edward’s office door one morning. The New Grad had been at the company for 6-months. Edward knew of him and his work, but didn’t know him too well. There was one skip level between him as VP and this new hire. Ed knew from his direct report that this New Grad had potential but wasn’t really *applying* himself quite yet.

Back in Edward’s office, the New Grad declared, “I have more strategic strengths than my job enables me to use. I’m bored. I want to make a greater impact. I’m better than this. I’m smarter than this. I want a promotion.”

Edward collected himself and responded, “I have every belief that you are as strategic as you say, however, I have no evidence to prove it. I can’t go around handing out promotions based on potential. We must promote people based upon merit, their performance, and their behavior. You have to earn it.”

Edward and this New Grad went on to talk about their role. This New Grad was responsible for ensuring that the TV monitors around the office had up to date information – weather, news, time, date, appropriate internal messages welcoming guests to the office and recognizing employee birthdays and other milestones. Apparently, the current process was entirely manual and the job to populate these

screens with daily, up-to-date information constituted a full-time role. I know, it does sound quite a bit mundane and repetitive.

Ed challenged the New Grad. "You say you're strategic, but what have you done to improve the operation of your current role?"

The stumped face on the New Grad was enough of an answer. The Karate Kid Training had officially commenced.

"Let's give you three months," Edward continued. "Show us your strategic strengths in action. What can you do to make your current role more efficient and effective? If you really want to be promoted here, earn it. Make the impact you want to and know you can make."

Cue "Eye of the Tiger" montage. Our New Grad now becomes the hero in our story.

Not only did the New Grad improve his role, he made it obsolete.

Wait. What?!

The New Grad built a system that took his previous manually laborious role and completely automated it. What was a full-time role now took only a few hours of maintenance every month. Pretty strategic, huh?

When his transformation was complete at the three-month mark, our New Grad came back to Ed's office door again.

"I did it," he smirked.

The New Grad shared his finished product with Ed and his manager. They were impressed. A promotion was deserved. Edward acknowledged the New Grad's effort, courage, and success. Fortunately, there was a more strategic role within product development for them to step into.
We can end this story with pride, knowing our New Grad has officially morphed into a junior employee.

So, what is there to learn here?

- **Define "impact."** We often say – as entrepreneurs, leaders, and individuals – that we want to make a greater impact. But what does that actually mean? It's not enough to say "I want to make an impact." It serves us to have a clearer sense of the type of impact we intend to make. So, what's the difference we wish to make? Define it. Make it happen.

- **Be worth the risk.** Our success - whether as an individual contributor, entrepreneur or anything else in between or beyond - is in direct correlation with others wanting to take a risk on us. Being offered a chance to contribute to a special project, earning a promotion, or gaining that first customer or employee – all of these require other people choosing to take the risk of trusting us. So, it's worthwhile concerning ourselves with this question: *what are the conditions we're creating to make it as easy as possible for others to take a risk on us?*

- **Earn it.** One of the greatest ways to earn a promotion or that next opportunity is to behave and perform as if you're already in that next role. Our beloved New Grad did it! They earned the promotion. But what would have happened if they worked themselves out of a job and no promotion was available to them? At the very least they had an epic and true tale of how they so successfully made their own role obsolete. Our New Grad displayed the behavior that will make them successful wherever they may venture.

So, the next time you, a direct report, or a mentee has some sort of opportunity to seize, you have the recipe: define the impact, be worth the risk, and earn it.

Sales is a life skill that we all need to develop

Author CIAN MCLOUGHLIN

CIAN MCLOUGHLIN *is a SaaS Start-up Founder, Best-selling Author, Award winning blogger and Top 50 global keynote speaker. He was selected as a LinkedIn Top Voice in 2022 and is a regular sales and marketing commentator in the mainstream media.*

I get asked this question all the time, by customers, business acquaintances, even friends and family. There's an underlying assumption in the question that certain people are simply born salesmen and women; arriving into this world with an impeccable set of communication skills, a high EQ to match their high IQ and an unquenchable thirst to close, close, close!

When I drill down on the question, I'm often confronted with a lengthy list of doubts and fears. These 'non-salespeople' simply can't understand how a salesperson can continue each day, in the face of almost insurmountable opposition, without losing their energy, enthusiasm and the will to live! The thought of having to make cold-calls, persuade, influence and cajole strangers and deal with constant rejection is enough to make the vast majority of people run for the hills.

The unfortunate reality is that sales is no longer simply a career path, it's a life skill that we all need to develop. Whether you are an entrepreneur, a restauranteur or a teacher in a classroom, the ability to influence, engage and ultimately convince your audience to take action is a critical skill-set to master.

I have a strong sense that many people's fear of selling and all things sales related, stems less from a fear of the simple act of making a sale and more from their concerns about the perception of others.

- Won't I lose credibility if I appear too 'salesy'?
- Surely my product or service should sell itself?
- I'm happy to talk about what I do, but someone else needs to close the sale…

Let's be honest, the sales profession has gotten a pretty bad reputation over the years and often for good reason. The mental image most of us have of salespeople is manipula-

tive, pushy and untrustworthy. Is it any wonder then that so many people feel uncomfortable with the thought of selling or being seen as a sales person?

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

It Starts with Trust: Instead of focusing your efforts on selling, focus on becoming trustworthy, knowledgeable, helpful and engaged in the eyes of your customer. The old sales cliché that '*people buy from people*' still holds true, so embrace that as your mantra and aim for trusted advisor status.

Be Authentic: People want to do business with those who have experienced life, maybe even picked up a few bumps and bruises along the way and come out ahead despite these challenges. Don't be afraid to share a little of yourself and your experiences, look for areas of commonality and mutual interest. Don't slip into 'sales mode' and leave your personality behind.

Be an active listener: Prepare well, ask intelligent questions, really listen to and process the answers you're getting back. There's an old sales truism that customers will teach you how to sell to them if you just listen. They'll tell you what's annoys and frustrates them, what issues they have experienced with past products, they'll often tell you exactly what's required to win their business.

Have the Heart of a Teacher: When you place your focus on educating your prospect rather than selling to them, the impact of what you say will increase exponentially and you won't feel any of that icky 'salesy-ness'. Your perceived credibility and authority in the eyes of your customer has a huge bearing on their likelihood to want to do business with you.

Treat Them Like A Customer: This one might sound counter-intuitive, but as soon as they first engage with you, prospective customers are wondering what you would be like to work with. If you start treating them like a customer from the start, helping, supporting, educating and advising them, you give them an immediate sense of what it might be like to work with you and your business.

The sales profession can be a tough, stressful and uncompromising place to work, but it can also be a creative, fulfilling and rewarding environment in which to build a career. For those of you who believe you just can't sell, my advice would be to dip your toe in the water, you may find it's not as cold as you thought…

Accelerating gender equity

Author SHARON PEAKE

SHARON PEAKE *is the Founder and CEO of Shape Talent, the gender equity experts for organisations who are serious about gender equity. She is a chartered psychologist and certified coach and prior to starting her business held senior leadership roles in two global business. Born in Australia, Sharon now lives in the UK, and her roles have given her experience working across six continents, delivering work in locations as diverse as Colombia, Romania, India, Uganda, New York, and Hong Kong.*

1. What are the steps one should take to become a doer rather than dreamer?

Take a first step. It may not be perfect, but action moves you forward. And you learn from every action you take, whether you enjoyed it or not, and whether it was successful or not.

Be prepared to change track. When I started out, my business proposition was completely different to where I am now. What started as a B2C coaching business for women turned into a B2B gender equity consulting business.

Reach out to others for support – I have always loved the feeling of collaboration and building something with others. Even when I started out working by myself, I found ways to collaborate with others – networking and sharing ideas with other entrepreneurs, particularly women entrepreneurs – it helped motivate me and make me feel less alone. But be selective in whose opinion you seek. Not everyone will share your vision or be able to support you in a way that is helpful to you. My most helpful and inspiring sources of support have been several women entrepreneur networks that I've joined.

2. As an entrepreneur, what helps you to structure your work?

a) **A To Do list focusing on the 3 most important things to achieve in a week** – as an entrepreneur often your time is pulled in so many different directions. I have learnt to be disciplined in identifying the 3 'must do' things every week that help me keep focused on the big things, rather than the 'noise'.

b) **A clear goal setting process.** We have implemented a simple but powerful OKR (Objectives & Key Results) goal setting process across the team. It starts with

being clear on the business strategy. From there we identify the 'vital breakthroughs' that will help us deliver against this strategy in the current financial year. These are the objectives (O). Then we identify the Key Result areas (KR) that will help us deliver these objectives. We agree as a team who will be accountable and responsible for each KR and how these will be measured. This means each person in the team has clearly articulated goals. We then reference these goals in our 1:1 and team meetings. Since implementing this the feedback from the team has been extremely positive.

c) **Project management tool** – a system to help track client projects. This has been a game changer as it gives clear visibility as to where our resources are deployed at any given time, where we have capacity and where we don't.

d) **Reporting tool** – we are implementing an automated reporting tool that presents a dashboard of key financial and non-financial metrics on demand. This allows me to literally press a button and see where we're on track and where we need a more attention.

3. What are your biggest drivers, what keeps you going every day?

I've always been very self-motivated, driven and independent. I'm driven by a genuine desire to make the world a better place for everyone, by enabling more women to rise to the top. The data is very clear that gender balanced leadership teams make better decisions and have better business outcomes. I am excited also by the ripple effect of our work. When we recognise and address the invisible barriers to women's progress in business, our actions reverberate in our communities and in society generally. These actions accelerate gender equality and create a better world for our daughters and their daughters.

Currently, the World Economic Forum estimate that we are 131 years off achieving gender parity globally, at the current rates of change. But it doesn't need to take this long. There are things that individuals, organisations and society can do that will significantly speed up progress. It's about knowing what to focus on, which is where Shape Talent comes in. I have a 4yo daughter and I desperately want her to grow up in a world where her gender doesn't disadvantage her. So, I have a personal motivation for accelerating the pace of change. She is my motivation.

4. How do you interpret being successful?

For me it is partly about maximizing my potential and feeling that I am achieving the very best I can, but more importantly it is about having a positive impact around me. On my team, our clients, and the world at large.

The more traditional measures of success – such as business revenues and profits, are great, but more important to me is whether we are helping our clients make a difference in dismantling the barriers to women's progression. I get a real buzz when a client talks excitedly about the difference our work has made in their organisation, or when the women on our women's development programmes go on to get promoted.

It is also really important to me that my team is engaged and motivated and has a sense of development and purpose.

5. Are You a Big Picture Thinker or Detail-Oriented?

I am definitely more a big picture person. I love driving the business strategy and making decisions for the medium to

long term. Ours is a purpose driven business which exists to help make the world a better place, by closing the gender gap and enabling more women to reach positions of leadership in organisations. This is our north star and I look at every potential product and service through this lens: if it doesn't help accelerate gender equity then we don't do it.

However, over my career I have also learnt to be very good at the detail. As an entrepreneur you can't really get away from it – especially in the early days which you are a jack-of-all-trades, performing most or all of the roles. You have to be on top of the detail – especially the finances and the legal side. At least until you can afford to outsource or delegate the things you're not particularly good at, to others.

6. When you founded Shape Talent, what helped you build a great team?

The first tip is to be clear on the sort of culture you're trying to build so you can hire people who have similar values and aspirations. I sat down and wrote down the values that were important to me in the business I was building – and these obviously reflect, to a degree, who I am as a person.

The second tip - hire well. Be really thorough in your recruitment process – don't ever settle for second best. Even when you're struggling to fill a role it is always better to restart the recruitment process than to fill a role with someone who doesn't wow you. I always involve some of the team in the recruitment process too.

The third tip – hire for diversity. Our business is all about inclusion and diversity, so you won't be surprised to hear me say this, but a diverse mix of experiences and backgrounds really does make for better decisions and better outcomes. It is obviously also really important to ensure the company culture is completely inclusive to get the best from a diverse team.

The fourth tip – onboard the team well. So many people make the mistake of hiring well and then let themselves down by leaving the new starter to fend for themselves. I always have an onboarding plan for new starters, allocating a buddy can be helpful too.

The fifth tip - Communicate well. Our team is fully virtual, and always has been, so finding ways of communicating when there are no natural 'water cooler' moments is really key. It's partly figuring out what style of communication suits each team member. As a general rule it is very hard to overcommunicate, but very easy to under-communicate, so always best to say more than less.

7. How did you push through your biggest business doubts?

I am tenacious! If I think something is a good idea or worth pursuing, I won't be deterred by the first set back. I'll regroup, reconsider and find other ways to pursue it. I will learn from my mistakes, but if I think the cause is worth pursuing, I will do what I can to move mountains to achieve this.

In the early days I was fairly cautious, especially financially, for example only hiring people when I knew I had a good financial safety net. I never want to be in the position where I take someone on and then later realise, I can't afford to keep them. However, over time I've learned to back myself more and to hire before I need the person.

I think the key to this is realising that no-one else knows the business as well as you do. You need to back yourself as no one else will ever be as invested in making the business a success as you will.

8. How has your business changed? Are you still following the same approach?

In the early days I focused on enabling gender equality through individual coaching. Working with women to build their confidence and navigate tricky career junctures. I was passionate about this and enjoyed the work. But soon I realized that while I was having a powerful impact individually, it wasn't going to materially impact the current state of gender equality. So, I took the hard decision to move away from that work and to focus on working with large corporates to dismantle the systemic barriers that are preventing women from being equally represented in positions of power.

This has been a complete shift in strategy from a B2C approach to an entirely B2B approach. While we do some individual coaching, it is no longer the leading service we offer. This move to a B2B business model has also allowed me to significantly grow the business as the projects are larger and more sustainable – for both us and our clients.

9. What are you focused on currently at Shape Talent?
Commercial partnerships – I am exploring a couple of ways to partner with founders in adjacent sectors to create new and innovative products that we don't have the technology, funding or capability to create on our own. With one potential collaboration, we will be able to co-create a product that is brand new, where we are both bringing valuable expertise to the party. This will enable us to leverage each other's brand and network for magnified impact.

Streamlined and efficient back-office operations. This is really important as the business grows, to ensure we have clear and simple SOPs (standard operating procedures). This consistency of approach is also saving us considerable time.

Growing the team – we are building out the team commensurate with our client and revenue growth. This means constantly having one eye on recruitment and onboarding processes to ensure we are keeping firm to our values and recruiting people who will help to positively shape and drive our business as it continues to expand.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
For me, impact is all about leaving people in a better place, for having worked with us. Sometimes this impact is large and widespread, like an organisation overhauling their approach to recruitment to ensure fairer, more equitable outcomes for years to come. And sometimes it is a profound change at an individual level. Like a woman achieving her dream job.

Focus means saying no to things

Author HENRIK FABRIN

HENRIK FABRIN *is the CEO & Co-founder of Certainly. He is a self-taught entrepreneur with one successful exit. Certainly, he is still building. Henrik is motivated by working with inspired people for a common goal. He is a tech nerd and has worked in ecommerce tech for +10 years building technology that accelerates growth for companies. Henrik regularly keynotes nationally and internationally and is an advisor on AI and Digitalization.*

1. Where do you seek inspiration?
Suppose I am working on a particular problem or idea. In that case, I try to look at what others in my industry have done and get inspiration from sampling across different sectors or approaches to solving a particular problem. More often than not, you find inspiration in how someone in a very different industry than yours has tackled a problem or come up with novel ideas.

2. What is the advice you give to dreaming entrepreneurs?
I get such questions from time to time, "should I stop dreaming about becoming an entrepreneur and actually do it?". "Should I jump at this new opportunity that's in front of me?" I always share two concepts that work for me:

1) One question I try to ask myself before making a significant decision is, "what is the worst that can happen, and can I live with that?" If the answer is yes, I do it.

2) Be like Nike - Just do it.

3. How are AI and Machine Learning going to change Digital Commerce?
AI and Machine Learning will fundamentally change the industry I work in. Digital commerce will be based on conversations and not clicks. The first version of the commercial web, the one we know today, is made up of webshops merely being simple product catalogs that you browse on your own. In the new version emerging via technologies like Conversational AI, you are having a conversation with an AI-driven digital salesperson that helps you find exactly what you are looking for.

4. You have gone from being horizontal/general-purpose to vertical and focused on ecommerce only. Can you elaborate?
Being general-purpose was great for early traction for us. Our type of technology (Conversational AI) was new to

most, so we launched as a general-purpose platform to gather market feedback and attract an early customer base. As we figured out what we believed was the best bet, we focused on serving online merchants, which is the vertical we work on dominating today.

5. With experience, comes realization. Looking back at your career, would you change anything?
Oh boy, a bunch of things! One thing would be to focus less on improving my base level across many skills, but focusing faster on things that I enjoy doing and that motivate me.

Also, the effect of working with clever, kind, and motivated people is underestimated unless you have tried it, so I would recommend anyone to surround themselves with the smartest and most thoughtful people they can find.
I would probably also choose to focus more. You can get easily distracted when new opportunities arise, but focus and discipline help you move much faster. Focus means saying no to things. Time is our absolute most scarce resource so think about what and who you spend it on.

6. What drives your motivation?
One of my main motivational drivers is figuring out how systems and people work. Systems as in industries, cultures, economies, disciplines, etc. The world we have created, why it works as it does, and the different factors that make it change. As for people, it is understanding how we think, operate, interact with and perceive others.

On a more day-to-day basis, my work motivation comes from seeing customers get value out of our product and see their business do better. Being part of taking something from an idea to bits and seeing it provide actual value to other companies is so motivating.

I am also very motivated by winning as a team; winning new customers and the improvements we make in areas where we are weak, are worth celebrating. The motivation comes from celebrating the milestones as well as the big wins.

7. Is growth and winning the definition of success for you?
Many studies of people on their deathbeds show that they always regret not spending more time with people who really matter to them and not taking those 1-2-3 big chances in life.

Success to me in a business context would be growth and winning, which is very output focused. Personally, I think feeling successful is more about connecting with your loved ones, understanding yourself better, doing your best, and evolving how you treat yourself and interact with others.
Wealth can also give you a sense of success, but it seems to not really matter that much once you have it, as opposed to being loved and feeling connected with people.

8. Can you share with us some of the biggest influencers of your career?
Oh, but there are many. Friends, my dad, authors I have read, people I have listened to. I see myself as having gotten a Ph.D. from doing real-life business and absorbing many books, podcasts, etc. Reading or listening to people who I thought had interesting things to say about a topic I was looking to understand better. Hamilton Helmer and Clay Christensen are a few whose work I have thought about extensively.

9. How can you use your company culture to build a great team?
Be very deliberate about your company culture. Use it as an instrument to attract the people who are a great fit and repel those who are not.

Freedom of ideas but not freedom of implementation: Make sure everyone feels empowered to suggest ideas, but make sure your strategy and focus guide which ones are implemented.

Freedom with responsibility: Self-driven and motivated people want an enormous sense of autonomy. You can give them that if they know what they are responsible for.

In my experience, helping people feel safe and motivated comes from providing clarity in why we are doing what we are doing, showing predictability in that the direction doesn't change even in a volatile world, and making mistakes is ok. Giving a sense of ownership makes it clear how their work contributes to the overarching goals.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

If there is one thing that I wish for our son to deeply understand is that the world is how you make it. Our world is made from all the things, concepts, etc., that we have created. That means he can choose to change it, create it, and make an impact. His world is how he makes it.

From my own life, I am proud of the impact I have made on people who listen to the music I have been part of and the thousands of companies using products I have helped create, from ideas to bits.

Impact to me is also the impact you directly have on other people's lives. In a work context, I am proud of how my companies have helped colleagues. Seeing them buy homes, establish a family, and move forward in their careers really impacts me.

Freedom of ideas but not freedom of implementation: Make sure everyone feels empowered to suggest ideas, but make sure your strategy and focus guide which ones are implemented.

HENRIK FABRIN
CEO & Co-founder at Certainly

The "Jiu Jitsu" of innovation

Author AMIT ELISHA

AMIT ELISHA *is the Founding SVP of Product & GM of Keystone at Outbrain. As a founding team member, he created the product and business model that invented the multi-billion dollar Native Advertising industry in the open web. Amit has been leading global product teams for the past 20 years – in NYC and Tel-Aviv. Amit resides with his wife, three children and two cats in Cresskill, NJ.*

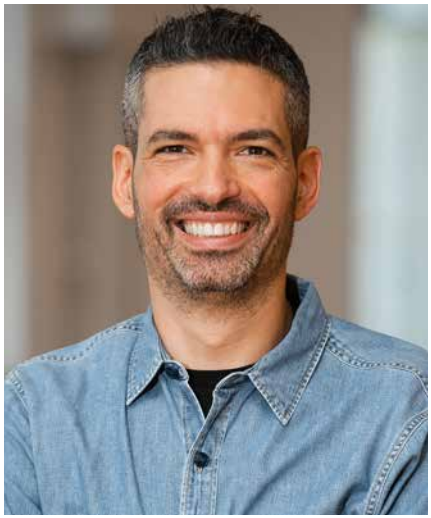

Photo: Noam Galai

1. Some say that dreamers talk, doers do. Which one do you feel most as and why?

I'm equally a dreamer and a doer! As a product leader, this is exactly what we are tasked with. Dream about a desired future and carve the way to get there. In business and technology context, the way I think about it is this: Product vision is the term we use for dreams. Product vision is how we imagine the future or what the desired future looks like. Product strategy is when we start 'doing'. We come up with the different paths we can go down in order to achieve our desired future. Finally, there's execution where you choose a path and create plans and execute against them on a day-to-day basis.

2. What advice would you give to others who want to be more action-oriented?

What really worked for me is putting my dream/vision into a framework that forces me to think about ways to make this dream a reality. I usually start with the 'why?' Why is this important? What does a desired future look like (I will often use a north-star metric for this)? Who will it impact? In which ways? These last two questions are where I spend most of my time. These questions force you to start thinking about a few possible KPIs.

I try to think about all the different ways the future may take shape for the people impacted and I try to think about what would be a success?

For example, if I had to do this for Spotify (before there was Spotify), I'd think along the lines of:

"I'm dreaming about making music accessible for everyone by becoming the world's largest music library."

Then I'd ask, who will it impact and in which ways? What is our desired impact?

For example for artists and music labels? What will its impact be on artists who are selling CDs or MP3s? How

does it impact unknown artists?

For the users, how will this impact music consumption habits? Music discovery?

With all of that said, I also give the opposite advice to not forget about the dream! This is especially true for more mature companies. Doers often set very clear KPIs and use data to inform decisions. This is how it should be! But there may also be a trap of optimizing the existing without innovating.

3. Is the big picture or the details more important to you?

Looking at this from a product person point of view, you can't have one without the other. Specifically for product people, the ability to navigate between the bigger picture and the details is what separates a good product manager from a great one. When a product manager is facilitating a development effort or experiment, they need to not only work with the engineering and design teams to ensure the feature is feasible, usable and the results are measurable but also how does it fit the company mission and goals? How does it impact others in the company? Are there legal implications? What else is happening in the company which may impact go-to-market?

4. Which technologies will fundamentally change the content recommendation industry in the next 5-10 years?

The things which are most likely going to change and evolve is how and where users consume content, and how content publishers monetize that content.

With self-driving cars, content consumption habits are going to change. Without the need to have eyes on the road, commuters will be able to consume content in any format – read articles, listen to a podcast, music, watch a TV show. From news to entertainment, the amount of time we are going to be spending consuming content is going to increase. This kind of content consumption is also a hybrid of lean-forward personal-device consumption and lean-back, living room TV consumption.

For the users with so many options for content consumption across formats and services, there will be a bigger need for personalized discovery technologies that can mix and match across everything.

For content publishers, this means that not only the formats of the content they publish will evolve, but also how they sustain their business and monetize. Publishers already have pressures to have a diversified portfolio rather than relying on display advertising. This change will increase this pressure even more but this will also fundamentally change advertising. This hybrid of lean-back/forward advertisers can have access to measure the impact of a full funnel – from awareness to purchase. This creates opportunities for better monetization while providing an experience and a more meaningful value exchange between the user and the content creator.

5. Are you working on anything that is powered by AI?

I'm currently working on bringing to market a platform that helps publishers diversify their revenue, beyond advertising – with the help of AI powered optimization.

For years, advertising has been the primary revenue stream for publishers' sustainability. But that's changing. With the imminent loss of third-party cookies, the rise of programmatic and affiliate advertising, and the promise of subscription growth, publishers have adapted their revenue models at speed.

But as publishers capitalize on these new revenue streams, their job gets harder, and more complex as these initiatives and the teams that support them pursue competing KPIs, often in silos. The impact of siloed departments is that there's internal competition for site real estate, for technology support, for attribution, and the list goes on.

The new platform (Keystone by Outbrain) is the key to unlocking new revenue opportunities while increasing engagement. Now publishers can optimize every KPI through a completely new SaaS model and easy-to-manage self-serve platform.

Working on this new platform has been an amazing experience. We are running this as a startup within a startup and trying to leverage technology and resources from the greater Outbrain, while at the same time have the independence to maximize agility and impact.

6. Who has had the biggest influence on your career? Any role models?

I have had many teachers and I'm surrounded by people who influence me every day. I can probably write an entire book on things I have learned from different people throughout my career.

The person who had the biggest influence on my career and my leadership style is Yaron Galai, Outbrain's CEO. He had most influence on me on how to build successful teams and approach to innovation and challenging the status quo.

Yaron hired me twenty years ago for my first role in the tech world and as technical jack-of-all-trades. I had no degree or any experience. I was a soldier doing mandatory service during the day and a bartender during the night. But what Yaron saw is the fact that I taught myself coding and was eager to learn and work hard. This was only the first time I ran into his unique style of building successful teams. He's a long-term thinker who's looking for people who are smart, get things done and are great to work with. When it comes to innovation, Yaron has a unique approach to turning frustration into opportunity. He calls it the 'Jiu Jitsu' of innovation.

7. Knowing what you know now, would you have taken a different path towards leadership when you were first starting out?

Not sure I would have done things differently as I have learned the most from my mistakes. I think making mistakes and learning the result and impact of your mistakes are inseparable part of your journey as a leader. The one thing that I feel is very different for me today than when I started out is a growth mindset and leadership style. As a young manager I thought that if I have the best product ideas in the room and my team likes me, I will be a great product leader.

What I have learned is that with this mindset the company, the team and ultimately myself are missing out. By being the person who comes up with most product ideas, we're missing out on amazing ideas from a much larger team with people with different perspectives and backgrounds. Having diversified, empowered teams work for a reason and these teams need to have the environment where they can share their perspective.

I also thought that prioritizing being liked by my team makes me a great manager and a leader. I always had in mind the type of manager I don't want to be (the boss!) and thought that if I avoid conflicts, I'm doing my teams a favor. Today, I approach it completely differently. The type of leader I always aspire to be is one with genuine care for my employees. I put their success as a top priority. With this mindset, coaching and providing feedback are central.

This is resulting in a much more open environment with high levels of trust and in this kind of environment and resolving conflicts is much easier.

8. What are your tips for building a great team?
There are so many things which define a great team. For me, the important thing about building a team is build it for immediate success with a long-term plan in mind. Coaching for the next role starts on day one and from my experience, this actually results in less attrition more stability. Another thing which is critical is a growth mindset is a team that constantly learns and evolves. One of the ways to test for that during the interview process is after the first interview to provide feedback to the candidate. Both what went well and what could be improved in the next interview. When you are in a mindset that you want the candidate to succeed, you want to test how they react to feedback and their ability to learn and adapt. This is a great filter for egos that can get in the way of getting sh!t done!

9. How did your team push through the biggest business issues?
Historically, we've had many times where we've had business doubts. Some turned out to be true and with some, we've learned that we can and should push through them. I actually attribute much of our success to pushing through doubts in areas that other companies didn't even try.

In the beginning, it was really hard. As a startup with a limited runway, we had a real sense of urgency to find a product market-fit. This sense of urgency helped remove many barriers when it came to being very nimble and make courageous decisions.
As a larger company with a much bigger scale, we empower teams to push through doubts by having them own certain KPIs rather than products or features. This provides them the environment in which they have freedom to experiment and achieve impact while still being held accountable to business outcome.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
When thinking about impact, I'm thinking about significance. Getting the first ten users to use your product at a certain stage may be extremely impactful for your business in the beginning whereas in other cases, this number is significantly different. Impact is all about context. Leaders should constantly provide this context in order to ensure whatever impact they have, have significance for them. When I approach a project or a product, setting goals and thinking about our desired outcomes, I'm thinking in these terms – what kind of a change is going to be significant enough that we can say, we've made an impact.

You have to be passionate, and it needs to be fun

Author JONAS WARRER

JONAS WARRER *is a Danish Olympic gold medallist. He has been sailing the Olympic 49er dinghy for twenty years. He participated at the Olympic Games three times: Beijing, 2008 - Gold. Rio, 2016 – 4th place. Tokyo, 2020 – 5th place. He was elected as Danish flagbearer in Tokyo. Jonas has been among the best 49er sailors in the world for fifteen years and has coached 49er sailors and teams from all over the world.*

1. What inspired you to become a professional athlete? As I understand it, the passion for the water runs in your blood, and you started sailing at a very young age?
It definitely runs in the family on my father's side. My grandfather used to sail and was a skilled sail racer, the same as my father. To this day, my father spends much of his time sail racing. I love most sports and play various sports myself when I can get away with it. The reason why I choose sailing was definitely because of my father. My father is very competitive and I have definitely inherited that, and we have always played all kinds of sports.

2. Do you consider yourself a dreamer?
I do believe we are all dreamers. I have dreamt about the Olympics and being able to stand on the podium many times, ever since I was a little boy, who just started sailing. Also, one of the reasons why it's so amazing is that it actually happened.
I see myself as someone who's very concrete, very realistic, and very rational. If there's something that I want to do, then I will chase after it, but only if it makes sense from a rational/realistic perspective.

3. You've won a gold medal in the Olympics. Something very few people in the human history have achieved. How much of it was hard training, luck, mentors, or other factors?
Funnily enough, luck follows the same people all the time. I don't believe you can win big competitions by luck, especially not in the Olympics, in which the competitors are so specialized and have trained so much and so intensely. I believe in luck as little as I believe in talent, in my world it is mainly about two things: hard, purposeful work, and training. Then also what type of individual you are and what kind of mentality you have. How do you react in stressful situations? Are you able to keep calm, keep

an overview, able to focus on the right things, and do the things you have to, and can do, where you have practiced and done those things a thousand times. Or do you stress unnecessarily and underperform?

The mental part plays a big role when we talk about the top 10-20 best competitors in an Olympic discipline. Therefore, it's important that you have or can create a way to maintain calmness and a surplus to perform optimally.

Most people can do the "right" things and perform when they are not under pressure. It is when you are under pressure you are being tested. That is where many fail and diviate from what they deep down know are the right things to do. They divert from what they have been practicing. They diviate from their proper and "healthy" hierarchy and communication, and from their personal roles and areas of responsibility. You need enough training hours in order to avoid that. It must be deeply rooted within you. You need to act instinctively and you must have the coolness to make the right split second decisions under maximum pressure and stress. It is tricky because many, must suppress their own personality and not act on their feelings, but force themselves to stay cool and do the "right" thing.

It is also essential to have a good team around you with people you respect and trust. People who can push you, challenge you and help you.

4. How can people become more active on their dreams. Do you have an advice for them?
You have to be passionate, and it needs to be fun. Otherwise, it would be difficult to invest the huge amount of work that it requires. Of course, there are moments and periods where it's bitter and tough. But it doesn't always have to be bitter, there must be time for living life. Otherwise, you will burn out. Take your time and give yourself the freedom to occasionally party, take some time off, and eat unhealthily…. or else, it will be bitter. That is a part of the 'mental training'.

Then you need to find the best trainers and sparring partners. They should preferably be better than you. Optimally, you ask those who are the best in the world, to work with you and teach you. Where you can copy them and get pushed to the maximum. That is the most optimal and fastest way to get good. If you only train with yourself or other people who are not at your level, it will be difficult to give 100% of yourself and you won't be pushed to the same extent. So, train with someone who's better or at least on par with yourself.

Then there are some things that you cannot control, some things that are out of your hands. Don't waste energy on them. Then there will be things that you can partially control, and finally, there are things that you can 100% control and you are your own master over them. All the things you can control, you have to control them, you can't leave those things to chance.

For example, one's weight is incredibly important in sailing. We have some 'ideal weights' that we would like to be at. If we don't do that, we simply don't sail fast enough in average conditions. You may have trained hard and optimally and be at a top technical and mental level, but if you are 5 kg too light, you just aren't sailing fast enough. So that needs to be under control, otherwise, it's a waste of time.

5. You must have met amazing people in your career. What have you learned from them?
What I have learned the most from, are my six different partnerships and the different coaching collaborations

I have had in my 49er career. I have learned about the strengths and challenges of diversity and how to approach them in the best way. I have had partners who were similar to myself type-wise, and also partners who were very different from myself.

It's definitely easier to have a partner who is like yourself, but then you also potentially have some blind spots, areas that are not optimally covered. It's more demanding socially and in cooperation with different types. Here I find that the key is to accept the differences, don't judge, and don't get mad that your partner does things differently. But to accept that things can be done differently and always know that we both have the same end goal. You don't necessarily need to be best friends, but empathy, understanding, and respect are the keys to making it work, while also getting the best out of the collaboration.

That are the values I have learned throughout the years.

6. What can entrepreneurs learn from elite athletes like yourself?

That you need to train to be good. We athletes do almost nothing besides training and practice for the few important competitions that we have. Roughly speaking, for us, it's about the Olympics every 4th year, five sailing days. Everything else is preparation and training for the ultimate goal. Funnily enough, it's often those who train the most who end up winning.

We also have a winning mentality. We will win and we will give everything we have. And I think it's true in many situations that those who want to win the most, often also win. Or at least have an advantage.

Then I have an important principle that is about taking ownership. In order to be highly motivated and to believe in the 'project', it's essential to take ownership of it. It's your ass that is wasted and you must take responsibility and not blame others, if or when there are challenges. At the same time, you must dare to delegate responsibilities. We are two people onboard on the 49er, and we both have to use our energy, skills, and abilities 100%. It's important that I trust my partner 100% and vice versa. So, we don't waste energy on 'checking' that the other person is doing the right thing. So that we do not step in and take over each other's tasks and areas of responsibility. We must have 100% confidence that our partner will fulfill his role as agreed upon and in the best way possible. In this way, you're able to concentrate 100% on your own areas and through this, the potential gets optimized.

So, it's important from the beginning to delegate so that you don't get into wrong and inappropriate work patterns where 2+2 suddenly becomes 3.

7. What is most important to you. Details or the big picture?

Sailing is a very complex sport. There's an incredible number of components and variables that you can turn and change. Therefore, there are also many ways of doing things, and many ways to do things well and successfully.

I think I would lose the big picture if I went too much into the details. I would potentially overlook the areas where I could really improve. Those who go into the details run the risk of going into a rut and spending a disproportionate amount of time on something that doesn't really move them forward and make them better in the big picture. So, it's important to take a step back and see if you are heading in the right direction. That you are working on the right areas. It's essential that you prioritize all the many elements, areas, and opportunities in the right way, and your energy lies where it really makes a change and sense.

I do believe we are all dreamers. I have dreamt about the Olympics and being able to stand on the podium many times, ever since I was a little boy, who just started sailing. Also, one of the reasons why it's so amazing is that it actually happened.

JONAS WARRER
Danish Olympic gold medallist

Remove the comfort of staying put

Author ZETA YARWOOD

ZETA YARWOOD *is an award-winning, certified Executive Coach and Career Coach, dedicated to helping people achieve success and fulfilment in their careers. With a Psychology degree and over fifteen years' experience in coaching, management and recruitment – Zeta is an expert in unlocking human potential. Working with multinational companies and individuals globally, she helps people discover their passions, strengths, and talents to optimise performance and career satisfaction.*

1. What motivated you to shift from dreaming to doing when you started your coaching business?

To move from dreaming to doing, the mind needs to know three things:

1) The perceived pain of not executing the dream and staying stuck is greater than the pain of executing the dream;
2) Executing the dream is relatively safe and won't lead to imminent death;
3) The pain of executing the dream is worth it e.g., the dream has a meaningful purpose and there will be moments of reward and pleasure along the way.

While individually they might persuade the brain to shift from dreaming to doing, it was the focus on all three that got me to move from dreaming to doing.

I knew for years I wanted to work in the personal development space. But going out on my own terrified me. Every job I took was 'to gain more experience' or 'to build up more of a financial cushion' but if I'm brutally honest with myself I took them to stay safe. It was only when I lost my job in a company restructuring that I realised I had a choice. I could:

1) Go back into recruitment or some admin-based job and be deeply unfulfilled as I had been in previous similar roles, or;
2) Take a chance and start my coaching business.

It was sink or swim.

In this assessment, I had associated recruitment with so much pain that the idea of option 1) was not even an option. Yes, the idea of starting my own business and failing was painful, but option 1) was MORE painful. Option 2) was the only way forward.

I also did a risk assessment. How safe was it for me to go from dreaming to doing? (On a subconscious, reptilian-brain level – would starting my own business lead to imminent death?)

Having been working and saving for a while, I had enough of a financial cushion to cover my expenses for a year. I concluded it was safe for me to give this a go for 6-12 months before reassessing my options. But in hindsight, I realised it wasn't just about having a financial safety net. It was also about having a psychological safety net. I realised something else that helped me to go from dreaming to doing was believing (not knowing, but believing) that if it all went pear-shaped, my previous boss, my network and my previous experience, knowledge and skills would all help me to secure another job.

I also reminded myself why I was doing this. I wanted to do something meaningful. I knew it would be stressful but moving away from a career that made me miserable to one I believed could enjoy and be good at, would make the stress worth it.

I didn't realise it at the time, but to shift from dreaming to doing, I used a simple but effective motivation strategy: increase current pain, create future safety, and focus on purpose. It's this basic strategy that I now use with my clients to help them successfully transition from dreaming to doing.

1) Remove the comfort of staying put. Focus on creating so much pain where you are that staying in your current situation is (and will be) more painful than moving towards your dream. Make the comfort zone so unbearably uncomfortable that your only option is to move towards something else;
2) Build internal and external safety nets so failure isn't so scary (e.g., finances, support system, alternative job options, self-belief). It's the fear of failure that keeps us stuck. But if we can see that failure won't lead to catastrophe (and could even lead to somewhere even better) the brain feels more confident to give our dreams a try;
3) Remember why you want the dream. How will the dream change your life? How will achieving the dream change how you see and feel about yourself? How will it impact your loved ones and others?

2. Who helped you in your biggest business uncertainties?

In the beginning, I tried to do everything alone. I wanted to prove that I could do it by myself and my ego didn't like the idea of depending on anyone to get ahead. This lasted about a year before the stress started to get to me, at which point I reached out to my business coach Peter Redelinghuys for help. As a coach, he helped me to identify my insecurities, doubts, self-imposed limitations as well as my business gaps. He helped me to take a step back from old patterns of thought and push through with new ones, as well as close my business gaps. I could have gotten there alone but I got there faster with his help, and it felt way better not doing it alone.

3. How is diversity tied to building a great team?

Don't create a team based on who is similar to you! You might be awesome and think you know the best way to do things, but you will have your blind spots too. If you hire a team because they have the same outlook, values, strengths, skills, and approaches as you, you will limit the amount of innovation that will take place and struggle when you hit a roadblock. If you can't overcome the barrier, chances are your team won't know how to overcome it either. Diversify as much as you can in terms of skills,

perceptions, and backgrounds and work hard to create and foster a culture of support and respect.

4. How has your coaching business changed since COVID?

Initially, I followed a standard coaching business model meeting my clients face-to-face in Dubai. While this worked well from a financial perspective it meant I was tied down in terms of location. I tried to persuade my clients to go online but they didn't want to. Then COVID hit and now, online coaching is the norm. In fact, people prefer it because it saves them time and fuss trying to get to an appointment knowing they can have a session in the privacy of their own home. It's been great for me too because I don't want to fit my life around a job. I want a career that fits around my life. I no longer offer face-to-face sessions; everything I do is online. I now have more freedom in terms of location and I'm spending longer periods of time in the UK. I'd say it was more my values that shifted over time, and I changed my business to match that shift.

5. What are the three most important tools in your daily work?

Insight Timer – meditation and self-care app. As soon as I wake up, the first thing I do is pick a meditation to prime my brain for the day ahead.

Journaling – each morning I do three things:

1) Write down whatever emotions are present and give them a voice. I write exactly what they want to say, and in response write from a kind and compassionate version of myself to bring any comfort or reassurance if needed in that moment;
2) Focus on hope and gratitude – three things I regret that led to something great and 3 things I'm grateful for;
3) Write three things I want to create or achieve that day.

Google Calendar – simple and easy way to plan my day.

6. Are you working on new coaching programs?

While my survival brain might try to sometimes convince me otherwise, after spending a month in Bali with Balinese people, I'm becoming more and more aware of how privileged I am. Even if my business imploded, I would never be destitute or living on the streets. My British passport, loving and supportive financially comfortable family, and access to government benefits means I will never experience that. So, I'm working on creating some coaching programs that will be affordable to all people from all backgrounds.

7. Has your life in Dubai changed your perception of success?

Having lived in Dubai for fourteen years surrounded by glitz, glamour and the uber-wealthy, I learned a lot about what success means to me. And contrary to society's current definition of success, being super wealthy isn't part of that definition. People believe wealth brings happiness. That having access to all material goods and luxury services anytime makes us blissfully happy. But it doesn't. It brings a quick dopamine fix and an ego boost at best. And if that ego is particularly fragile, it can open up a whole can of worms that are probably best hashed out on the couch of a therapist rather than on the deck of a superyacht in the Caribbean. The sayings 'more money, more problems' (e.g., relationships become more and more shallow as you no longer know who to trust) and 'money brings out the worst in people' (selfishness, abuse of power, aggression, greed) are sayings for a reason.

Research has shown that once our basic survival needs are

covered, all we need to thrive and feel fulfilled is a loving and nurturing environment/tribe that facilitates growth, a sense of contribution, good sleep, good nutrition, and experiential play. Everything else we're told we need is just a story concocted by marketing teams worldwide, cleverly woven to convince us that we need their product or service to be happy, successful, and loved. Don't buy it and you will be miserable and left behind.

My definition of success is knowing you're safe and loved, having the resources you need to spend time with the people you love, experiencing whatever you deeply love, contributing to a group, cause, family, or 'tribe' in a meaningful way with the regular experience of awe, wonder and fun. For me, that's spending time in nature.

8. Did you have a mentor in your professional life? What did you learn from them that you apply today?
My previous boss Dream Samir (ex-MD of Merck Serono Middle East) has hands down been the biggest influencer in my professional life. He was the type of manager people dream about having in their careers. He saw the potential in everyone, empowering us to empower our teams. He was confident and calm in a crisis. He'd always smile when he saw me stressing myself out, and remind me, 'Zeta, it's just a job. It's not worth it.'

He was my friend and mentor, and everything I've learned about how to be successful I learned from him. Integrity, self-belief, valuing myself, humility, appreciating the importance of relationships at work and doing the right thing even when nobody is watching are all things.

9. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
To me, impact is influence that has led to action. As someone who has ca. 260,000 followers on LinkedIn, I was recently told that I am, in technical terms, a macro-influencer. I have no idea what that means and haven't subscribed to the influencer culture in any way at all. But my hope as a human and a coach is that whenever I write on LinkedIn, it inspires enough hope that change is possible in someone, and that they take a step towards creating that change. In short, making an impact is helping someone believe in themselves and the world enough that they take action towards their goals and dreams.

It is not about starting the process, it is about finishing

Author TOMAS STASIUKEVIČIUS

TOMAS STASIUKEVIČIUS *is the Head of Content at LOGIN – the largest technology and innovation conference in the Baltics which attracts the world's most influential speakers, such as Steve Wozniak, Jimmy Wales, Margrethe Vestager, Jared Isaacman, Martin Cooper, Christopher Wylie, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Nadya Tolokonnikova, Neil Harbisson, and many others. He is also a founder of the first speaker's bureau in Lithuania "Speakers.LT"*

1. Are you disciplined when it comes to executing tasks?
When I was a kid, I used to daydream a lot. I always looked a bit stoned because of that. While growing up I saw an awful example of my uncle, whom in every sense is also a big dreamer, however he hasn't managed to fulfill his dreams by even a bit. At that time, seeing my uncle having crazy ideas and failing to achieve them, I have decided to adhere to a very strict discipline of finishing every task that I had. Seeing his dreams smashing into his own inability to attempt and act has encouraged me to set a certain set of rules to my dreams.

First of all, I have started setting smaller (and more reachable) milestones to my goals, and started celebrating those small bits of achievements. It is great when you can clearly visualize your final goal or your ultimate life achievement, but it is nearly impossible to stay so motivated over time. You are mostly motivated at the beginning and at the end of the process so I always try to keep that distance as short as possible. And it is not about starting the process, it is about finishing. So, I always break down my goals into tasks that are reachable. My most recent example happened just today. I have always dreamt of a successful podcast on Formula 1. I want to interview the world's best drivers like Lewis Hamilton, Max Verstappen, or Nasser Al-Attiyah. And my first goal was to publish the first episode. And today I just did that. And I feel absolutely happy about that which gives me energy to dream even bigger and work even harder.

2. Are people your inspiration?
I am always inspired by the people that surround me. Having worked with the largest conferences in the region, I got acquainted with some of the most prominent speakers in the world. Their work and dreams both excite and inspire

me to achieve goals that would make the world a greater place. What I have noticed throughout the year is that even the most influential people are only humans after all. With the same fears and struggles as we all have. This idea always leads me when I am developing something new. After all, if they have managed to achieve that, so can I.

3. How can one become more action-oriented?
It is not about starting things; it is about finishing them. Dream of goals that you know you are able to accomplish, and focus on finishing them as efficiently as possible. That would be my advice.

4.Have you encountered any big influencers in your professional life?
From quite an early age I had many mentors who later became my good friends in life. Learning from their mistakes have helped me to overcome my early struggles and gain confidence in my career and personal life. I think everybody needs their own personal Master Yodas in life. I am glad I have found quite a few of them along my way.

5. What motivates you as a person and in your work?
Seth Godin once said "You are more powerful than you think you are. Act accordingly". This thought motivates me in every aspect of my personal and work life.

6. How important are the details for you?
Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas? I believe that even the smallest details can multiply and make a significant impact on the final result. When organizing the largest conferences and festivals in the region, even the smallest mistake can start a chain of failures, as many parts are interconnected. Sometimes a small mistake can even lead to reputational damage. I always try to identify all the smallest details and make sure that nothing is missed and nobody is forgotten.

7. What are the areas that will change the content industry in the next 5-10 years?
I believe that algorithms will make a fundamental change in whole content business. Already right now algorithms can provide you with better content solutions based on your interests. Under such circumstances the role of content manager shifts. We will need to focus on developing our interpersonal skills that will help us to build communities that would last longer. And I think that conferences and festivals will shift from providing content to providing unique experiences and building communities.

8. How did you push through your biggest business doubts?
Again, having a Master Yoda in life (someone who is usually 10-15 years older than you and has more experience in your field) will help you to deal with your biggest doubts, because usually they have had the same struggles as you. It is funny to see how in the world that is changing so fast, business problems stay almost the same – is this the right business? How to raise money? How to expand into other markets? The fundamental doubts stay the same, so surround yourself with people who have already pushed through these doubts.

9. How has your business changed after the pandemic?
A few years ago, face-to-face communication was key in our business. Speakers wanted to meet you in person, have dinner or have a chit-chat over a cup of coffee. After the pandemic, this is not the case anymore. Everybody has shifted online, which is more efficient, but lonelier. To be honest, I still like to grab a coffee and have a physical meeting whenever I get a chance. Hope that this will not vanish completely.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

Most recently I was an officiant at my best friends' wedding and I felt an incredible amount of love and devotion which blossomed between the bride and the groom. You could see that many guests were uplifted by this energy as well. This made me realize that nothing makes a bigger impact than pure love and commitment to each other. Sometimes I think that seeing my wife's smile is what makes me wake up in the morning. And if I make her happy, I think it is a sufficient amount of impact that I make.

> **Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas? I believe that even the smallest details can multiply and make a significant impact on the final result.**

TOMAS STASIUKEVIČIUS
Head of Content at LOGIN

Discipline and desire lead me

Author GERMAINE MOODY

GERMAINE MOODY *is a philanthropist, investor, entrepreneur and author, revered as an international networking pioneer and one of the most connected professionals in the world. He is the founder of Atlanta Shopping Network, The Moody Gala, Become Endless International, and Chairman & CEO of Moody Capital Partners. He is the author of "The 40 Laws of Networking", "50 Seeds of Greatness", and "5 Rules For Networking With Millionaires & Billionaires".*

1. You recently founded a brand-new company - Atlanta Shopping Network. Could you tell us a little more about the idea behind it and what you want to achieve?

Atlanta Shopping Network is a digital media shopping platform that markets products, services, entrepreneurs, authors, real estate, and more through video and advertisements. After years of watching the success that Lori Greiner generates for her Shark Tank investments through QVC, I wanted to create a similar medium but with a more millennial approach to give small businesses and entrepreneurs worldwide more credibility to help them build and grow their brands and businesses, while exposing them to a larger audience.

2. You are the CEO at Moody Capital Partners. What type of businesses do you invest in and what makes you invest in a company?

Moody Capital Partners invests in small businesses, start-ups, and big ideas, covering a variety of industries such as online retail, publishing, food & beverages, real estate, etc. First and foremost, I look at the leadership team of the company before deciding to invest, because I know with the right founders and leaders in place, they will find a way to become successful, whether with their present company or with starting another. I prefer to invest in companies and ideas that greatly benefit the lives of customers. Companies that provide products, services and solutions that make life easier, better, happier, healthier, or more manageable.

3. Is there a business you are most proud of for investing in?

Yes, our now publishing company Become Endless International. Some friends of mine started a self publishing company even though none of them were authors. I invested in it as an investor and as an author. I'm incredibly proud that I did this, and not wait on a major publisher for my books. It has given me the chance to learn the industry,

also maintain 100% control over my writings, royalties, and global business decisions concerning my books.

4. In your most recent book "The 40 Laws of Networking" you are discussing networking secrets and strategies. What would you say is the most important law you have learnt in your experience and why?
It would be Law #1, "Master Words". We give little attention to the power of words, even though every day the world is operated by words. Words are everywhere, advertisements, text messages, laws and policies, directions, social media, on products, emails, instructions, etc. There are so many words on the planet, even more words than people.

This means that next to God, words are the most powerful thing on earth. Learning how to master words when networking is key. Whether in person or online, using the right words to start a conversation, present an opportunity, get a response, respond to an opportunity, negotiate a deal, or just to get people to keep reading, is what matters.

Words have personality, which means your communication has a countenance that can be seen and felt without a physical face in view. Words allow you to cultivate other people's perception of you, and that is the starting point for networking.

5. You founded The Moody Gala back in 2017. How did you come up with the idea for the gala and what is the focus of this event?
Actually, the original event company came about in 2009 after I received an invite on LinkedIn to a networking event in Los Angeles from my friend Lewis Howes. I was in Atlanta directing a 2-day music video shoot and couldn't make the trip to L.A. I was fascinated that such events existed and at the same time, really upset because I couldn't go. I then discovered he was hosting similar events in multiple cities. I wanted to grow my professional relationships and I wanted to meet cool people all over the place like he was doing.

I asked Lewis for a five-minute phone call to tell me how he was organizing these incredible events across America. He agreed, gave me the details, and within 72 hours I had built a website and scheduled my first event in downtown Chicago on October 6, 2009. Back then the company was called MoodTyme Events, years later I changed it to Germaine Moody Events, and in 2017 I settled with The Moody Gala.

The events started out as business networking events and we also host an annual red carpet PreGrammy Party (PreGrammy party has been held in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Atlanta). We were also the first to ever produce a world networking event tour back in 2010 (covering 12 major cities in the USA, Canada, UK), we called it" The Biggest Networking Night Of The Year").

The focus of our company and the events will always remain the same, to bring people together to network so that they can expand their lives and fulfill their dreams. So many lives have been changed from our events over the years and so many people have thanked me.

Currently, our events are shifting towards entrepreneur and investor networking parties, group trips for professionals, as well as black tie charity events to raise money for causes dear to me. I discovered that through our global networking events, I was helping people connect with others that could help them fulfill their goals and dreams. People that get to fulfill their dreams are happier people. And I believe that happy people create a happy world. So, I'm honored to say that The Moody Gala allows me to create a happier world.

6. What was the very first company you started and what made you continue working on new projects?
I've been an entrepreneur since the age of 7, selling popcorn and performing puppet shows on the front porch, but the very first official business I started was called GM Productions. I was 15 years old at the time. Being a musician, I played the keyboard, piano and guitar.

I was hired to play at churches, weddings, banquets, parties, anywhere somebody wanted a solo musician, I was there. I remember a bride hired me to play the "here comes the bride" theme at her wedding on the piano, which was only for about forty-five seconds. She paid me $325 for those forty-five seconds. After that, I knew I had to continue my entrepreneur journey for the rest of my life.

7. You are a philanthropist, investor, serial entrepreneur, and author. How do you find enough time and resources to actively participate in all initiatives?
I truly believe it's all a part of my DNA, so as far as finding time, I just figure out a way to make it all happen. Discipline and desire lead me. Those two combined always make a way. Of course, the bigger your life, the bigger the sacrifices. One thing I know for sure is that everything I do ties into my purpose, which is to help make the world and people greater, so any sacrifice is worth it. Each day is a blessing, another day to work on those things that matter most to me. I consider it an honor to not only be here, but to know why I'm here.

8. Can you tell us more about "The National Black Media and Press Association"? What are the greatest milestones achieved?
The National Black Media and Press Association's mission is to ensure equity for media platforms owned and operated by blacks, and also ensure local, national, and international events include black media entities. The organization is brand new. I was contacted by the founders of the association to become a founding member and advisor. They are currently building membership and using their platform to support media professionals and black media entities.

9. In your biography you mention that you are connected with colleagues and business allies in all 195 countries and territories. How do you maintain close relationships with so many individuals?
Thanks to technology, the entire world is one click away. When we hold our mobile phones, the world is in the palm of our hands. I've been fortunate to include friends around the world in my books "50 Seeds of Greatness" (106 countries) and "The 40 Laws of Networking" (130 countries), which also has given me friends for life. I often check on these individuals through text, email, or social media. Even those that aren't in my books, if I hear something unfortunate on the news in their region of the world, I reach out to see if they're Ok. So many have been a part of my success so I remain available to help them in any way I can with their success as well.

10. Lastly, this book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact to me is to a live a life of service and inspiration that pushes the world forward. A life that outlives you by continuing to influence thinking, produce ideas, and create solutions that make life better, easier, happier, healthier and safer for all. We were all born with the potential to impact others and the world, whether in a negative way or a positive one. I choose positive.

The way we think is the starting point for impact because everything begins with a thought. The ability to influence another's thinking is impact. Those who can affect the

thinking of a person or group of people have the gift of impact.

Thinking enables us to produce ideas. Ideas to help ourselves and humanity. Ideas rule the world. Great ideas are generated from a place of impact. There are no bad ideas. The only difference is, some ideas will have greater impact than others.

From ideas we create solutions. Solutions that solve problems, solutions that fast-forward society, solutions that heal the sick, solutions that teach us how to not make the same mistakes, solutions that impact all of us. To sum it up, impact is who you are, and what you do with that discovery.

“Failure” gifts you with a lesson learned

Author BRIAN SCHULMAN

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1. How are your ideas forming into actions?
In my mind, I see everything clearly and there is always an idea forming that will move to doing. I am a dreamer who has learned to ‘do’ by asking for help and gathering amazing people around me. A tribe with whom I collaborate, learn from, and together, we get things done! A dream without action is like the figurine inside of a snow globe. Pretty to look at, safe and going nowhere.

2. What is your biggest inspiration?
Knowing that what I create will reach someone in the moment they need it. If I can positively impact the life of even one person, I have met my goal. I am inspired when people connect to people. Technology has united a global community. No longer ‘business is business’ and ‘personal is personal’. This makes creating a community that gathers to support and cheer for one another accessible to all.

It happens all the time on our two global award winning weekly LIVE shows. People share about themselves, their world, their successes, and their struggles. That’s inspiring. Listening to the guests and hearing their hearts is a privilege; human-first, heart-first. People’s willingness to get vulnerable and be real, is one of the most inspiring things I get to witness.

My ‘why’ isn’t to change the world, but to change one person’s world every day.

3. There are many who want to start their own business but are very hesitant. What is your advice, how can they push themselves?
After building and growing start-ups for 20+ years... START. Start where you are. Start today. There is something I instill in each of the incredibly talented human beings with whom I have the honor to advise, partner with

and mentor globally. A lesson dear to my heart. FAIL! YES, FAIL. What does F.A.I.L. mean? FAIL is an acronym for First Attempt in Learning. "Failure" gifts you with a lesson learned. Learn EACH time you fall and if you get back up - you ALWAYS win, for success is taking the steps. F.A.I.L = WIN. So YES, fail! I have failed way more than I have succeeded in business, but I have succeeded because I failed. Growing is in the struggle, in the discomfort of being in the unknown and navigating it with faith, tenacity, and the desire to succeed.

In the second book in a 13 book collaborative series, "The 13 Steps To Riches", based on Napoleon Hill's classic, "Think and Grow Rich", I recount how taking risks and having faith within the unknown is one of the most difficult things I have done and one of the biggest keys to my success. In moving toward 'doing', never underestimate the power of others seeing in you, what you don't yet see in yourself. There is tremendous power in believing in yourself and what you are creating.

4. What has influenced your professional life the most?
I have been fortunate to have many great role models who have given me the privilege of sharing their experience with me as I built and grew start-ups for the last 20+ years and when I started my own business. I have been influenced and learned from every person with whom I have ever interacted. There have been people who taught me what to do, what not to do, who reminded me what was important, talked me off ledges, and who pushed me when I needed it. All that said, it took me a fair amount of time to realize the influence and impact I had on my journey. It isn't that I knew better or was smarter than anyone who had supported me along the way. Far from it! I would never have made it to the place I am today without their generosity, for which, I know I can never fully express my gratitude and appreciation. I was the one who had to live with the consequences of every decision I made after considering the advice of others. Too often, we don't give ourselves credit for our triumphs, intuition, insights, choices, failures, and how they give us the perspective we have. Once any of us take action and see the impact it has, we begin to wholly believe we can fly and have what it takes to succeed.

5. Are the details or the big picture more important?
It all starts from the big picture. A carefully crafted and curated big picture that as you refine, it becomes more clear - the details emerge. The big picture is what you work from. Think of a puzzle, the pieces strewn across a table doesn't look like much, but you keep the picture on the box in your line of vision the entire time you work on completing the puzzle. You need the big picture to know where the pieces go and how they fit together. Once they come together, you see the big picture that was your blueprint all along.

6. How can one build a Dream Team?
Building and growing any company is all about a dream, a team, grit, and passion. "TEAMWORK is what makes the DREAM WORK ". Gathering a group with passion toward the same goal and equal work effort is key.

If you don't have the right people in place at the top, your team will fail to flourish and grow. You need a group of aware leaders who don't put their ego first. Find people who want to collaborate and that aren't working for their own recognition, but for the betterment of each person, the company and those who will receive the fruits of their labor.

People who bring compassion, empathy, and know that before the job, the title, we are all humans with a heartbeat. People that value the relationship and connections that are built within a team.

Give credit to your team for without the team, there would be no success.

Care. Be a leader of inspiration. Constant enthusiasm, positivity, mentorship, and always make an impact with anyone you meet. Care so much about the people you work with personally and always look at how you can make the lives of others better, both in the office and at home.

As the quote goes, "Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence."

7. How do you deal with doubts in your professional life?

Sometimes it feels like we just keep getting pulled back further and further in the opposite direction of where we want to be going. Not unlike a rubber-band stretched beyond its capacity, business sometimes feels like it's going to snap right between our fingers. What we must remember is that, like a rubber-band on a slingshot, it's pulling us back further and further, not to hold us back, but to gain power and exponentially propel us FORWARD.

When you doubt yourself, take a deep breath in, smile and offer gratitude for this moment. Know what lies ahead will be better than you imagined and, ALWAYS, put good out into the universe to help others, no matter what you are going through. Remind yourself: The next great chapter of the adventure in your journey is unfolding right before you, you're exactly where you are meant to be.

8. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

Money makes the world go round, but impact lasts a lifetime.

I remain committed to creating a space that uplifts, inspires, motivates, reminds people that they matter and are amazing. My goal is to create positive energy/vibes and give people hope. The spirit of Voice Your Vibe and purpose of our LIVE shows is to focus on the feels. Maya Angelou said it best, "People may forget what you say, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Together, #ShoutOutSaturday and #WhatsGoodWednesday have aired for almost 600 LIVE, consecutive episodes. These shows and their associated special events have had a global impact. All SOS and WGW guests come directly from the audience, and everyone is invited to join LIVE. There are countless stories of people coming on, sharing their story, and leaving feeling supported and more hopeful.

Many people who have watched or participated LIVE on the shows describe how their lives have been transformed, often after their first experience. Their praise focuses on the shows' emotional impact and how they feel loved, supported and that they are a part of something. The shows are widely viewed and touch the hearts of millions around the world. To know that I have made a difference in the life of even one person, is a privilege and, for me, defines impact.

My ‘why’ isn’t to change the world, but to change one person’s world every day.

BRIAN SCHULMAN
Founder & CEO at VoiceYourVibe

Your vulnerability has impact

Author PAULINE LAIGNEAU

*"**PAULINE LAIGNEAU** has become a key figure in French entrepreneurship. She co-founded Gemmyo, today one of the major actors of the French jewellery industry. She is also the host of the "The Pauline Laigneau podcast", the number 1 business podcast in French speaking countries. In 2020, she launched a business training program called Demian to help entrepreneurs and people who want to become the best version of themselves."*

For a long time, I was afraid to expose my flaws. I was afraid of being judged, of not seeming credible (damn impostor syndrome...). When I think about it, actually, I was constantly trying to hide who I really was… simply because I was afraid nobody would love me or respect me when they truly knew me.

And then one day, I was asked by Roxanne Varza - director of the French Startup incubator Station F - to talk at her "FailCon" event, a famous conference that aims at showing failure should not be taboo. She asked me to speak publicly about one of my most significant failures. A very personal story immediately came to my mind. I remember that I was hesitant to talk about it in public. I was afraid to expose myself. I was ashamed. Talking about one of my worst memories in front of hundreds of people? No way! I tried finding excuses to avoid the event. I tried reinventing the story. Finally, after weeks of backtracking and dithering, I had no more choice: the deadline was there. I just had to do the talk and tell the truth.

There it was. All alone on stage. Hundreds of people looking at me talking about my biggest shame. The thing was a nightmare.

But when I finished speaking, something crazy happened: a roar of applause. People were cheering me on for my authenticity. My confession made sense to everyone in the audience! When coming down off the stage, I received so many pads on the back of people telling me "THANK YOU. Your talk was liberating. I've been through the exact same thing"

This came as a punch in the face.

On that day of April 2014, as I received hundreds of messages of thanks and cheers, I understood a fundamental thing: vulnerability is not a weakness; it is a strength. The

audience congratulated me for taking responsibility for my own limitations. For daring to admit them publicly. For taking this risk of shame. For being my true and imperfect self.

This example is one of many. Since then, I have seen the power of vulnerability time and time again.

Take responsibility and others will love you

As I mentioned above, for a very long time, I tended to hide my weaknesses, for fear of losing credibility with others. This was true both in my personal and professional life. If you feel you might be in this situation too, please bear with me a few more minutes.
Let's play a little game.

Try to imagine you are not yourself anymore.
Now, you are Peter (your brother), Julian (your employee) or Mary (your best friend).
Close your eyes and visualize this.

As Peter, Julian or Mary, what are your fears?
What motivates you?
What makes you feel good?

The orders of an impassive manager?
A CEO who seems unaffected by anything or anyone?
Your robot friend who never cries or seems hurt?
Of course not.

Now try to imagine this: you are still Peter, Julian or Mary. But now, their manager, friend or brother admits when she is in trouble.
She takes responsibility of her mistakes.
She does not hide her fears.
What happens now?

You probably have the right answer.
You love this person all the more for showing who she truly is.
You even want to help her. To support her.
You relate.

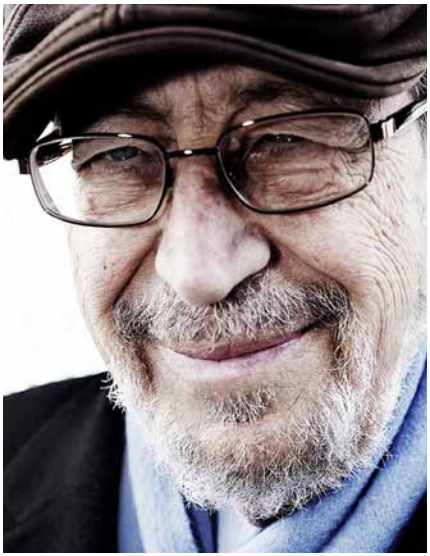
In a recent conversation, the VC Jean de la Rochebrochard told me that vulnerability "is what we feel, it is what brings us closer to others." He could not be more accurate.

Let's face it, acknowledging one's weaknesses is often like saying "I need your help".
It strengthens the bonds with the members of a team or the people around them: when people feel they are helping, they are able to push themselves and overcome their own limits. Much more than if they are just told "do this, or do that".

With vulnerability a virtuous circle is established. No more mask. No more fear of what "others will think".

A good _____ (leader, brother, mother, manager, you name it) is not perfect and acknowledges it.

He inspires not in spite of his failures, but because he truly owns them.



The benefits of presence

In memory of Dr. Edgar H. Schein 1928 - 2023

EDGAR H. SCHEIN *is Professor Emeritus of the MIT Sloan School of Management. He was educated at the University of Chicago, Stanford, and Harvard where he received his Ph.D. in Social Psychology in 1952. He worked at the Walter Reed Institute of Research for four years and then joined MIT in 1956 where he taught until 2005.*
He continues to consult and recently has published a book on the general theory and practice of giving and receiving help (Helping, 2009) and Humble Inquiry, 2013.

It is all well and good to be invited to write something as a "guru." Presumably that is supposed to mean that with all of your eighty-eight years of experience you should know something to pass on to younger people. At the same time, you realize that the older and presumably wiser you are, the less confident you are about wisdom, truth and knowledge. What is wisdom anyway, more facts, more skills, more caution, more resilience, more agility, and, perhaps most of all, more humility. Maybe the hardest thing to discover in life is how fragile you are, how much of what happens is out of your control, and in fact, how dependent you really are on others.

As I think about humility, I also am reminded of a persistent question which I could not answer. How come some people clearly have more "presence" than others? How come some people are noticed immediately when they enter a room, while others are not noticed at all? This question bothered me because I often felt I was not noticed until someone introduced me, gave me a platform, silenced the room on my behalf. How come some people can do this for themselves, can create their own platform, be present from the moment they enter a new situation, whether that be a classroom, a party, or even a crowd of strangers. Personality characteristics like extraversion-introversion, social ascendance, assertiveness, emotional intelligence did not cut it for me. Those might all play a role, but deep down I felt there was something else in presence that we had not yet figured out.

Then one year I was having a conversation with a fellow organization development consultant and brought up this topic because I had learned that this man, let's call him John, was also a successful part-time actor. I turned the topic to the question of whether this "presence" issue was important in the craft of acting, to which he replied with

some intensity, it is "all important." An actor must have presence in front of an audience or camera or things will not go well. So naturally I followed up with the question of "what does it take for an actor to be present?"

A long pause followed. John wondered out loud about the same question and gradually worked out his answer. He said that he was currently in a play where he had a tiny part. He was the butler who had to make an announcement of someone's arrival. And it was thinking about this bit part that revealed to him the answer — as he was getting ready to step on the stage and deliver his line, **he had to know why he was there.**

He, of course, had to know his lines, but, more importantly, he had to know and understand the play, the scene, the importance of the announcement, and the consequences if he fouled up in some way. He said that if he did not get into that mental state of fully knowing why he was there, he could not confidently step out on that stage and deliver his line correctly.

I thought deeply about the implications of this simple principle. I remembered immediately that when I went to a cocktail party "just to see who was there and mingle" I was much more anxious than when I went to that same party in order to meet my wife who was already there and who was going to introduce me to one of her friends. I wondered whether my entry in the first situation was less noticeable than my entry in the second situation. Did I have more presence when I know what I was doing, had a purpose and a specific goal, in other words, knew why I was there.

Life is a series of situations, some of which we can predict and some of which just overwhelm us. I was given an honorary degree at the Bled School of Management in Slovenia and knew that I was supposed to give some kind of talk after receiving the degree. I had prepared a talk with PowerPoints and thought I was prepared, but when I arrived a day before the ceremony, I discovered we were in a big hall, there would be many non-academics there and giving my talk would be absolutely the wrong thing to do. I was quite anxious but also knew that just rewriting a short talk was out of the question. I asked myself "why am I here?" What is this situation, what is expected of me and gradually realized the ritualized ceremonial nature of the event and that what would be expected of me was a few simple words of thanks and, perhaps a simple message that would "justify" the honor of being given the degree. There were no scripted lines, but I knew that "some wise words" were expected from the honoree.

I ran through a lot of stuff that had been in my talk and finally found something worth mentioning — how leaders communicate their values through their actions. This was, however, a pretty pedestrian message and I knew I was there to say something more, something provocative, something new. But what? It came to me as I was preparing to be called to the stage to receive my robe, my hood, and my degree, and it ended up being quite a satisfactory, powerful message. I felt I had presence and had something to say and was very grateful at having been able to "rise to the occasion."

The message itself was important and relevant — that leaders communicate their values more by what they do **not** say and do, than by what they do say and do. Perhaps the most powerful example I had observed over and over again was how leaders did not notice that their failure to ask personal questions of their subordinates showed their lack of interest in those subordinates and led to some of the disengagement that those same leaders later complained about.

I challenged the audience to think about this and said silently to myself, what a relief that I had discovered what I was there for and had not bored them with my long lecture.

Since that conversation with John, the actor, I have explored how widely applicable his simple principle is. I have noticed, for example, that doctors in a teaching hospital who lecture to the residents about the case in front of the patient get much less good information than the doctor who believes they are there to form a relationship with the patient and concentrates on their conversation with the patient rather than with the residents. I have noticed that managers who think they are there to help their subordinates get much better performance out of those subordinates than managers who think they are there to tell subordinates what to do.

The form in which you present yourself gets across to others. If you are not interested in them, they will sense this, as every therapist and consultant will confirm. Presence is about purpose and goals, not about personal style or personality. If you know why you are there, if you have figured out your role in the total situation, if you know your lines, you will have presence. It turns out to be as simple as that.

Maybe the hardest thing to discover in life is how fragile you are, how much of what happens is out of your control, and in fact, how dependent you really are on others.

EDGAR H. SCHEIN
Professor Emeritus, MIT Sloan School of Management

Incompetence awareness is a key ingredient for successful social impact entrepreneurs

Author KASPER HOLST HANSEN

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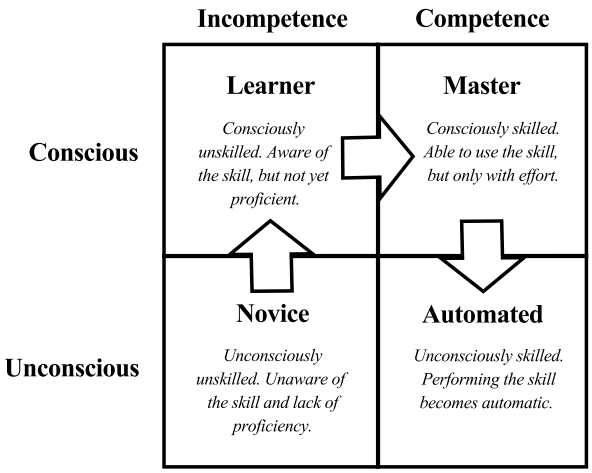
Photo: Egon Gade

An open mindset and a willingness to face your own shortcomings are essential for personal development and success. Social impact entrepreneurs in particular have a tendency for their heart to muddle their path to a successful business. Learning about incompetence awareness is the ingredient they need to succeed.

The best learning tools are often simple, but with immense opportunity for personal development. One of my personal favourites is the Conscious Competence Learning Model (Figure 1). The model illustrates four stages of awareness, knowledge and learning, in which you progress from incompetence to competence.

As a start-up entrepreneur you are on a steep learning curve towards business acumen. My experience is that quite a few social impact entrepreneurs are unconsciously incompetent on several parameters. They have invented a product to do a world of good, however turning it into a viable business is not easy – unless you are open to learning. You need to be able to put your product aside and focus also on your own personal development, as it can stand in the way of the success of your product and business.

Figure 1: Conscious Competence Learning Model



As you open your mind to learning new things, you become aware of your incompetence, which consequently makes learning possible. Whereas learning can be difficult in the sense of acquiring complex new knowledge and skills, it can indeed be even tougher to uncover your own shortcomings! An example is my own learning journey of how to raise capital loans and investments, and subsequently how to report to my investors. It was hard, but as I gradually progressed to becoming unconsciously competent, the joy of teaching others took precedence.

You also need to accept that some things you might never learn. It might be hard but try to embrace it. The good news is that you can seek help from others. You might feel very much on your own as an entrepreneur, so remember to draw upon the people around you.

I have employed a combination of learning methods for my own personal development. As well as using the Conscious Competence Learning Model to open my eyes and tenaciously go through the stages, I have sought advice and learnt from others. I have pinpointed a handful of competent people whom I can trust to be brutally honest with me and direct me in my personal challenges. Thereby they help me become a better version of myself, so I in turn can be better at helping and advising others. And as a result, hopefully make my new business a successful one, too.

When I created the digital math portal in the mid-2000s, it gained a 75% market share despite my lack of a math teaching background. What I had, was an automated understanding of digitalising the subject of math, that I could then teach others to develop. But it was hard. Many entrepreneurs like myself are unconsciously competent at

Figure 2: Learning points

Credit: Kasper Holst Hansen

Be curious about your own shortcomings, and be willing and open to asking others to help you to uncover them.

Work hard at **learning to move from incompetence to competence,** being honest about the things you might never learn; then seek help from others.

Surround yourself with people whom you trust will be honest with you about your personal challenges, and let them help you to become even better at what you do.

Take what you know and **make even more of your genius** to scale and make a success of your business.

Go after **discovering your automated competences,** and learn to make the most of them.

Be willing to accept and appreciate that **learning is a journey** that never ends. Be hungry for it! For the success of both you and your business.

Your own personal development is as important as the development of your product and your business. Embrace it and cultivate it!

Only apply your heart in your vision, efforts and product. **Put your heart aside when it comes to business and finance.**

many things and thus take certain knowledge and skills for granted. They simply do not realise how great they are, and thereby risk not making the most of it! My point is that awareness is key, not only when it comes to your shortcomings but also in terms of your automated skills.

To conclude, a key ingredient to success is to become aware of your incompetence and your automated competence. When it comes to developing, you are as important as your product in the strive for a successful social impact business.

My key advice to social impact entrepreneurs is to keep applying heart in your vision, efforts and product, but to put it aside when it comes to business and finance. I started out by saying that you are on a steep learning curve towards business acumen. I share with you my learning points that should get you one step closer (Figure 2).

Seek awareness. And be brave in the process. You can have the perfect idea or product, but to be successful it must be carried by a competent and capable entrepreneur. You need to face your own shadows to be able to shine.

A key ingredient to success is to become aware of your incompetence and your automated competence. When it comes to developing, you are as important as your product in the strive for a successful social impact business.

KASPER HOLST HANSEN
Founder and CEO at Flying BizKit

Don't embrace being a copy-pasta programmer

Author DAVID HEINEMEIER HANSSON

DAVID HEINEMEIER HANSSON *is the creator of Ruby on Rails and co-founder of Basecamp & HEY. He is a best-selling author, Le Mans class-winning racing driver, antitrust advocate, frequent podcast guest, and family man.*

In the valiant effort to combat imposter syndrome and gatekeeping, the programming world has taken a bad turn down a blind alley by celebrating incompetence. You don't have to reduce an entire profession to a clueless gang of copy-pasta pirates to make new recruits feel welcome. It undermines the aspiration to improve. It reduces the work to magical thinking. It is not good.

I say this an evaluation of the prescription, not of the diagnosis. The programming world absolutely has had, and still has, challenges with imposter syndrome and gatekeeping. In large part because, unlike so many other professional fields, a high percentage of the people working in programming are self-taught. (Including yours truly!).

When you don't have a diploma from a prestigious institution telling you and the world that "you know things, and you're good at things", it's only natural to occasionally have doubts. Especially if there are people within your profession who use their diplomas as a logical fallacy to prove why they're right and you're wrong.

But you can't let that doubt win. You can't become the I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING dog as a professional identity. Don't embrace being a copy-pasta programmer whose chief skill is looking up shit on the internet. Treat it as part of a learning process to actually understand what's going on. Not merely as a shortcut to solve today's problems. If you never dig deeper, your competence will be stuck at the surface.

Likewise, influential programmers who do have the hard-earned skills and accumulated knowledge to repeatedly create good software need to resist the temptation of presenting a "yes, I too am a know-little, copy-pasta dummy, JUST LIKE YOU" facade. Whatever gains you derive from

being relatable to someone struggling must be weighed against infusing this industry with a sense of futility of deep learning.

The magic of programming is largely just things you don't know yet. Once you learn those things, it stops being magic in the sense of "I have no idea how it did that or why it works" and starts being magic in the sense of "I can make the computer do exactly what I ask it to do!". The point is to become the wizard, not the bedazzled member of the audience.

This does not happen overnight, and we need to have the confidence to accept that our profession has depth, even as we celebrate the ease with which someone can get started (and welcome them onto the journey of becoming a wizard)!

It also doesn't happen across all the domains of programming. You can't become an expert at everything, and it's fine to accept your boundaries. But it's not fine to think you shouldn't be on *some* paths towards mastery, if you intend to make programming your career.

We also need to accept that not all wizard apprentices turn out to be of equal talent or end up with equal levels of competence. Just like in every other field of human pursuits. You can learn the basic rules of chess in a few minutes, but you can also spend a lifetime mastering the game (and not everyone becomes a grand master, even if they try very hard!).

The world has never had a greater need for programmers than it does today. It's never had a greater need for *competent* programmers than it does today. Let's skip the overly self-deprecating nonsense that nobody knows what they're doing, and trying to learn things in depth is not for us.

You're not a clueless dog banging at the keyboard with no prospects of ever improving. You're a human of tremendous capacity to become good at what you do. Embrace that.

How external triggers affect you

Author NIR EYAL

NIR EYAL *writes, consults, and teaches about the intersection of psychology, technology, and business. Nir previously taught as a Lecturer in Marketing at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford. Nir co-founded and sold two tech companies since 2003 and was dubbed by The M.I.T. Technology Review as, "The Prophet of Habit-Forming Technology." He is the author of two bestselling books, Hooked and Indistractable. Nir invests in habit-forming products that improve users' lives.*

Struggling to stay focused? Knowing which external triggers serve you—and which ones don't—can help you get back on track.

It was 9 a.m. and Wendy, a freelance marketing consultant, knew exactly what she needed to do for the next hour: be in her office chair to write new client proposals, the most important task of her day.

She fired up her laptop and opened the client's file on her screen, eager to win new business. As she held her coffee mug with both hands and took a sip, a fantastic addition to the proposal entered her head. "This is going to be great!" she thought to herself.

But before she had a chance to write down the idea — "Ping!" Her phone buzzed with a notification.

Wendy ignored the intrusion at first. She jotted down a few words, but then the phone buzzed again with a different notification. This time her focus faltered, and she became curious. What if a client needed her? She picked up her phone, only to find out that a trivial tweet by a celebrity rapper was reverberating through social media. After tapping out of the app, another notification caught her eye. Her mom had messaged her to say good morning. Wendy fired off a quick heart emoji to let Mom know she was fine.

Oh, and what's this? There was a bright red notification bubble over the LinkedIn app icon. Perhaps there was a big business opportunity waiting? Nope. It was just a recruiter who'd viewed her profile and sent an introductory message.

Wendy was tempted to reply, but she remembered the time. It was now 9:20, and she hadn't made any progress on

her proposal. Worst of all, she'd forgotten the big idea she had been so excited to add to it.

"How did this happen?" she moaned to herself. Despite having important work to do, Wendy wasn't getting it done. She was, once again, distracted. Does this sound familiar?

These distractions aren't caused by internal triggers, such as intrusive thoughts. They're external triggers: cues that arise in your *environment* that prompt you to act, including notifications, pings, dings, alarms, and even other people.

External triggers are hard to ignore, but you can start to defend yourself by asking one question:

Is this trigger serving me, or am I serving it?

To understand why this question is so useful, let's look a bit more closely at the effect external triggers have on us.

How external triggers affect you

When BlackBerry launched push email in 2003, users rejoiced; they didn't need to constantly check their inbox for fear of missing important messages.

"When email comes, BlackBerry promised, your phone will tell you," David Pierce wrote in Wired magazine in 2017. Apple and Google soon followed, making notifications part of their phone operating systems. "Suddenly, there was a way for anyone to jump into your phone when they wanted your attention," Pierce continued. "Push notifications proved to be a marketer's dream: They're functionally impossible to tell apart from a text or email without looking, so you have to look before you can dismiss."

Checking those notifications comes at a high price. External triggers can rip us away from the task we planned to do at that moment. Researchers have found that when people are interrupted during a task, they tend to subsequently make up for lost time by working faster, but the cost is higher levels of stress and frustration.

The more we respond to external triggers, the more we train our brain in a never-ending stimulus-response loop.

We condition ourselves to respond instantly. Soon, it feels impossible to do what we've planned because we're constantly reacting to external triggers instead of attending to what's in front of us. When this happens, ***we're serving the trigger;*** it's not serving us.

Perhaps the answer is to simply ignore the external triggers. Maybe if we don't act on the notifications, phone calls, and interruptions, we can go about our business and quickly silence the interruptions when they happen.

Not so fast.

A study published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*: *Human Perception and Performance* found that receiving a cell phone notification but not replying to it was just as distracting as responding to a message or call.

Similarly, the authors of a study conducted at the University of Texas at Austin proposed that "the mere presence of one's smartphone may impose a 'brain drain' as limited-capacity attentional resources are recruited to inhibit automatic attention to one's phone, and are thus unavailable for engaging with the task at hand."

By having your phone in your field of view, your brain must work hard to ignore it. But if your phone isn't easily accessible or visually present, your brain is able to focus on

the task at hand. That's why I recommend purging unnecessary notifications to hack back your concentration.

Triggers aren't always bad

Not all external triggers are harmful to our focus. In many ways, we can use them to our advantage. For example, short text messages providing words of encouragement are effective at helping smokers quit (see also this habit tracker). A meta-study of interventions from ten countries found "The evidence provides unequivocal support for the efficacy of text messaging interventions to reduce smoking behavior," according to an author of the study.

The trouble is, despite the potential benefits external triggers can provide, receiving too many can wreak havoc on our productivity and happiness. How, then, can we separate the good external triggers from the bad? The secret lies in the answer to the crucial question:

Is this trigger serving me, or am I serving it?

This question helps you immediately identify what's helpful and what's not. From there, removing unhelpful external triggers is a simple step toward staying focused and getting more done. (Here's my complete guide to distraction-proofing your phone.)

When I challenged Wendy, the marketing consultant struggling to stay focused, to ask herself the critical question, it empowered her to start putting unhelpful external triggers in their place. She could begin to decide for herself which triggers led to traction instead of allowing her attention to be controlled by other people.

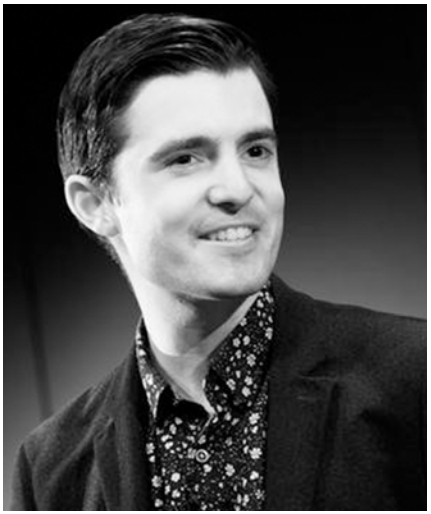
Viewing external triggers this way, we can treat them like what they are: tools.

If we use them properly, they can help us stay on track. If a trigger helps us do the thing we planned to do in our schedule, it's helping us gain traction. If it leads to distraction, then it isn't serving us.

Asking the critical question is an important step to becoming Indistractable.

> **External triggers are hard to ignore, but you can start to defend yourself by asking one question: Is this trigger serving me, or am I serving it?**

NIR EYAL
Writer, Consultant & Teacher



Our lives are so noisy

Author FRASER DOHERTY

FRASER DOHERTY MBE *is the founder of SuperJam – a 100% fruit jam company he started in Scotland at 14 using his grandmother's recipes. The company now supplies major retailers around the world and has won over 20 innovation and design awards. Fraser has been commended by the Prime Minister at Downing Street, by HRH Prince Charles and was awarded a medal (MBE) "for services to business" by The Queen. He is also the co-founder of Beer52; the world's largest craft beer club.*

Our lives are so noisy. Noisier than they've ever been before. The average person checks Facebook more than twenty times a day. We take in information all day long from the TV, radio, newspapers, billboards, tweets, posts, YouTube videos, memes, FourSquare, text messages, phone calls, Skype, instant messenger, email, post and then somehow, we even have some time left over for real life conversations with the people we live with, the people we work with and the people we love.

We seem to have lost the ability to stop and think deeply about one thing at a time. We take in hundreds of ideas from all over the place and instead of questioning each of them, we just take in the ones that fit and ignore the ones that don't. We're swamped with so much information that our brains are overloaded – we can barely think for ourselves anymore.

And it doesn't appear that anyone has any desire to live in the moment either, the here and the now. Nobody picks up the phone and says, 'hey, what are you doing, fancy a coffee right now?'. That would seem weird in the always-busy society that we have created. Collectively, we suffer from the illusion of having a plan. It is assumed that we're all busy right now. The moment is already taken. Today is already booked. Tomorrow is already booked too, so the here and now better just wait until next week.

We're constantly scanning hundreds of different information outlets, waiting for something to happen, waiting for our lives to happen, waiting for some stroke of luck that will make all of our dreams come true.

In our work, we often tend to get to the end of the day not really knowing what we achieved – have you ever felt that sinking feeling you feel when you leave the office after sitting at your computer for ten hours and then ask yourself, "what the hell did I actually do today?".

I think we've completely lost the ability to focus all of our

energy on doing one thing at a time. On doing a good job of one thing each day. Instead, we skim the surface of hundreds of ideas, hundreds of different tasks, not really doing the best we can at any of them and not fully achieving what we can with our lives.

What's worse, is that by not committing ourselves to any one thing, we don't really live, we just wait. People go to dinner parties and check their phone every five minutes. They go to parties and are always busy finding out what's happening someplace else. If they could just live in the moment a bit more, enjoy what they're doing at that exact second, life could be a lot more fulfilling and a lot more fun.

Something amazing happens when you start giving all of your attention to one thing at a time. Whether it's the conversations you're having, the ideas you're working on or the time you're spending with the people you love, if you give each moment your undivided attention, you get the best out of every situation and the best out of yourself.

Generally, we have so many options for how to spend our attention that we end up being completely scatter-brained. There are so many things that we can do with our careers, so many things that we can do with each day, that generally we just do nothing. Making a choice and a commitment to focus on one thing is often a step too far for us. Infinite choice has a paralyzing effect on our minds; it's easier to decide to do nothing than it is to pick from an infinite number of choices.

I feel like people tend to get very little work amongst all of this and end up never truly fulfilling themselves. I meet a lot of people who have no idea what to do with their lives – paralysed by the limitless opportunities for work that our globalized, digitized world provides. There used to be a time when most decisions were made for you – you'd work in the local mill or factory and live the same life as your parents and the same life as everyone else around you. But now, the choice of what to do with your life is completely up to you – the choice of what to do every day is more or less up to you.

In the book 'The 48 Hour Start-up', I want to show what can happen in just 48 hours of undivided attention. By focussing all of my energy on working on one simple idea for two days, it's amazing how much ground can be covered. If we remove the constant interruptions of phone calls and Facebook updates from our lives, we can begin to work on tasks more deeply, enjoy our lives more and have experiences with the people around us that are more meaningful.

The 48 Hour Start-up is an experiment in focus. If you just devote all of your energy to a task that has a simple and clearly defined goal, you can achieve in days what you previously thought would take years. And, if you do try starting a business in the usual way, with all of the distractions and putting things off that our normal approach to life brings, it may well take you years.

How to keep stress under control

Author DR. TRAVIS BRADBERRY

DR. TRAVIS BRADBERRY *is the award-winning, #1 bestselling author of Emotional Intelligence Habits. His books have sold more than 3 million copies. Dr. Bradberry is a LinkedIn Influencer and a regular contributor to Forbes, Inc., Entrepreneur, The World Economic Forum, and The Huffington Post. He has written for, or been covered by, Newsweek, Time, Business-Week, Fortune, Fast Company, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Harvard Business Review.*

The ability to manage your emotions and remain calm under pressure has a direct link to your performance. I've conducted research with more than a million people and found that 90% of top performers are skilled at managing their emotions in times of stress in order to remain calm and in control.

If you follow my work, you've read some startling research summaries that explore the havoc stress can wreak on one's physical and mental health (such as the Yale study, which found that prolonged stress causes degeneration in the area of the brain responsible for self-control). The tricky thing about stress (and the anxiety that comes with it) is that it's an absolutely necessary emotion. Our brains are wired such that it's difficult to take action until we feel at least some level of this emotional state. In fact, performance peaks under the heightened activation that comes with moderate levels of stress. As long as the stress isn't prolonged, it's harmless.

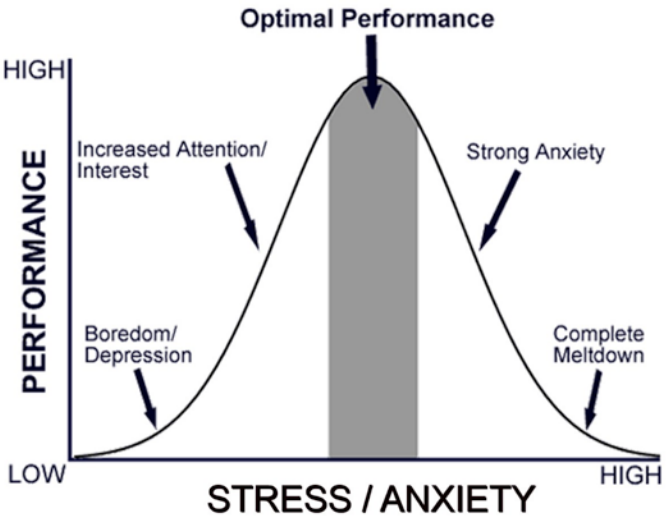
Research from the University of California, Berkeley, reveals an upside to experiencing moderate levels of stress. But it also reinforces how important it is to keep stress under control. The study, led by post-doctoral fellow Elizabeth Kirby, found that the onset of stress entices the brain into growing new cells responsible for improved memory. However, this effect is only seen when stress is intermittent. As soon as the stress continues beyond a few moments into a prolonged state, it suppresses the brain's ability to develop new cells.

"I think intermittent stressful events are probably what keeps the brain more alert, and you perform better when you are alert," Kirby says. For animals, intermittent stress is the bulk of what they experience, in the form of physical threats in their immediate environment. Long ago, this was also the case for humans. As the human brain evolved and increased in complexity, we've developed the ability to

worry and perseverate on events, which creates frequent experiences of prolonged stress.

Besides increasing your risk of heart disease, depression, and obesity, stress decreases your cognitive performance. Fortunately, though, unless a lion is chasing you, the bulk of your stress is subjective and under your control. Top performers have well-honed coping strategies that they employ under stressful circumstances. This lowers their stress levels regardless of what's happening in their environment, ensuring that the stress they experience is intermittent and not prolonged.

While I've run across numerous effective strategies that successful people employ when faced with stress, what follows are ten of the best. Some of these strategies may seem obvious, but the real challenge lies in recognizing when you need to use them and having the wherewithal to actually do so in spite of your stress.



They Appreciate What They Have

Taking time to contemplate what you're grateful for isn't merely the "right" thing to do. It also improves your mood, because it reduces the stress hormone cortisol by 23%. Research conducted at the University of California, Davis found that people who worked daily to cultivate an attitude of gratitude experienced improved mood, energy, and physical well-being. It's likely that lower levels of cortisol played a major role in this.

They Avoid Asking "What If?"

"What if?" statements throw fuel on the fire of stress and worry. Things can go in a million different directions, and the more time you spend worrying about the possibilities, the less time you'll spend focusing on taking action that will calm you down and keep your stress under control. Calm people know that asking "what if? will only take them to a place they don't want—or need—to go.

They Stay Positive

Positive thoughts help make stress intermittent by focusing your brain's attention onto something that is completely stress-free. You have to give your wandering brain a little help by consciously selecting something positive to think about. Any positive thought will do to refocus your attention. When things are going well, and your mood is good, this is relatively easy. When things are going poorly, and your mind is flooded with negative thoughts, this can be a challenge. In these moments, think about your day and identify one positive thing that happened, no matter how small. If you can't think of something from the current day, reflect on the previous day or even the previous week. Or perhaps you're looking forward to an exciting event that you can focus your attention on. The point here is that you

must have something positive that you're ready to shift your attention to when your thoughts turn negative.

They Disconnect

Given the importance of keeping stress intermittent, it's easy to see how taking regular time off the grid can help keep your stress under control. When you make yourself available to your work 24/7, you expose yourself to a constant barrage of stressors. Forcing yourself offline and even—gulp! —turning off your phone gives your body a break from a constant source of stress. Studies have shown that something as simple as an email break can lower stress levels.

Technology enables constant communication and the expectation that you should be available 24/7. It is extremely difficult to enjoy a stress-free moment outside of work when an email that will change your train of thought and get you thinking (read: stressing) about work can drop onto your phone at any moment. If detaching yourself from work-related communication on weekday evenings is too big a challenge, then how about the weekend? Choose blocks of time where you cut the cord and go offline. You'll be amazed at how refreshing these breaks are and how they reduce stress by putting a mental recharge into your weekly schedule. If you're worried about the negative repercussions of taking this step, first try doing it at times when you're unlikely to be contacted—maybe Sunday morning. As you grow more comfortable with it, and as your co-workers begin to accept the time you spend offline, gradually expand the amount of time you spend away from technology.

They Limit Their Caffeine Intake

Drinking caffeine triggers the release of adrenaline. Adrenaline is the source of the "fight-or-flight" response, a survival mechanism that forces you to stand up and fight or run for the hills when faced with a threat. The fight-or-flight mechanism sidesteps rational thinking in favor of a faster response. This is great when a bear is chasing you, but not so great when you're responding to a curt email. When caffeine puts your brain and body into this hyper aroused state of stress, your emotions overrun your behavior. The stress that caffeine creates is far from intermittent, as its long half-life ensures that it takes its sweet time working its way out of your body.

They Sleep

I've beaten this one to death over the years and can't say enough about the importance of sleep to increasing your emotional intelligence and managing your stress levels. When you sleep, your brain literally recharges, shuffling through the day's memories and storing or discarding them (which causes dreams), so that you wake up alert and clear-headed. Your self-control, attention, and memory are all reduced when you don't get enough—or the right kind—of sleep. Sleep deprivation raises stress hormone levels on its own, even without a stressor present. Stressful projects often make you feel as if you have no time to sleep, but taking the time to get a decent night's sleep is often the one thing keeping you from getting things under control.

They Squash Negative Self-Talk

A big step in managing stress involves stopping negative self-talk in its tracks. The more you ruminate on negative thoughts, the more power you give them. Most of our negative thoughts are just that—thoughts, not facts. When you find yourself believing the negative and pessimistic things your inner voice says, it's time to stop and write them down. Literally stop what you're doing and write down

what you're thinking. Once you've taken a moment to slow down the negative momentum of your thoughts, you will be more rational and clear-headed in evaluating their veracity.

You can bet that your statements aren't true any time you use words like "never," "worst," "ever," etc. If your statements still look like facts once they're on paper, take them to a friend or colleague you trust and see if he or she agrees with you. Then the truth will surely come out. When it feels like something always or never happens, this is just your brain's natural threat tendency inflating the perceived frequency or severity of an event. Identifying and labeling your thoughts as thoughts by separating them from the facts will help you escape the cycle of negativity and move toward a positive new outlook.

They Reframe Their Perspective

Stress and worry are fueled by our own skewed perception of events. It's easy to think that unrealistic deadlines, unforgiving bosses, and out-of-control traffic are the reasons we're so stressed all the time. You can't control your circumstances, but you can control how you respond to them. So, before you spend too much time dwelling on something, take a minute to put the situation in perspective. If you aren't sure when you need to do this, try looking for clues that your anxiety may not be proportional to the stressor. If you're thinking in broad, sweeping statements such as "Everything is going wrong" or "Nothing will work out," then you need to reframe the situation. A great way to correct this unproductive thought pattern is to list the specific things that actually are going wrong or not working out. Most likely you will come up with just some things—not everything—and the scope of these stressors will look much more limited than it initially appeared.

They Breathe

The easiest way to make stress intermittent lies in something that you have to do every day anyway: breathing. The practice of being in the moment with your breathing will begin to train your brain to focus solely on the task at hand and get the stress monkey off your back. When you're feeling stressed, take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing. Close the door, put away all other distractions, and just sit in a chair and breathe. The goal is to spend the entire time focused only on your breathing, which will prevent your mind from wandering. Think about how it feels to breathe in and out.

This sounds simple, but it's hard to do for more than a minute or two. It's all right if you get side-tracked by another thought; this is sure to happen at the beginning, and you just need to bring your focus back to your breathing. If staying focused on your breathing proves to be a real struggle, try counting each breath in and out until you get to 20, and then start again from 1. Don't worry if you lose count; you can always just start over.

This task may seem too easy or even a little silly, but you'll be surprised by how calm you feel afterward and how much easier it is to let go of distracting thoughts that otherwise seem to have lodged permanently inside your brain.

They Use Their Support System

It's tempting, yet entirely ineffective, to attempt tackling everything by yourself. To be calm and productive, you need to recognize your weaknesses and ask for help when you need it. This means tapping into your support system when a situation is challenging enough for you to feel overwhelmed. Everyone has someone at work and/or outside work who is on their team, rooting for them, and ready to help them get the best from a difficult situation. Identify

these individuals in your life and make an effort to seek their insight and assistance when you need it. Something as simple as talking about your worries will provide an outlet for your anxiety and stress and supply you with a new perspective on the situation. Most of the time, other people can see a solution that you can't because they are not as emotionally invested in the situation. Asking for help will mitigate your stress and strengthen your relationships with those you rely upon.

Stress and worry are fueled by our own skewed perception of events. It's easy to think that unrealistic deadlines, unforgiving bosses, and out-of-control traffic are the reasons we're so stressed all the time. You can't control your circumstances, but you can control how you respond to them.

DR. TRAVIS BRADBERRY

Award-winning, #1 bestselling author and LinkedIn influencer

Sleep is not a disposable luxury - it's a non-negotiable biological necessity

Author LOUIS BOUCHARD

LOUIS BOUCHARD *is a researcher, YouTuber, and community manager. He is co-founder of Toward's AI and owner of "What's AI".*

"Sleep is not a disposable luxury-it's a non-negotiable biological necessity." - Matthew Walker

While it may not sound obvious to many, there's, in fact, one thing you can do that will allow you to have more time to do what you love while you're on earth. Not only that, but it will improve your quality of life by making you happier, more productive, wealthier, and healthier. It will even help you fight most diseases that exist. Oh, and there are no downsides to it and it is completely free. With that said, how could you not implement it in your life?

In a recent interview, I got asked what would be the one book everyone should read as soon as possible in their lives. Being an artificial intelligence researcher and entrepreneur, the answer seemed obvious: **Why We Sleep:** Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams by Matthew Walker, Ph.D.

Before you ask, yes, this is **the most relevant book** for my work and yours too. It will change your conception of sleep forever as it did for me and improve your life in ways you couldn't even imagine. Read it or listen to the fantastic audiobook version, as you wish, but go through it as soon as you can. You will not regret the time you **invest** going through this bestseller. The sooner you read this gem the longer and better your life will be.

I assume most of the readers of this book either preach or have heard mentors saying that you should sleep less to do more, heard stories of people sleeping 4-5 hours a night, start working before everyone and leaving the building after everyone. This article aims to debunk this myth and be quite controversial in a way, preaching the opposite. I will detail **key points that marked me regarding the benefits of sleeping more** (7–8 hours) and how you can **improve your sleep**. But first, let's start with a quote from Matthew Walker himself;

From the point of view of survival and evolution, sleep only makes sense if it is essential to life.- Matthew Walker

Indeed, why else would we voluntarily shut down for 8 hours, defenseless, and risk not waking up every day if it wasn't something necessary? To me, this simple fact is convincing enough to understand its importance and necessity, and therefore the danger of lacking sleep. We hear too many entrepreneurs, inventors, and even some athletes vent the merits of sleeping 4 hours a day, and it has to change. Thanks to Matthew Walker and other specialists popularizing the subject and discovering the real power of sleep, I believe it will happen. Being a fervent advocate of sharing and explaining science, my goal here is to spread the beauty of sleep within my community, since both researchers and entrepreneurs tend to cut sleep to check more boxes in their to-do lists, while it will have the opposite effect on the long run.

(8 hours of) Sleep has many benefits. Here's only 6 of them:

Sleep helps with A LOT of diseases, but lack of sleep also worsens a lot of them. Your immune system needs sleep to fight off diseases and infections.

This study by Michiaki Nagai et al. shared that sleeping **6 hr or less, or 9 hr or more, had up to 1.7 times the total age-adjusted death rate of sleeping 7 or 8 hr per night.** Similarly, the American Cancer Society has seen that this rate went **up to 2.80 times with less than 4 hours!** Indeed, the relationship between our immune system and sleep duration has been reported to be U-shaped, and aiming at **7-8 hours of sleep** seems to be the sweet spot for most people.

REM sleep bolsters learning and memory. Deep or rapid eye movement (REM) sleep changes your brain's neuronal structure by creating new connections for learning what's essential and deleting useless connections that would act as noise or unnecessary information. A good night of sleep is often much better than studying the night before an exam. Not only to be fresh and ready for the exam but even for learning.

NREM sleep aids physical recovery. Non-REM sleep is when you wind down, and your body recovers. It both heals physically and allows you to recover from illnesses. NREM sleep makes you feel rested and has a function for memory consolidation, which is another reason why sleeping is better than studying a few more hours before the deadline.

Lack of sleep makes driving deadly. Drowsy driving can be more dangerous than alcohol. Even if you are unaware of it, having less than 5 hours of sleep can cause you to have "microsleeps". They happen when you are sleepy, mostly at night, but also during the day if you don't get enough rest. Microsleeps are momentary gaps in awareness, where your brain literally shuts off for a short time and can be deadly when driving.

Sleep helps us regulate our appetite and make healthier food choices. Enough sleep is a powerful diet for weight loss in itself. Also, when you sleepin', you can't be eatin'!

Sleep is highly correlated with your willpower. Studies [1,2,3] have linked sleep with emotional regulation and our decisions. **Lacking sleep will make you feel more frustrated and impulsive**, which will hurt your patience for learning something new or tackling difficult tasks. **Poor sleep quality will also damage your decision-making process.** Similarly to food, you will be more likely to make good short-term decisions, e.g., for taste, than good long-term

decisions, e.g., the healthy choice. But this happens for all decisions you will take during the day, whether watching TV over learning to play the Piano or making a risky investment over a safer long-term play when your current situation doesn't allow you to take such risks.

Now that you know these benefits of a good night of sleep, you may want to implement it right away and have difficulty doing so. Here are my preferred tips from the book to help you change your sleeping habits for the better.

Eight tips to improve your sleep quality and time

1. **Find a routine.** Humans are creatures of habits and it will help to fall asleep if you stick to the same schedule every day.

2. **Cut the late-night sports.** Late-night cardio can make it hard to wind down and fall asleep. Save this for the morning or when you feel your best to work out. But don't slack on physical exercises! **Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity** per week for your wellbeing, and it will help you fall asleep more easily.

3. **Reduce caffeine and nicotine consumption.** Caffeine has a half-life of about 5 hours. This means you will still have half the caffeine in your system 5 hours after your coffee, half of this 5 hours later, etc. Try not to take coffee, or opt for decaf, after 1 pm or so!

4. **Eat light at night.** Eating heavy meals can be hard for digestion and wreck your sleep. Same for drinks. You're not sleeping if you need to empty your bladder every hour!

5. **Leave time to unwind.** Close your screens a few hours before sleep and take the time to read instead, or use blue-light-blocking glasses and other apps to reduce the blue lights of your devices.

6. **Avoid lying in bed for too long.** Your bed, and room, should be reserved for sleep so your brain can associate it with sleeping and not other activities.

7. **Follow your circadian rhythm.** If your job allows it, start working earlier or later in the day, depending on when your body naturally falls asleep. We are not all made for 8–5 work. Some people naturally fall asleep much later and cannot have 8 hours of good sleep if they wake up at 6 am.

8. **Melatonin and sleeping pills can help you fall asleep, but using them may not be the best solution for your case.** There are many reasons why you could have trouble sleeping, and they cannot all be fixed with melatonin or drugs. Talk to a sleep specialist! If you feel tired every morning, try asking your doctor about sleep apnea! It is much more common than we think and might be worth looking into that! The solution is becoming pretty cheap and less invasive.

I hope this article could help you understand why sleep is beautiful, convince you to learn more about it, and not underestimate its necessity. Learn more about sleep in Matthew Walker's fantastic book or new podcast, "The Matt Walker Podcast".

If you can take one thing out of this short article is that you

should aim for 8 hours of sleep daily. I understand that it may feel like a lack of valuable time as you could have 2-3 additional hours every day to work on your startup, but this will reduce your life's duration and even its quality. You might not feel it right now, but try to sleep 7-8 hours a day for a week straight, and you'll feel the difference. Try to put in some exercises and reduce your calorie intake while you're at it! All these things will allow you to work more efficiently and for much longer. Why work for 16 hours if you can manage the same output with half the time?

Oh, and just remember that you cannot "catch up" sleep! 5 hours on the weekdays and 10 hours on the weekends won't work! Sleep hours cannot be banked, but it's not too late to switch for the best and start living your best life, with enough sleep!

“My recurring dream”

Author DAVID COHEN

DAVID COHEN *is the Founder and Chairman at Techstars, the worldwide network that helps entrepreneurs succeed. David has been an entrepreneur and investor for his entire life. He has only had one job interview in his career, successfully got that job but then quit shortly thereafter to start his first company. Since then, he has founded several companies and has invested in hundreds of startups such as Uber, Twilio, SendGrid, Digital Ocean, Pillpack, Classpass, Zipline, Scopely, Outreach, Remitly, SalesLoft, and DataRobot. In total, these investments have gone on to create more than $210B in value.*

My dad died 25 years ago. For a few years, I’ve had this article on my to do list and the due date has arrived. I was both looking forward to it and dreading it a bit.

After 25 years, your memories of someone who is gone tend to condense. They’re summarized in your brain like a highlight reel. Those highlights, I suspect, represent the core of what the person meant to you. So, what are the highlights that are left in my brain about my dad?

First, **humor**. There were many times when my father would literally be laughing so hard that he was unable to talk or breathe. He loved the Pink Panther movies and we’d watch them over and over together. We’d be on family vacations playing some stupid board game and we’d need to wait 10-15 minutes until we all stopped laughing. He had a great sense of humor and these are my fondest memories of him. As a specific example, the clip below would always set him off for 10 minutes or longer.

The second highlight of him in my brain is **kindness**. Whether it was rescuing and caring for 11 puppies found underneath his office building abandoned by their mother, or giving a yard work job to someone down on their luck

Credit David Cohen

that nobody else would give a chance, this epitomized my dad.

The third highlight was of him as an **entrepreneur**. He started his own accounting firm and merged it with another. And it was built to last.

Even though he's been gone twenty years, that firm is still going today and is called Cohen, Smith and Company which I view as quite an honor. I used to work in his company doing payroll data entry for his clients when I was a kid. I remember being amazed that you could build a company from the ground up, create jobs for people, and make it in your own image.

In his own way, he was making the world a better place for his customers, his employees, and his family.

Fourth, he was a really good **tennis** player. He had an amazing slice backhand. He taught me how to play at a beautiful tennis club that he helped build with a bunch of other families (another entrepreneurial activity).

I remember going to the site with him that was nothing more than a field of kudzu that he had to chop down along the path just to show us where the courts would be. I basically grew up at that club.

Since he passed away, I've had a recurring dream. It's happening less often now, but for a while there it was 4 or 5 times a year.

In that dream, we're usually on a vacation, just spending time with each other. It's the current year, my family is there, my kids, my wife, my brother, my sister, and my mom. And my dad. He's just there, and it's normal. We all seem to understand that he died, but in the dream it's common knowledge that even though that happened, he's just back. He looks just like he did 20 years ago, although everyone else has aged. There's nothing special about the scene, he's just a part of it. He's laughing and smiling, he's a part of the normal conversation. Inside the dream, I know I'm dreaming. I'm hoping I don't wake up for a while.

Credit David Cohen

I'm on the right next to a tennis pro and another kid

When I finally do wake up, I have a thankful feeling for being able to spend a few more minutes with him. And it reminds me to laugh, play tennis, be kind, spend time with family, dream, and change the world for the better. Just like he did. I like that dream.

What your dog can teach you

Author STEVE BLAKEMAN

STEVE BLAKEMAN *is LinkedIn Top Voice, entrepreneur and best selling author. He has over 300,000 followers on LinkedIn and has been named as Top 10 Writer on the platform for the past 4 years.*

This is Baxter. He is my 10 year old Golden Retriever. And like most canines I reckon that he can teach us a few things which can help us boost our careers. You don't believe me? Read on...

To be clear, I'm not claiming that Baxter is the smartest pooch on the planet. Far from it. He has numerous flaws. Case in point, he likes butt sniffing (although in business, some might say that is a quality). That said, I reckon that he does possess many admirable qualities which can be related to business which, if we adopted them, would make us much happier and more successful.

Ok I can almost see that cynical look on your face but bear with me... I have detected 10 behaviours that I believe all of us could benefit from copying:

1. Baxter doesn't care if you talk about him behind his back

Dogs don't give two barks about what people say when they aren't listening. They are impervious to gossip because frankly they just don't care. Bax may well have eaten another one of my socks and I will curse about it when I find

Credit: Steve Blakeman

the remains of it the day after but he simply isn't interested. He lives in the moment. If I catch him about to eat one of my socks and admonish him for it, he totally gets that though. He looks sheepishly down at the ground, knows he has done wrong and is immediately contrite. And there are two valuable lessons to be learned here.

Firstly, don't worry what people are saying about you when you are not there to defend yourself - you can't control it anyway. And secondly, if you are caught out then accept it for what it is, show some genuine remorse and move on.

2. Baxter is an old dog but he can learn new tricks

The old adage is nonsense, it is possible to teach an old dog new tricks. Baxter's capacity to learn new things is always endearing. With the right incentive (in his case it's bananas - I know he is a dog not a Monkey or a Minion but he adores bananas) you can teach him pretty much anything. Well ok maybe not how to host a Zoom call, but you know what I mean. My daughter Lexi has recently taught him how to spin around through a combination of patience and persistence (and bananas).

There is a clear lesson that we can all learn here. It may be a cliche but it happens to be true - you are never too old to learn something new. You just have to want to do it and have the right impetus to make you succeed. The question you have to ask yourself then is very simple: what is my banana?

3. Baxter knows that you have to trust in someone

Bax had an operation to have a rather alarming looking mole removed from his leg (which, if you are concerned, turned out to be benign). Anyway, the operation wound was pretty large and had to be dressed each day to ensure that it didn't become infected. We had to clean the site where the stitches were and initially, he was apprehensive, not quite sure why we were making him roll over and then messing around with his leg. He was clearly in a little distress and elicited the odd whimper to let us know he was in pain. Yet he never once tried to pull away completely or snap at us whilst we were fixing him up. He trusted us. A trust that has built up over the years so now he knows that we would never do anything to harm him.

That's the kind of trust that work colleagues often don't have. Petty politics or a personality clash are often at play which prevents people from truly trusting one another and that is to their collective detriment.

4. Baxter knows there is always another solution to a problem

Dogs are incredibly resourceful when it comes to getting what they want. With Bax it's usually a plan to procure himself some more food (did I mention he is partial to bananas?) but the example I have chosen to exemplify my point is actually related to his operation which I mentioned in the previous point.

To prevent him from messing with the wound he had to wear one of those silly plastic cones on his head. He was not a big fan of it and looked thoroughly fed up every time we put it on. The vet had said that there was no way he would be able to get to the wound with the cone on. Our vet clearly doesn't know Baxter that well.

After the first week we noticed he had popped a stitch and we couldn't work out how. Until I caught him the next evening (when he thought he was alone) and it was clear that he had developed a cunning technique to bend the edge of the cone against his back leg so he could nibble on the itchy stitches.

It's clear that Baxter has developed some highly effective problem-solving skills over the years and is displaying another of his admirable traits. Unwavering determination.

5. Can you pass Baxter's sniff test?
Generally speaking, Bax is very friendly to other dogs and people. That said, he doesn't offer up his friendship unless you have passed his smell test (and by this, I don't exclusively mean his aforementioned butt sniffing habit). Baxter has a keen sense of whether other dogs or people are going to be good or bad. He weighs up any new quarry with a sense of excitement and caution (I think it relates back to a time when he was bullied by an over energetic Pug at a park a few years ago but that's another story). I'm not exactly sure what thought process he goes through when he is examining people / dogs but it seems to be a mixture of what they look like, what their body language is and I guess (literally) what they smell like.

The decision process takes just a couple of seconds before he chooses to greet them or give them a wide berth. And do you know what? He is very rarely wrong. He almost instinctively knows if something is 'off' with the people and dogs or comes into contact with and acts accordingly. Imagine if you could have that innate skill in business to know almost from the outset whether you are dealing with a wrong 'un?

6. Baxter doesn't hold a grudge
When we moved into our new house a few years ago Bax was introduced to our next door neighbour's dog. A Rhodesian Ridgeback called Ralph. Now Baxter is a fairly big dog but Ralph is huge. We have since learned that Ralph is really quite docile but it seems that Baxter's initial smell test hadn't properly kicked in and before we knew it Ralph was trying to play the wheelbarrow game with poor old Baxter. He didn't really know what was going on, bless him, but he did look a little perturbed by the whole incident. Since that day, I always expected that Baxter would be somewhat wary of Ralph in case he tried it again but the

Credit: Steve Blakeman

two of them get on famously now and we've never had a repeat performance. So, it's clear to me that Baxter can forgive a one-off indiscretion. After all we all make mistakes and sometimes, we just have to let it go.

7. Baxter is always ready for anything
Trying to get your kids out of bed at 3am if you are going on holiday is like pulling teeth. With Bax, not so much. He will yawn and stretch a little but will always be ready and willing to do whatever you want to do no matter the time of day or night especially if there is a banana on offer. Now ask yourself if your work colleagues would do the same? Especially if the only thing you offered them was a banana?

8. Baxter gets very excited when he is happy
Like most dogs, Bax is incredibly social and loves being with the family (including our menagerie of rodents and

rabbits). Whenever I come home from a business trip, he is always the one to make the biggest fuss of me when I walk in through the door. He barges everyone else out of the way, tail wagging furiously, running around in tight circles like a Tasmanian Devil. And I believe that, in itself, is a skill - to demonstrate pure unadulterated joy when they are happy.

We all have the same capacity when we are young but we lose it over the years, not wishing to 'embarrass' ourselves by such honest displays of emotion. It's even worse in business. Even when we win a chunk of new business or a colleague gets promoted it's rare to witness anyone getting too excited about it. More's the pity.

9. Baxter is a great listener

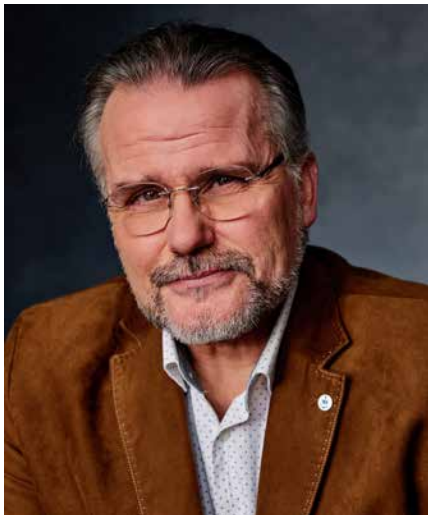
Ok I admit it. I occasionally talk to my dog (but I bet I'm not the only one out there). He isn't much of a conversationalist to be fair. He's also not brilliant at handing out advice. He pretty much just sits there, drooling, his head cocked to one side and with a slightly quizzical expression on his face. But what he lacks in dialogue he more than makes up for in his listening skills. He will sit there for ages soaking it all up, listening intently to every word, never answering back or interrupting and absolutely never being judgmental. And sometimes, just sometimes, that's all you need after a tough week at work. A sympathetic ear just to listen to your troubles without fear of retribution. The chances are that he is only thinking about eating a banana but that's just fine with me... he deserves it.

10. Baxter welcomes change

There was a recent addition to the household recently with the arrival of a new pup called Blu. When we brought him home, I was filled with trepidation as I wasn't sure how Bax would react – he had been top dog for so long, introducing another dog into his domain was not without risk. But I needn't have worried. Baxter welcomed the furry terrorist with open paws and the two of them are the firmest of friends. Now imagine that same scenario playing out at work? A new young pup suddenly arrives in your work environment and aims to take over almost straight away. Would you be as accommodating as Baxter was?

So, there you have it, my 10 reasons why we can learn some real-life skills from dogs which can help us in our careers. What do you think? Am I barking mad or do you think I may have a point? Whilst you ponder that, I'm off for a chat with Baxter. And we might even share a banana...

Success is nothing more than a 'bus stop' at one moment in time



Author LUCIEN ENGELEN

LUCIEN ENGELEN *is the CEO at Transform.Health. He is a Linkedin Influencer 800K+ followers/ 150K+ subscribers newsletter. He is Global Strategist Digital health for Deloitte's Center for the Edge and Vodafone, where he leads Global Digital Health next to still working at Laurentius Medical Center. He is also a public speaker, where he touches on how the intersection of technology and (patient) empowerment is creating momentum for delocalization of healthcare.*

1. You talk about the rat race defining our society at the moment. What is the rat race?

We need to step back every now and then to reflect, to see what is (not) happening, and getting away from the rat race defining our society at the moment. Are we going to do it a little bit better, a little bit cheaper, a little bit more quality or do we take a different paradigm to work from?

We have to dream about that, next to doing stuff that gets the things done that need to be done right now.

2. You have worked on creating sustainable global healthcare for all for some time now. Is there anything you think you should have done differently?

Although I think we need to make sure we will be able to leave no one behind in our endeavor to bring more health to as many people as possible, if I had to start all over, I would focus more on building the coalition of the willing. Too much time goes into trying to convince negative influence, unwillingness, and simple naysaying that, in the end, distracts from the actual improvement that could have an impact tomorrow. It is utopian to think we can implement good solutions for everyone from the get-go. Many 'commodities' of today once were only available to the 'happy-few' like the color-TV, the internet, and smartphones.

3. Are you inspired by problems?

To see the challenges we face boosts my ambitions and inspiration to think with different lenses to find solutions that often are 'off'. With that, igniting others, and myself to view the problem with a different mindset and sometimes actually be able to implement that different thinking into an actual solution.

4. What advice would you give to others who want to be better at doing?

Make things small(er), take baby steps, create little tangible facts based on what you are dreaming of, and make them into a reality. Keep track of the heading, accept things will

not all work out well (right away), but don't let yourself be distracted from the end goal in your dream.

5. How will the internet continue to change the healthcare sector?
Global coverage of internet service on every inch of the planet by suborbital satellites, will increase the number of people coming online, the knowledge that will become unlocked, and the opportunity for remote healthcare. On the other hand, it also will bring new challenges to factual information and data and increase the amount of fake news.

6. Do you have any role models? Do they have anything in common?
Many people have influenced my (professional) life, from artists to regular workers, from patients, doctors, and nurses to Presidents and (former) CEOs. What they all had/have in common is they have a clear approach and were able to vocalize that in simple terms to create shared values and beliefs.

7. What are your three most important tools in your daily work?
The most important 'tools' in my daily life and work are people, my intrinsic curiosity, and authentic worries about the future for mankind

8. What impacts you?
To (gradually) see having an impact that matters in the lives of (individual) patients, professionals, and industry, one step at a time. I (no longer) believe in big steps being made for the many challenges we face.

9. How do you define success?
I don't! I think success is nothing more than a 'bus stop' at one moment in time. It kind of describes an end-state where we can sit back and relax while the effort should be continuously improved.

10. What challenges related to healthcare are you working on currently?
For the big challenges, healthcare has doubled in demand, shortages of skilled personnel, and lack of budget. We need to find a different path to improve the current system.

One of the pathways I'm working on is to explore with (big) retail opportunities they can help with in de-medicalizing part of healthcare by bringing convenience and adequate user interfaces to touchpoints in healthcare.

With digital and physical in near to the citizens/patients. With that, I hope to 'carve out up to 30% of the current healthcare, so replacing, not cutting, with that create space and resources for the healthcare system to cope with the increase of demand and prevent a total stand-still as we've seen during the pandemic but then in a structural state.

Brand activism is a “hero trap”

Author THOMAS KOLSTER

THOMAS KOLSTER *is a frontrunner and one of the most recognised thinkers globally where marketing, business and sustainability meet. He has written two books: Goodvertising & The Hero Trap. Thomas has delivered keynotes and workshops in over 70 markets for clients like Facebook, P&G, and IKEA and at conferences such as TEDx and SXSW. He has also judged top awards such as Jury President at D&AD and Jury at Cannes Lions.*

Brands shouldn’t be activists but should turn people into activists for better living!

I used to believe in purpose. And its chest-thumping cousin: Brand activism. I’ve applauded and encouraged brands to fight injustices or struggle for our planet. Good Lord, I even wrote a book about it called “Goodvertising” (Thames & Hudson 2012). But I have to take a hatchet to my beliefs because history is not siding with our current approach to purpose. One month ago, a police officer had barely lifted his knee from George Floyd’s neck before every brand and CEO was screaming, “BLM, BLM, BLM!” I see the same pattern repeat itself every time. Whether the climate, ocean plastic or diminishing bee populations, it’s always the same. Purpose shouldn’t be a crusade to show which brand cares or sacrifices most.

Imagine if you kick open the door to a bar and shout, “I’m the world’s best lover!” No one would believe you. Why would it be any different as a world saviour? Take what Patagonia is saying, “We’re in business to save our home planet.” It sounds like self-important navel gazing from a company that essentially sells T-shirts to young men stuck in pokey Brooklyn apartments wanting to feel outdoorsy. But Patagonia can get away with it because they’re a legacy brand that can break the rules. For almost any other brand, you’re setting yourself up for failure and criticism if you do the same. If you try to fly like superman, you will eventually fall like a can of soup. Every day I witness failures and missteps, and more and more people growing critical towards brands playing heroes.

There are simply too many Mother Teresas

When every brand is pitching itself as Mother Teresa or Gandhi – who can be believed? Every brand can claim to have a big role to play in your life as their burning why. But if you can’t see or feel the outcome, it’s another broken

promise. What brand has changed your life for the better? Taught you something new? Made you healthier? Sparked new thinking? Probably not many. My list was very short, which proves there's plenty of space for brands to play a meaningful role in our lives rather than simply shouting their world-bettering ambitions at us like a Pope on speed.

Less about buying, more about becoming

Wearing a T-shirt decrying ocean plastic is the easiest thing in the world. It demands almost no effort. Being generous cannot be bought; it's something you earn through time and effort.

During the pandemic, we've seen people embrace a reality where it's less about buying and more about realising dreams, goals and ambitions. It's about guitar lessons, yoga, community work, baking and even knitting.

I'll argue we're heading towards a post-purpose marketplace, in which people are no longer buying what you make or why you make it, but instead who you can help them become. It's all about the difference you can enable in someone's life.

Patagonia can claim to be "in business to save our home planet," but compare that to a statement from a Danish organic food box delivery service, Aarstiderne. Their mission is spreading "the joy of organic produce and great tasting meals." As a customer, I'm improving my cooking and learning how to make great tasting organic vegetarian meals. I'm thankful for the new-found cooking skills, which I can enjoy and share with friends. I don't actually buy their organic produce. I buy who Aarstiderne helps me become: A better plant-based cook. We don't need more brands preaching, we need coaches who can help us achieve our goals or overcome obstacles.

Change begins with asking: Who can you help people become?

If we are to create change, we have to take a new view on leadership. It's a move from why your brand matters to understanding how you can help me become who I want to be.

Very few brands have been able to bridge the purpose gap and get people to move from buying into the purpose to actually buying the product. The intention is there, but action doesn't follow. After years of advising leaders and brands on purpose, I finally realised what the missing link was: the very people you are supposed to serve and consequently motivate. I looked to coaching methodologies and psychotherapy to understand how to move people from inaction to action, from unfulfilled to fulfilled.

One simple but essential question helped spark the needed change: Who can you help me become? People are no longer buying marketing messages or a brand's goodwilled approach; they're looking for a personal change. Anyone can sell them things, stories or identity, but very few brands can help people achieve their goals. It's moving the relationship from transactional to transformational, helping people be more, do more, see more, and experience more!

Your brand's dreams versus my dreams

I did one commissioned study comparing well-known purposeful commercials like Budweiser's "Wind Never Felt Better" with transformational commercials like Always' famous "Like A Girl" commercial. The findings were clear. People are 29.5% more motivated to act on transformational messaging.

It's dangerous to climb the purpose pedestal and put on the hero's mantle. And it's even more treacherous to put on a balaclava and behave like an activist. I realised years ago

how difficult it is to create change. We are our own biggest barriers to the change we want to see in our lives – and this is where brands have a truly meaningful role to play. Every brand can claim to be diverse, but the outcome I can feel and appreciate is a brand that has helped me overcome some of my own biases. Dear brands, don't be activists, instead turn people into the activists of their own lives. Who focuses on the role you can play in people's lives; enabling their beliefs and dreams, whereas why focuses on your organisation's beliefs and dreams.

You tell me, which one sounds better?

When every brand is pitching itself as Mother Teresa or Gandhi – who can be believed? Every brand can claim to have a big role to play in your life as their burning why. But if you can't see or feel the outcome, it's another broken promise.

THOMAS KOLSTER
Marketing & Austainability Advisor,
International Keynote Speaker & Author

Algorithmic influence for impact

Author MIKKO ALASAARELA

MIKKO ALASAARELA *is the co-founder and CEO of Equel Social, an AI-powered networking platform helping people across the world access life-changing career and business opportunities. Mikko is a globally recognized expert in algorithmic influence and a regular public speaker in international conferences about the topic.*

How algorithms shape us and our societies

We live in the age of artificial intelligence. Many kinds of algorithms influence our daily lives and behavior, silently deciding on our behalf. The rise of behavior-shaping algorithms has been rapid, and their effect on us and our societies has been dramatic.

It all started with Google. Their PageRank algorithm changed the way we search for information. Now, we depend on Google and other AI-powered search engines to find the answers to almost every question we might imagine.

However, the answers are not the same for you and me. Google has a massive treasure trove of information about you, and that information is used to deliver personalized search results to you. It may sound good on the surface, but it has the effect of creating an algorithmic filter bubble around you.

During the 2000s, social media entered the mainstream. It changed the way we received and consumed our information. Instead of the daily serving of mainstream broadcast TV brainwash, we started seeing content that was curated and personalized to us with algorithms.

This might sound good on the surface, but we have to understand how these algorithms work before making any judgments. All the social media companies have to make money to stay in business, and the vast majority of their revenue comes from advertisers.

The success of a social network depends on the utility, entertainment value and social capital that its members can gain. Social networks do their best to convert this social capital, entertainment and utility into a financial return. Therefore, the goal of the social feed algorithms is to maximize advertising revenue. To achieve this goal, the social media platforms need to maximize the engagement, or

rather, addiction, of their membership to their algorithmic content feeds.

Social media is not the only industry whose business model depends on addicted users. The same is true for streaming services and video games industries. Companies have invested billions of dollars in addiction algorithms over the past decade.

As a result, games companies understand behavioral algorithms well, and have implemented them effectively. In 2018, Google algorithms showed users the most important keywords from Play Store app reviews. All the top 200 grossing games had "addictive" as their top keyword, with multiple times more reviews than any other keyword. This led to Google ending the practice of surfacing top keywords.

AI makes it possible to mass customize the content feeds to each individual to maximize addiction. Once you have learned what content the person likes, you serve them a constant stream of dopamine hits with instant gratifications within their interests.

Without an intervention, we are steadily heading toward a zombie apocalypse, where most people have lost control of their lives. The good news is that our awareness of the effect of algorithms on our lives has increased.

What if we could turn the tables and use algorithms for good? This is what I've been working on for the past decade. I've built AIs, developed products, as well as consulted companies and governments on *algorithmic influence*, gaining an audience of over a million readers a month to my writings.

How to scale influence digitally

The only scalable type of influence is digital influence. The amount of people we can discuss with in person is limited by time, geography and other factors. To have the best impact on your investment of time and effort, build influence on social media.

With the Covid pandemic, the world learned to do business remotely. This is good news to you, if you live outside the biggest metropolitan hubs like New York, San Francisco or London. You don't have to have a membership at SoHo House or graduate from a famous university to succeed. Today, relationships can be built and nurtured remotely.
To build the right relationships, choose the social network that suits your goals, find the people that can make a difference for your career or business, and learn to communicate with them.

The evolution of social networking has given rise to multiple models of networking, and you have to understand the differences to make the right choice.

Social networking started with a friend model popularized by networks like Facebook and LinkedIn. They are still excellent platforms for building personal relationships with people and reputation for your own name. You can have public conversations with your friends on the wall and engage in private conversations through messaging.

The follower model of Twitter and Instagram drove the second wave of social networking. It concentrates the influence to 1% of the top influencers and leaves the rest of the members to serve the role of content consumers. Personal relationships between the followers and the influencers are shallow or non-existent, but if you are an influencer, you can still shape opinions and behavior on a large scale.
Reddit and Quora gave rise to interest-based networking, where following and friending was secondary to the topics of the discussion. The asynchronous communication model is suitable for finding topics of interest and learning, but

not so good for building relationships. The pseudonymity of Reddit enables people to discuss more openly, but makes it impossible to build real-world reputation or relationships.

Group networking arrived as the fourth wave with the rise of Facebook Groups, Discord and Slack. Groups bring together people with a common interest into a synchronous real-time conversation, which helps you build real-world relationships. When you network with your real identity, you can also gain a professional reputation on these platforms.

The fifth wave brought us the algorithmic model popularized by TikTok. This model doesn't rely on following, friending or even creating groups. Rather, it is based on a clever and addictive algorithm that serves content to you. TikTok observes your engagement with the content and then feeds you the next piece of content based on your behavior. YouTube is also in this category, with its auto-play algorithm. The algorithmic model enables a rapid rise of new superstars by making videos viral, but doesn't allow you to effectively build personal relationships with the content creators.

These networking models have stayed and developed in parallel, and many social networks leverage many of them at the same time. Facebook alone supports friend, follower and group networking models, and keeps copying all new social networking trends as they appear.

When choosing the platform, the important questions are:

1. Do you want to build your professional or personal reputation with a real identity? Or do you prefer the convenience of pseudonymity?
2. Do you want to grow an audience for your creative work, or do you want to build or join an existing community around your cause?
3. Do you want to build personal relationships or become an influencer through your content?

How to do good with algorithms

Once you've decided on the networking model, it is time to think about the positive influence you are going to make. You can make a lot of impact quickly with algorithmic influence.

I should know. I have studied and practiced algorithmic influence already for over 12 years. In October 2019, the state-owned Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE, approached me and asked if I would be interested in filming a short documentary on how to influence people with algorithms.

I thought about it and agreed under the condition that I can choose the subject of the documentary project. They agreed, and I chose school bullying as my topic. On a November Tuesday morning, we set up a stage at Maria01 startup center in Helsinki, and I shared my post about school bullying while the cameras were recording.

The Finnish language post went instantly viral on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, and my phone and messaging apps started a non-stop barrage of notifications and rings. My post gathered well over 600,000 direct viewers, and the conversations it sparked touched many, many more people. School bullying became the biggest social media conversation topic in Finland during that week, which sparked other media outlets to write about it as well.

So how did I intentionally make half of Finland talk about school bullying?

I used a combination of strategies and tactics to maximize the virality and engagement of the story. First, I timed the early growth to perfection by publishing the post when lots of Finns were reading their social media feeds. I also notified several of my influential friends in advance to take part in the conversation to gain early traction. I also shared the post in a few large groups that I thought might be interested in the topic.

Importantly, I wrote specific keywords and idioms used in diverse social media bubbles to create a sense of familiarity and a feeling that I was "one of them". This triggered more diverse groups to "own" the topic and to share it to their followers. People only recognize the sayings they are familiar with, so it didn't matter that I targeted multiple bubbles at once.

I optimized the content type to each social media platform separately to gain maximum visibility on each platform. I told a personal story that triggered powerful emotions to boost engagement and virality.

Most importantly, I made a positive impact by engaging Finns to talk about a difficult topic that everyone has some personal experience with. You can do that too. But remember, algorithmic influence is a superpower, and it should be used responsibly.

Inspiration by frustration

Author SUZANNE LAURITZEN

SUZANNE *has founded Raffle.ai in 2018, four years later they are 40 employees and have raised $21 million to expand globally. Earlier she founded LogBuy, an Employee Engagement Platform, later acquired by VISMA and Reward Gateway in 2016. She has worked with leadership, strategy and sales for more than 20 years. Suzanne has a master's in economics, later an International Law degree and is teaching innovation as External Lecturer.*

1. As an entrepreneur, what are your inspirations when starting something new?
I always get inspired by frustration. In my current case I thought it was frustrating that I could never find anything in my drives, in emails and other corporate systems. And then when using different systems and not remembering where I put it or got it, I had to search the individual systems that all have poor searches. It's a mess and I found out research said we all spend 20% of our working hours searching for information or reproducing information we can't find. This frustration almost turned into anger because I was wasting time. Why was this not solved? How could systems and tools providers get away with having useless search functions, while Google was doing a great job in the consumer space? I was baffled.

2. How did you deal with the biggest business issues you encountered over the years?
In situations where everything seems to fall apart, I keep it to myself, spend 10-15 hours thinking it through, present the problem and my suggestion to solve it to my cofounder and get feedback.

I guess I don't really have doubts because I have tried what seems to be hopeless situations every other year. After 22 years of being an entrepreneur I know I always overcome them and often with better outputs at the end.

3. Has your business vision changed over time?
Our vision has not changed. 'To provide access to company information across tools and systems in one click' Our way to get there has been a little like a countryside road from we started out in mid-2018 to 2021 where we managed to get on to the highway. In 2023 we will be taking flights and in 2025 I believe we will be ready for the moon.

4. If you could go back, would you have done anything differently in your entrepreneurial career?
No, I think it's good you don't know what you're getting yourself into the first time. The second and third time are so much easier because you know who to contact, how to get funding, what to prioritize, how to build a product, how to get traction, who to hire etc. This comes with experience and unfortunately cannot be told. The first time you do a business is the 'master's degree' in real entrepreneurship. You must learn it.

5. What advice would you give to others who want to move from dreaming to doing?
I would say they shouldn't force a change upon themselves, but instead get an exceptional doer on board from the beginning, that knows how to prioritize and get things moving. In the first years it's the doing that makes all the difference, because you must do an incredible amount of work, to get a very limited output. When the snowball rolls a couple of years down the road, you can start realizing your dream.

6. As a founder it is an extremely important job to build a strong team. Any tips on doing that successfully?
Take people that have an impressive track record within exactly what you need, make sure enough references/people confirm it objectively by having witnessed it, and hire people you like and intuitively believe in. And very important, don't hire for a year from now, hire for what is needed right now.

7. What is most important to you. Details or the big picture?
Both are equally important. The devil is always in the details, so ignoring that is certain death. Ignoring the bigger picture, is a slow death.

8. Have you had a role model in your professional life? Anything valuable you learnt?
Not individuals but I read as much as possible on subjects that are important to having a business. For me it is like kick-starting a learning process and even if a book only gives you one actionable insight, its great time spend to listen to when going for a run or taking the train to work. Great employees and colleagues that know their stuff, have taught me a lot as well. I try to learn enough from them to lead them right and ignore enough to let them do their thing.

How an idea knock down the obstacle of COVID lockdown

Author TERRY PAN

TERRY PAN *(Hong Kong, China) is an award-winning brand strategist, creative director, coach and trainer with 20+ years of experience in Greater China. Since 2010, Terry has been based in Shanghai and has authored the influential Chinese book "Beyond Formulaic Copywriting," which explores the psychology of storytelling in the Chinese context. He is a LinkedIn China Top Voice in Marketing with 100K+ followers from China and around the world.*

An Unexpected Challenge

"According to the schedule, it would be a one-week lockdown."

Only the COVID-19 outbreak in Shanghai was much worse than expected by the end of March 2022. Thus, the authorities imposed a citywide emergency lockdown from April 1 that would gradually be extended for weeks.

People could not leave their residential quarters, and home delivery services were reduced to the minimum. Soon a problem arose: food and necessities were running out. Shanghai was not suffering from a product shortage. However, although traders were well-stocked and consumers wanted to buy, the lack of home delivery capacities meant the cost went much higher than usual.

"Maybe we can order together to justify the delivery cost and business?"

Such an idea ignited one of China's most remarkable business initiatives for 2022 – the Shanghai Group Buying.

Putting the Idea into Action

Traders started putting bulk order offers online. A bulk order usually required a minimum order of 30 units or 3,000 Yuan (US$450).

It spreads like wildfire.

Residents formed numerous WeChat groups to mobilize their neighbors to join the buying. Vegetable group, meat group, milk group, amenities group… it was like a text-based marketplace on your mobile phone. However, the more residents that participated, the less efficient it became. We wanted to get the products as soon as possible.

That's how the tuanzhangs – leaders of group buying, a Chinese term borrowed from the military rank of Leader of Regiment – came into place. From this term, you know they were here to maintain discipline, collaboration, and efficiency of the transaction process.

I was a tuanzhang for my residential quarter. A tuanzhang needed to deal with everything, such as ensuring every household paid quickly and placing accurate orders to collect the deliveries on time. It was essential as you wanted to get the goods, especially foodstuffs, into your home storage as soon as possible. Every detail counted.

Tuanzhangs were volunteers, mostly housewives and multilingual so the non-Chinese speaking residents would also be covered. Shanghainese housewives were particularly motivated as they were often responsible for their families' well-being. They had the perfect qualities, too: household experts, no-nonsense approach, calm, organized, detailed, and caring. Being a tuanzhang was tiring, but also an honor. Apart from the appreciation from your neighbors, you knew you were helping create critical values, which can be life and business-saving sometimes.

Ask for More

After people met their basic needs, they started looking for more varieties. It helped to create a better mood so that could cope with the uncertainty and stress from the extended lockdown.

But how? The backgrounds of those who were living in the same residential block differed, so an extensive network of connections and resources was readily available, if they are willing to share. After rounds of group buying, residents built great mutual trust and were more than happy to share and check with more traders together. Thus, more buying options became possible. More traders and deliverers were motivated by the more diversified, growing demand.
Little indulgences made a lockdown life much easier. Take our residential block for example, we have neighbors with good relationships with fresh food suppliers, flower shops, and a few start-up boutique pastry brands. Therefore, we were able to buy something special from late April like:

- Wagyu
- Sea urchin
- Ice cream
- Flowers
- Sashimi
- Fresh baked pastries and cake
- Lobsters

The Power of Trust

Product competition was not as fierce in the lockdown, as many options were not available. Therefore, even if the brands were unknown, if they were willing to overcome the obstacles and able to deliver quality products, everyone would almost automatically consider them. That was a golden opportunity to impress and leave their mark.

Aldi did a great job, for example. In Shanghai, the German supermarket was only considered for imported European foodstuffs and no comparison to giant players like Hema, the supermarket operation of Alibaba. However, Hema stopped many of its Shanghai operations throughout the lockdown due to recurrent staff COVID infections, and it was also difficult to buy from other big stores like Carrefour due to reduced capacities. Frustrated consumers started looking for alternatives.

Meanwhile, Aldi tried to maintain its operations and, most importantly, kept the nearby residential quarters

informed. When a small brand tries its best to make its consumers feel secure in a lockdown, you cannot help but love it. Aldi's milk, German beer, and rye bread became hot items. When the lockdown was over, people even queued at Aldi for days as they felt it was a trustworthy brand that stands for quality.

It was also an opportunity for traders to enhance consumers' loyalty, as direct communication channels and relationships with community leaders nearby were established.

Some traders like Aldi provided services like exclusive timeslots for a residential quarter, so residents could enjoy their shopping without worrying about the online traffic congestion that frequently happened during the lockdown. Some others were offering special deals or packages for returning residential quarters.

Always a Creative Way

The lockdown has been eased, but the legacy of group buying stays. Now it's a convenient supporting service to get quality foodstuffs at a lower price, and traders can leverage that to do their CRM to the highly targeted consumers with minimal cost.

The beauty of Shanghai Group Buying was turning an idea into a citywide action that reconnected the consumers and businesses by making the best use of limited resources. So, think again whenever you think it's hard to find a way out. Sometimes you just need to think outside the box, get the essential details right, and find some helping hands.

Just like the classic poem written by Lv You of the Song Dynasty says:
"After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt where there is a path out, then out of the shade of the willows, came bright flowers and another village."

> **We wanted to get the products as soon as possible. That's how the tuanzhangs – leaders of group buying, a Chinese term borrowed from the military rank of Leader of Regiment – came into place. From this term, you know they were here to maintain discipline, collaboration, and efficiency of the transaction process.**

TERRY PAN
Strategist, Creative Director & Executive Coach

‘The future is spoken’ – AI voice technology and women in tech

Author SHYAMALA PRAYAGA

SHYAMALA PRAYAGA *is a seasoned conversational AI expert and author. Having led initiatives across connected home, automotive, and wearables, she's put her work on research into usability, accessibility, speech recognition, and multimodal voice user interfaces, and has been published in publications such as Forbes. She's spent the last 20 years designing mobile, web, desktop, and smart TV interfaces and has most recently joined NVIDIA. She’s also the founder of the Digital Assistant Academy.*

1. You are the founder of Digital Assistant Academy. What made you start this company?

I started my journey in UX and transitioned to Conversational AI. Sometime in 2015, when I was part of launching Alexa, very few people in the industry were doing Conversational AI and designing voice interactions, most of the people had IVR backgrounds. So, my user experience background helped me get into the Conversational AI space and contribute to the launch of first-gen Alexa.

When I joined Ford in 2017, I was the only Conversational AI designer plus product manager working on designing virtual assistance in cars. As I started looking at hiring conversational designers, I found a gap. I found that a lot of people, who are doing Conversational AI, do not understand the space holistically, hence there are gaps in the experiences.

When I saw the gap, I started looking into if there were any courses available and if so, what kinds. I found a couple, but they were more focused on copywriting. Again, I felt that it was a very limited scope and does not do justice to designing world-class experiences.

That’s when I decided that instead of looking at folks from different backgrounds, if I myself – bring all the experience of product management, Conversational AI, UX, and research - if I design a course that brings all of these elements, we will be able to produce more successful Conversational AI designers. That is when I decided to start the Academy and we’ve been successfully able to train and solidify a lot of folks who are successfully working in the Conversational AI industry.

2. You want to build a community for women and diverse people in voice technology. What does it mean – to you – to be a women’s advocate?

I come from a very small town called Jabalpur. The tendency especially back in those days was that women are just going to be homemakers. Back then, there was no role model for me, so I did not know what to do and where to start.

During my career I figured that there are many more people like me who do not have a clear direction or do not have clear guidance, they do not have mentors that can guide them and can support them. And that is where the thought of building a community and working with women to empower them made sense to me.

That is why I joined Women in Voice. I'm also a chair for Society for Women Engineers because there is a big gap even when it comes to diversity. I still sometimes feel like in meetings - where there are ten men - I am the only woman trying to push harder and push the boundary. That's the kind of gender gap we still see, and it feels like more and more women need to be empowered, to be not just in the industry but also in the leadership positions making an impact.

I joined these different societies related to female empowerment to support them, mentor them, teach them, and guide them in whatever way possible, collaborating and coordinating, and providing my expertise, guidance, and support.

3. What made you move to the USA eight years ago? And was it a hard decision?

It was a really hard decision. It has been a dream of mine ever since I was a kid; I wanted to be in the US, and I wanted to make a mark for myself. I used to see women just confined to their homes and I knew that was not the life I wanted. I worked in the tech industry for a very long time. When I worked with Amazon India, my son was 3 years old, and my husband and I decided to move to give our son international exposure. So, I requested Amazon for an internal transfer and that is where the transition happened.

4. Your background is in civil engineering, which is different from UX design. What made you decide to invest so many years of your career in UX design?

Why I decided to invest so many years in UX and move away from civil engineering was at some point – when I was in civil engineering – I felt like things were getting monotonous, I wasn't getting excited because I was doing the same thing, designing houses. There was no innovation or challenge. Since there were many similarities between architecture and UX, I decided to move into UX and leverage my engineering background to design meaningful experiences.

When I moved into UX, every day was new learning. When I started, I was designing websites, and slowly SaaS applications became a trend. Then, mobile became a thing, so I started learning and designing for different platforms. I felt like every time I was designing something, I was solving people's problems, I was helping them - in fact, with a system that otherwise would not have existed. I give a lot of respect to UX designers because they simplify the most complex interactions in the easiest way, and they design for it. And that is basically what happened in my case hence I decided to stay for so many years in this UX field.

5. One of your main fields of expertise is voice assistance. Could you tell us a bit more of how the industry is doing right now?

In 2014 when I moved to the US, I started working on Alexa – It wasn't really new. Siri and Google Now existed but they were still learning. The paradigm shift happened when Amazon launched Alexa in a completely different

modality. It was a smart voice assistant, which was hands-free, and eyes-free and that changed the entire dynamic of the market.

Technologies are getting sophisticated day by day. Conversational AI technologies, like speech recognition, text-to-speech, and natural language processing technology are also evolving.

Speech recognition technology is now able to understand speech from different users and distinguish who is speaking, how they speak, and the different accents and dialects. Text-to-speech is also becoming more sophisticated, and the voice sounds more human-like. So, it's really hard to differentiate between a robotic versus a human voice. If you look from the user perspective, there are a lot of things that are evolving around various use cases like customer care. The customer care bot assistants are smart enough to understand what the user is saying and talk to them in various modalities like touch, text, voice, and more in such a manner that the user will not be able to differentiate whether they are talking to a real person or a bot.

Now, the new trend we are seeing is the meta-human. An AI avatar may look like me, speak like me, and even have similar body language. That takes conversational AI to the next level.

6. What does it take for women to be more involved in the tech world? What do you see being the main issue? The first thing is: it's very challenging for a woman to be involved in the tech world.

When I was doing research for the voice assistant in the car, there were people who said that if the voice assistant is doing tasks like booking reservations, calling someone, or shopping on my behalf, I would be more comfortable having a female voice assistant. Versus, if I wanted the voice assistant to help me change the tires or help me in a vehicle with technical issues, I would be more comfortable getting instructions from a male voice assistant. So that is the kind of notion we have in the industry and everywhere in the world, where certain kinds of roles are taken by certain kinds of people.

The second thing, there's so much gender gap. I've been in meetings where I was the only female and the rest – the entire attendees – were males. So, trying to make a mark in the male-dominated society, trying to push, and trying to make a point also is sometimes more challenging because they do not understand my point of view.

A quick example, I was recently talking to my neighbor's kid, who is in kindergarten and likes cars. When he was talking about the Ford Mustang, I told him I was the designer working on Ford Mustang and he was really shocked. He was like, "How come you work? Women are just homemakers, why are you working, I don't believe it". It really shocked me, and I was like even a kid of kindergarten age has that mindset, which is the main issue.

So, until both genders are treated equally, this is not going to change, women will always face these challenges every day. There are a lot of fields where women are in leadership positions and are making a mark. We just have to keep pushing harder and proving ourselves every day.

7. You have also started the podcast The Future is Spoken. What is the goal of the podcast and what are the main topics discussed?

I'm very much involved in Conversational AI in general. There is a lot to learn in the speech industry and tons of literature and research already exists. We will start seeing more and more voice-enabled devices everywhere. So, I wanted to bring all these speech AI industry experts to one

place and learn from real-world experiences. They add so much value and bring so much knowledge, but there is not one place where all of this is being captured. So that's when the idea for "The Future is Spoken" podcast came to me like the future is spoken and how do we prepare for it?

We talk about issues related to voice, like ethics, empathy, inclusivity, and accessibility, hence listeners gain some value from all the conversations. Speech is a billion-dollar industry and knowing all the ins and outs would only help people learn, because that's how I learned. I learned through audio; I learned through visuals, and I felt like having a podcast will help a lot of different people to learn from industry experts.

8. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
I would say impact is all about what mark you have left. For example, a long time back I used to write a lot of blogs. One of the reasons was that that's how I learned. As I mentioned, I used to learn through visuals and audio. So, if I used to listen to something, I used to write a blog about it so that I will remember it.

So, I wrote a blog, I wrote about user experience back then, and one person came to me and said "You are my mentor, you are my guide. Reading through your blogs I was able to crack my interview and get my first UX gig." And that message was so amazing, so heart touching, he then continued saying "You have made an impact in my life, and I will remember you forever. You know, although I have never met you, you have made an impact." That's what impact is for me: if someone is gaining something out of my experience, that is the impact; if someone is able to recall my name "Oh, Shyamala Prayaga, she works in Voice Technology," that is an impact. So, for me, impact is what mark you have left of yourself and how people remember you.

NFTs - Find your own investment and engagement style

Author MICHAEL LITMAN

MICHAEL *is Senior Director, Emerging Technology at Media.Monks. He is a collector, connector and advisor to NFT projects, founding member of Meebits DAO, web3 believer and thought leader. He can be found at the intersection between brands, tech, culture and commerce.*

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what Media.Monks is all about?

Media.Monks is a digital-first marketing and advertising services company connecting the dots across content, data, digital media and technology services. We're in over 30 countries with around 9000 Monks across the globe. We've been around for a while but operate uniquely under one P&L so we can work with the best talent around the world across projects.

2. Back in early 2022 you were promoted to a web3 & NFT focused role. What are the main responsibilities of this position?

It's been the most fascinating ride and still continues to interest and excite me more every day.

I started out as one of the first creative strategists in the London office a few years ago now. Today, I'm part of a small group that drives all projects forward globally within the web3 space across the network. This can be everything from virtual world builds to NFT drops to long term brand strategy and community building. No two days are the same. It's both a hands-on practitioner role, while also being consultative and an advisor to both internal teams and external clients.

It's part inspiration, education and onboarding while also being an evangelist, executing and upskilling. It's being the connector across teams and also being able to understand a business problem and how we can solve it in an innovative way.

3. You have previously been an NFT advisor. Why did NFTs become so popular and who should invest in them?

I'm going to start off by saying not everyone should invest in them. And even thinking of them as investments skews

the perception of them into being assets that will appreciate or depreciate.

I feel like that era of wild profits is somewhat behind us now and NFTs are becoming more like utilities and memberships rather than financial instruments. I believe that NFTs will become the next frontier for loyalty, membership and community with the token becoming a new access gateway for brands.

Even the term NFT itself might fade into the background with companies like Meta describing them as digital collectibles. This moves the narrative on to being about what they enable rather than the technology itself. I liken this to how you didn't use to listen to an MP3, you listened to a music album.

4. The NFTs have seen a decrease and some say it is collapsing. Why is that and what are your predictions for NFT in the years to come?

The NFT market is just like any tradeable asset, it has ups and downs e.g., the stock market. This is healthy and normal. For me the bear market in many ways can be an indicator of who is staying around and building through it to be in a strong position when the market becomes more bullish again.

I think in years to come we won't be talking about the technology and the label, but about the benefits that it brings. Like I mentioned above, we don't talk about listening to an MP3, we say we are listening to music.

In the same way I think the terminology will fade in to the background and it will usher in a new ownership economy through web3 principles.

5. What advice will you give to the young minds, who want to invest in NFTs and crypto?

- Take your time.
- Don't FOMO into things.
- Do your own research.
- Be careful who you listen to.
- Don't copy trade influencer's wallets. Anyone can send stuff to them.
- Join communities yourself that you are interested in, understand how they work.
- Don't spend what you can't afford.
- Find your own investment and engagement style.
- Stay up to date with news through podcasts, newsletters, Twitter and the web.

6. You founded your first company when you were only 16, what motivated you to start a business so early on and what made you continue the entrepreneurial spirit?

Truthfully the main reason was I would have been mad if someone else did it at the time. It was a real driving motivation for me. Because there wasn't anyone else doing the same thing at the time. And that lens still helps me today weigh up where I spend my time outside work. Now there's usually many people or places doing a similar thing so I need to feel like I can either learn by doing, do it differently or give it a fresh take.

I've always got energy from creating projects out of ideas. I don't have a problem coming up with them, my main problem is actually prioritizing which one!! I will typically always have in my mind three or four even if none of them see the light of day.

I enjoy being early to things, seeing opportunities sometimes in hindsight before the mainstream and making calculated risks and bets. Some may not have paid off but the

experiences and learnings are themselves priceless. I love to learn by doing too. I find things can be daunting and overwhelming in a theoretical sense but once it becomes practical to me it becomes a lot easier to grasp, understand and move forwards with.

7. You have a fascinating portfolio of companies you worked for. You have been involved as a strategist in many of them. What are most important do's and don'ts as a strategist?

- Be curious
- Be useful
- Be practical
- Simplify the complex
- Do the things others don't want to do or know how to do
- Find what gives you energy and lean into it
- Be the information sponge
- Find the methods of learning that work for you specifically e.g., is it through podcasts, books etc.
- Get inspiration from anywhere and especially outside your brands sector and vertical

8. I read that you love collecting different things, digitally and physically. When did you start collecting and what are some of the collections you are mostly proud of?
I think it stems back from my dad who used to collect stamps and obscure whisky. I started out with premier league football stickers when I was much younger, which I'm now going to start back up again this year for the nostalgia with my hometown team Nottingham Forest back in the Premier League!!

I love to collect sneakers, books, random brand merch and am a heavy user of Pinterest, pinning all the things I'm into. It was an easy segway for me to understand the drivers behind people getting into NFTs. Starting out in the art world initially, there's a huge collector mindset already there. Then luxury fashion got into it in a big way who also understand provenance, scarcity and exclusivity. Whatever it is you collect those are some of the key tenets.

I have some particularly rare sneakers but a lot of it is collected out of enjoyment rather than for profiting from.

9. Lastly, this book is all about IMPACT, what is impact to you?
Impact to me is about making a difference, being known for a unique skill and leaving a legacy.

I feel like that era of wild profits is somewhat behind us now and NFTs are becoming more like utilities and memberships rather than financial instruments. I believe that NFTs will become the next frontier for loyalty, membership and community with the token becoming a new access gateway for brands.

MICHAEL LITMAN

Senior Director, Emerging Technology at Media.Monks

Don’t be a job seeker, be a job shopper

Author J.T. O'DONNELL

J.T. O'DONNELL *has been in staffing, recruiting, and HR for over eighteen years with a specific focus on disrupting the professional development industry. She founded WorkItDaily.com to provide career coaching to people in all professions and skill levels. With over 2.6 million followers on LinkedIn and over one million on TikTok, she's determined to drop the physical and financial boundaries to accessing career coaching in hopes of empowering millions of people to embrace a workplace revolution.*

1. You founded Work It Daily thirteen years ago. What were the considerations around starting the company and what made it such a global success?
I decided to start the website in the recession of 2008. I thought that this was a really opportune time. There were a lot of people who were hurting that needed new information and advice in order to move forward. So that was the time to create a resource so that I could help people at scale.

Most people can't afford or don't think about using a career coach one-on-one and I wanted to be able to drop the financial and physical boundaries to getting access to really good career coaching. What worries me and something that I've seen over many years is that people tend to go to the wrong people for career advice. They go to their friends and those aren't the people that should be helping you. Trained experts who are familiar with hiring and practices involved in companies are the ones that can give you the most solid and sound advice. And so that was the idea of starting the business and we've been at it ever since.

2. You have generated a very impressive following on LinkedIn – over 2.6 million people are following you for career tips. What steps did you take to acquire them?
I had been writing about LinkedIn from the moment that it started on our own website and some folks at LinkedIn had seen and taken notice of me writing about how to use it. So, they reached out to me when they were starting their influencer program and invited me to be a part of it. I was lucky enough to be one of the first 400 influencers and that was The Proving Ground.

I was required to write a couple times a week and contribute but I will tell you that of all the people that were brought on I was virtually an unknown. So I had no followers, whereas there were a lot of very famous people that

came on that had instant followers. I really had to work for it. For me, it was about giving consistent advice. Showing up every day for the people that were responding to my articles and commenting and just engaging with the audience as much as I could. So, they knew they could trust me and they could really get to know my brand of career guidance. And I think that consistency paid off.

The other thing I would tell you is that I was very honest and conversational with people. I noticed that some people will get on platforms like that and try to talk very knowledgeably by using a lot of multi-syllabic words and industry lingo to prove their knowledge. I go the other direction. When I'm giving advice, I'm trying to give advice that a fifth grader could understand.

3. How do you ensure you stay engaged with your large audience?

I just I make it a habit every day. My company is called Work It Daily. My commitment to social media is daily. Every single day I am on there checking and commenting, reading the polls, reading the comments, creating content that speaks to what's happening in the moment, and the trends that my followers are sharing with me.

I can't respond to every single one, but you can take the time to look and get a general sense of what's happening and respond to what will serve many people.

4. You are a very talented writer, have you always loved writing?

I've always loved communicating ideas; it was writing and now it's video. I think I like doing video more than writing, because I can convey more and really be me in video, even more than in writing. It was about how can I explain things to people in a way that will hold their attention and give them an a-ha moment and make them feel smarter for reading it. I'd never want people to read something and feel like that was a waste of time.

5. A question that many are curious about: How to make recruiters come to you? How can you strengthen your personal brand?

All of us would rather for the recruiter to come to us, instead of us going to them. And the key is to know what the recruiter is looking for and to make sure that they can find you based on that.

Recruiters use a lot of technology that helps them find people with certain skill sets and abilities. You need to know what those skill sets are, and make sure they're in prominent places on your LinkedIn profile and on your résumé. This will help you get noticed and attract them. If you want to be found you need to be on LinkedIn, same as in older days being in a phone book.

6. Writing a resume that will appeal to recruiters nowadays is quite difficult. What are some of the best tips you can give when writing a resume?

You need to have a resume that is skimmable. For example, recruiters skim resumes, they don't read them verbatim. So, you need to have your resume laid out in a way that you can achieve maximum impact in those six seconds.

You need to create a lot more empty space or white space, so it's easier to read. The number one mistake I see people make is they're trying to put everything they've ever done on a résumé. So, they've got little tiny margins and an 8-point font, which I'm squinting to read and they try to make themselves sound so impressive. The problem with those résumés is they look narcissistic and desperate, and they're so hard to read that they don't get read.

Strip down the résumé to just the facts. Emotional intelligence and intellectual humility are two things that need to

show up on your résumé. And that is done via simplification. Less is more.

If a recruiter calls you and says, 'hey, I saw your résumé, but I needed more information' Ding ding ding, you've done it, right? Because you got them to call you. The idea that, if I put everything on there, they'll call me, is wrong. You want to pull that information back; you want to create kind of a teaser copy. Just enough information on the résumé so that they need to call you to get more.

7. What is the one question you should always ask at a job interview and why?
The questions you should ask is 'tell me how the job I'll be doing impacts your job? And what can I do to make sure that the work I do makes your job easier not harder?' That's the key because if I'm interviewing you and we're having this conversation, then somehow the job that you're going to do is going to impact my job.

Thus, when you ask me that question, I can tell you 'hey, this is what I need you to do, if we gave you this job, I'd need you to do this so that you make my life easier'. And if you're going to make my life easier, well then of course, I'm going to pick you, right?

8. Recruiters are focused on different objectives from country to country. For example, in Denmark, a photo in your résumé is a must, whereas in the US is the opposite. How do you ensure your followers know the difference?
Firstly, we're very clear that we follow kind of, 'US-based practices', but that you should research what is different in your country, and then adjust accordingly. We have people from all over the world inside our program. They'll use our résumé CV layout, but we'll say 'if your culture requires a photo, then just put the photo up here. If it doesn't, just leave it off'.

I'm finding that globalization has had its advantages, especially tech globalization, because I'm seeing more conformity around just one way of doing things, and that gets me excited. The résumé format that we designed, 73% of recruiters say that they prefer it. I know with our résumé design I can make sure that people are getting what they need, wherever they are in the world.

9. What is the best career advice you can give to job seekers?
My advice right now is to not be a job seeker, but to be a job shopper. You need to learn how to shop for an employer, you need to figure out what you're attracted to, why you're attracted to it, and what will get you up out of bed every day to work for that company.

You need to figure out what value you create and what value you want to sell about yourself, so that you can go out and shop for an employer. Then when you find the employer you like, really present them with the value that you'll bring to them in exchange for a position.

It's the mentality that I want to drive home to people right now. If you have a mentality of 'I can shop for an employer. I'm going to work with an employer not for them. I'm going to partner with them', then you can go out and start to find the companies that impress you and say 'hey, that's who I'd want to be aligned with'. And that changes everything. It changes how you interview and the relationships you build in the company.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
To me, impact is making a measurable difference. In anything that you do, if you're able to say 'it's better than when

I started, it's better now that I'm leaving', you know, whatever the length of time, to me impact is that, and positive obviously by default. I'm talking about positive impact not negative impact.

I have a quote by Pablo Picasso that says the meaning of life is to find your gift, the purpose of life is to give it away. And so, I think that making impact creating value is one of the best things you can do for the world and yourself because when you feel productive, satisfied when you believe you've made an impact, I think that's where the real joy comes from. The real peace comes from inside.

Our desire to see reality

Author ADAM KATZ SINDING

ADAM KATZ SINDING, *formerly known as Le 21ème is an American-born, Copenhagen-based photographer. A true innovator in the realm of street-style photography since 2003, Adam spends the majority of the year documenting the zeitgeist of the contemporary fashion industry on a global level. When he is not photographing fashion events, he shoots major campaigns and editorials, giving lectures, and embarking in cross-country cycling trips. Adam has also published two books.*

Credit: Jonathan Daniel Pryce · GarconJon.com

1. You've worked with notable clients like Tom Ford, Vogue, Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, WWD, Givenchy and many more. What is photography for you? A form of art or a business or something in between?
I would never consider myself to be an artist, and I find it hard to accept that what I do is merely a business. I prefer to look at photography as a form of documentation. I make an effort to photograph what I see, put it into a certain context, and try to make my images as beautiful as possible. I did this job without payment for many years before it became a business, so the business aspect of it is just a lucky byproduct of doing what I love to do.

2. With the recent advantages in AI it seems like computers will soon be able to portray very real-life images of the world. Will this mean the end of photography as we know it?
I have a hard time wrapping my head around the idea that photography will one day be completely obsolete. Yes, sure, AI can possibly make fantastic alternate realities, however I believe that we as human beings, desire to see reality. Maybe this thought process is the same as that of those who built the railroads and thought that train travel would be the final form of transportation…and then airplanes came around. Who knows.

3. Today everyone can become a photographer in the sense that we all have access to cameras and smartphones. What sets aside acclaimed photographers like you from 'the masses'?
I do not think that my work should be differentiated from "the masses". I think that all photography is just as important as mine, the only difference is through my work and with the help of social media I have the ability to expose my work to a larger audience.

4. This book is all about IMPACT. How can photos impact the world?

If you've been to a World Press Photo exhibition then this answer is already answered. Images are how we relate to stories. Words accompanied by images allow us to connect to a moment.

5. Robert Frank said that "There is one thing the photograph must contain, the humanity of the moment." Is this also the case, when we talk about fashion photography?

I agree with this sentiment. However, fashion is not quite reality. So perhaps it doesn't apply to the full extent. Fashion is fantasy, and the humans participating in these fashion related events are important, but I would say in most cases, secondary to the garments. Now when we describe "street-style" then I think this quote applies much more than if we refer to a campaign or an editorial. On the street I look for the personality first and the garments come in second place. In a proper photoshoot, then the clothes are often the first focus.

6. What would you do, if you didn't take photographs for a living?

Live on my mom's couch. Jokes aside, I have no idea. I would probably still be working in a hotel and riding my bike on my days off. A much more sustainable way of life, honestly.

7. You're from Tacoma; have lived in Paris, New York, and Amsterdam but ended up moving to Copenhagen in Denmark. Why, and how has this influenced your photography and ability to impact the world?

I think that being from a smaller American city, I grew up desiring to see more of the world. I imagine that if I had grown up in New York City I would have been a bit more jaded and likely less driven (knowing my personality) to push myself to expand my horizons. Of course, my travels and living in new places has stimulated me and given me perspective. Essentially, I have no idea how my life would be if I had not made these choices to live elsewhere and travel, but I would assume that my exposure to different cultures and people is the driving force behind my desire to move and document what I see.

8. You've said that talent doesn't matter, if you don't practice. How do you practice to become even better at what you do? Is it just about taking as many photographs as possible, or?

I never read the manual. I learn on the fly. And to be honest, I have made countless mistakes. I've imagined a rule where I am allowed to make mistakes, but never the same mistake twice. If I make the same mistake twice, well, then I'm an idiot for not learning my lesson the first time.

So yes, take as many photos as possible, making stupid mistakes, but only once. I was once on my phone checking my messages and fell down a flight of stairs. Now my phone is in my pocket when I'm on the stairs. Not making that mistake again.

Wouldn't it be cool if I could get...?

Author LARS TVEDE

LARS TVEDE *is an award-winning serial entrepreneur, a successful financial investor and bestselling author of 17 books. In 2016, he co-founded the venture capital fund Nordic Eye, which is slated to become one of the most profitable venture funds ever founded in Europe. In 2019, he founded Supertrends AG, which uses AI, text-mining and crowdsourcing to map global innovation – past, present and in the future.*

1. As an entrepreneur do you see yourself a doer or a dreamer? Do you have any advice for the ones who want to be doers but don't know how?
I am very much both, which is why I am an entrepreneur. However, I am not a leader, which has been my Achilles heel all my life. I create ideas and companies, but then seek other people to lead them, because I don't like to lead and don't do it particularly well.

My advice is, find out if you are actually a doer by nature, because if you aren't, you should probably leave it to others. But if you do in fact have the doers' mindset, consider doing the project with someone who shares your dreams. Do it as a part of a team. OK, I know this can go so bloody wrong, so please write a shareholder's agreement early on. But still, for most people, it's far easier to succeed as a founder´s team of 2-3 people than alone. Statistics show this.

2. What inspires you, when you develop new ideas?
Most of what I have done was about creating something that I would love to be an owner or user of myself. I guess the inspiration comes from seeing a lot of things in life. This means once in a while, that "wouldn't it be cool if I could get …?" And then I set out to make that into a reality.

3. Knowing what you know now, is there anything you would have done differently when you were first starting out?
There is an awful lot, actually. The first thing is to take some personality tests early in life to find out who you really are. In my opinion, many of these tests are surprisingly good, and there are lots of them. When I chose my education as a teenager, I had minimal understanding of what made me tick, so I chose the wrong line of education – simply because I didn't understand who I was. And later in life I often accepted responsibilities that I was not good at handling.

However fortunately, I learned gradually along the way, and when I look back at the 13 companies I have founded or co-founded so far, the ones that went well were typically the ones where I worked with people with talent, insights and social networks that were very complementary to mine. But I should have been better at this earlier.

4. Your parents have worked in the public sector. How has this influenced your entrepreneurial career?
Many people have inspired me a lot. This was great but also necessarily because I had to learn a lot. I grew up with parents working for the public sector, and most of their friends doing the same. From this, I evolved to become a private business serial entrepreneur surrounded by other entrepreneurs, and there were just so many things to learn on the way.

For instance, some people have taught me how to sell, which is pretty far from my own personality. Others have shown me how to simplify business activities. And others how to stay fit or enjoy life. One thing that I have tried to learn along is to both be inspired but also try to inspire. You tend to get if you give.

5. What is most important to you. Details or the big picture?
I am generally mostly a big picture guy, but when I work with something which is a passion for me, I can become incredibly detail-oriented. The flipside of that is that when I am not passionate about a subject, then its details might bore me to death.

6. What are you working on currently?
I am a financial investor and the founder of the company called Supertrends, which uses crowdsourcing and AI etc. to create Dashboards for tracking and forecasting global innovation and market trends. This includes technology milestones, startup activity, sector impact, use-cases and news, etc.

7. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
In terms of startups and investing, impact means making something better apart from your personal situation. Personally, I don't think impact needs to be grandiose at all; most people who seem to be trying to "save the world" don't impress me much. In fact, in many cases, I see it mainly as egocentric virtue signaling. Yes, saving the world does work in some Hollywood movies, but many people who make noise about saving the world in real life assume that it is done with other people`s resources. And many of these people are in my opinion pretty useless.

However, what we can all do is to find some small corners of the world that we can make incrementally better. This is the down-to-earth impact that I prefer.

My popcorn brain

Author PETER LAURITSEN

PETER LAURITSEN *is a co-founder and CPO in the Danish inbound marketing agency TEXTA. As a content and email marketing strategist, he works with both B2B and D2C brands to increase traffic and revenue via inbound marketing for both Danish and international clients like Randstad, Pilgrim, and Stora Enso.*

1. Are you a result-oriented person or more of a thinker?
I'm most definitely a doer. I excel at the tactical and operational level, but need strong partnerships to help me choose direction, targets, and milestones. That's not to say I don't dream or think big, but my strengths are concentrated around turning plans into action.

2. What's your main source of inspiration when you work on new ideas?
My clients, my colleagues, and our competitors. New ideas arise when I hear something mentioned more than two times by different people: a problem, a concern, a question, an opinion. Once can be a fluke, two can be a coincidence, three times is a pattern.

Usually, my popcorn brain then turns on 'solution-mod' and generates a plethora of ideas and potential ways to solve the issue or answer the question. This has, over the years, resulted in a Google Sheets with more than 200 ideas. Some are very bad and will never see the light of day; some have already been made into 'products'.

3. With the knowledge you have now, what would you have done differently when you were first starting out?
A lot of things. Know and accept your flaws (e.g., I really hate spending money), but delegate decisions to people you trust to make the right decision on your behalf. When you are the one deciding, follow your gut. Most of the time, it's either right or right with the information you had at the time. Lastly, remember that a lot of the time, there is no secret sauce to success. It's just old-fashioned hard work – and a lot of it.

4. What are the most important tools in your daily work?
Notes on my MacBook Pro. Yes, I am that kind of person. The birth and (sadly) sometimes the death of many ideas. Google Sheets for prioritizing, sharing insights/tasks/proj-

ects and organizing. And then LinkedIn for inspiration, knowledge sharing with people outside my own organization and networking.

5. How did you overcame your biggest business difficulty?
By concentrating on the things we were able to influence and stop thinking about the things that were out of our hands. A big inspiration of mine is that it's stupid to worry in advance. If the thing you worry about materializes, you have spent time worrying twice. If it's not, you've wasted time worrying about something that didn't happen. I try to live by that.

6. How has your business changed over time?
We've tried to move from being 'just another vendor' to a trusted advisor of our clients. The biggest change however is probably in the way we market ourselves. In the past, I thought it was important to keep your best cards to yourself to keep a competitive edge over your competitors. Now, we share all our insights, experiences, and approaches – and sell the implementation. Of course, you shouldn't publish patents and sensitive business information, but the saying 'sharing is caring' could also be 'sharing is good business' in a business context.

7. What are your motivation drivers?
I'm motivated by two things: Seeing (potential) clients using, gaining insights, or consuming the content I/we create. I don't measure success based on them actually buying anything immediately after having stumbled upon our tools, worksheets, posts or other types of content. Usage and consumption are the primary goals in itself, and it motivates me a lot seeing our content in use. For example, when we are used as a source or tagged on LinkedIn.
The second huge motivator for me is seeing my colleagues succeed in our shared objectives – launching a new concept or getting traction on a post they made for our company page on LinkedIn. When they succeed, I succeed.

8. What is your definition of success?
From my own perspective, success is doing what I love doing in a way that does not feel like work. I don't mind putting in a lot of hours because my job doesn't feel like one. An important part of this is of course still reaching the goals that we set out for ourselves, our clients, and my team.

9. What are you working on currently?
A lot of upcoming content under the 'ungate and share everything' movement. I'm finishing my long-postponed book, a new newsletter concept, and a community for marketers.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact is changing something, providing value, or offering something so the recipient can change something themselves – opinions, work processes or business decisions.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

CHAPTER 6

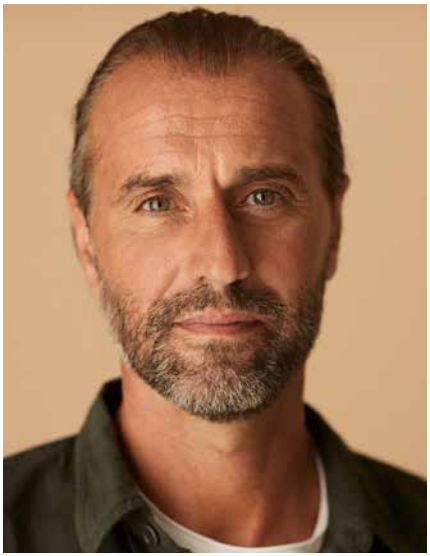


Photo: Jerichau Production

Living in an economic and existential paradox

Author MORTEN ALBÆK

MORTEN ALBÆK *is a philosopher, bestselling author, international public speaker, and Founder and CEO of advisory company Voluntās. Before that, Morten was CMO and member of the Executive Committee at Vestas Wind Systems (2009-2015). Yet before that, Morten was the SVP for Development of Ideas & Innovation at the multinational banking and financial services corporation Danske Bank (2002-2008). In addition, Morten is the author of One Life: How we forgot to live meaningful lives, is the best-selling philosophical book in Denmark in recent years.*

1. You have written a book titled One life: How We Forgot to Live Meaningful Lives. What motivated you to write this book?
It was a thought process based on two key observations.

Firstly, over the last decade, we experienced tremendous growth in wealth and developments in poverty, education, and health, no doubt in part due to robust technological advances; but concurrently and despite this progress, we have never been more anxious, lonely, and depressed than we are right now. In other words, 2010 to 2019 was the first documented period in the developed world when economic growth did not translate into increased human well-being.

Secondly, and in the face of deteriorating employee mental health, I began to question whether we truly understood the well-being of our employees and if we were using the best metrics to measure their performance.

Writing this book was a natural progression towards understanding how we could dismantle this economic paradox and improve employee dissatisfaction, so that once again we might be able to see a healthy correlation between wealth and well-being.

2. Can you please elaborate on what you mean when you say that we are living in an 'economic paradox'?
GDP and average wages increased significantly from 2010 to 2019. It cannot be disputed that we got richer. Not only that, but we also lifted a lot of people out of poverty in the process. But what we need to understand - and this is where the paradox emerges - is that even though we are richer and live longer, increasing numbers of people report feeling lonely, and the burden of depression is on the rise globally.

I think the average newborn in the developed world today

has a better economic starting point than any previous generation, yet this has not translated into a more enlightened and interconnected life with an improved sense of existential well-being. It is a remarkable incongruity! We need to accept that the way we are presently living our lives is creating a system where many are living in existential despair, despite the fact wealth has increased across every metric. Indeed, there are certain structures and philosophies that we need to challenge and replace in order to make progress.

3. With many people working from home as a result of the pandemic, the idea of 'work–life balance' comes up frequently in conversations. You have previously called this term 'absurd', noting that the key issue is flexibility at work, not balance between life and work. What do you mean by that?

I think the work–life balance management philosophy has been a contributing factor in causing the aforementioned paradox. It was established approximately 40 years ago and since then has gained unbelievable traction, to the degree that we no longer question whether it actually has any substance. Undeniably, the work–life balance philosophy tries to impose on us the notion that life is one thing and work is something different. Logically, if they were not two different things, then they couldn't be balanced against each other! Can you actually say the true opposite of life is work? Of course not.

Work and life are not separate entities. If work, viewed in isolation, is seen as a source of stress and anxiety — and therefore intrinsically unhealthy — then it makes no sense to talk about a healthy balance between work and life, as no such balance can ever be healthy. Work is an embedded part of life and so we ought to be thinking about 'life balance', meaning a healthy balance in the one life that we have all been given, instead of focusing on the logically flawed concept of 'work–life balance'. Logically, the term 'work–life balance' is absurd.

One of the outcomes of Covid-19 is that we are confronted by all aspects of life simultaneously. I feed my baby, talk to my clients, meet with my colleagues, and plan groceries with my wife all from the same desk. This is both an opportunity and a challenge. It is an opportunity for people to understand that they need to optimise their life as a whole. However, it is also a challenge be- cause so many have trouble confronting all dimensions of life at once, being so used to sub-dividing.

4. In One Life, you have a chapter on meaningful leadership. What makes a meaningful leader, and can you tell us more about your meaningfulness quotient (MQ)?

If we accept that the notion of work–life balance is nonsensical, and by extension that work is an embedded, existential part of life, then we can think of work as something more intimate. What does this mean for the idea of leadership? Leadership is not a role or a process. It's a moral obligation to ensure that the intimacy of work is treated with respect and that, above all, our people are inspired. To exercise meaningful leadership, you must be naturally curious about the motivations and well-being of your colleagues and try to help fulfil their potential. Leadership is a calling, rather than a rung on the career ladder.

Fortunately, current generations demand that their work help them find a sense of meaning in their one life, to a higher degree than has been the case for previous generations. At Voluntās, we have made steps to quantify meaningfulness as an essential quotient in management, built on four factors that drive meaning at work: purpose, belonging, personal growth, and leadership. If an employee

is to feel meaning and realise their potential for their own sake and that of the business, they must be aware of these four drivers and reflect on whether they are succeeding or struggling to find meaning in their work. Where leadership can truly benefit productivity is in creating frameworks that facilitate this process.

Practically speaking, meaningful leaders do not keep a professional distance between themselves and their employees. Managers can't fulfil their responsibilities at a distance. What they ought to cultivate instead is professional intimacy. 'Employees don't leave workplaces; they leave managers' is more than just a platitude; it reflects the fact that leadership styles play a significant role in how we feel about our work. By truly understanding their colleagues, leaders can create an atmosphere of trust and empowerment which enables meaning and can drive improved performance.

5. Many companies assign themselves values. You believe virtues should be assigned over values. Could you explain?

Since the 1980s, shared corporate values have emerged across every organisation in order to steer behavior and morality. Many organisations claim to be value-based, but this often means little more than the values being pasted on the wall in the reception or emblazoned on a website. An organisation, much like a person, cannot just assign itself values. Values are assigned to us by other people.

While values are static and originate from the language of mathematics, virtues stem from the language of morality and philosophy, referring to behaviours that one commits oneself to striving towards daily. If we want to create businesses with good intentions, we need to shift from value-based leadership to leadership that is virtue-based.

When we say virtues are something we aspire to be rather than something we are, we are also simultaneously communicating that we are fallible and acknowledging that we are not perfect. What we are really saying is, 'I'm not always honest, but I constantly strive to be.' People may counter that this philosophy is only linguistics; sure, but the use of language creates tangible differences in our realities. Therefore, if we continue to use ignorant language, we will remain ignorant and continue moving towards non optimal outcomes.

Organisations need to select and precisely define the virtues that will inform their ethics and bring them closer to realising their purpose.

6. Nearly every company today has a human resource (HR) department and employee performance reviews. You have an interesting perspective on both. What are your thoughts on the role of HR in companies today and performance reviews in general?

I am a self-declared capitalist, meaning I want to earn as much money as fast as possible at the lowest possible cost. From a profitability and earnings perspective, HR processes today are deeply insufficient. Instead of realising the full potential of employees, HR is eroding it. HR management is an American leadership philosophy that characterises all people across an organisation as an asset class. In my opinion, it is clear why people, after being treated as an asset class, are getting less engaged at work. Managing people in this value-driven way is redundant and kills the possibility of optimising an organisation.

Meaningful leadership is primarily about leading people on the basis of their potential, rather than managing them as resources. Replacing HR with 'human potential' functions — which focus on ensuring that the infrastructure

and culture for competent leadership are in place — will help to realise employee potential.

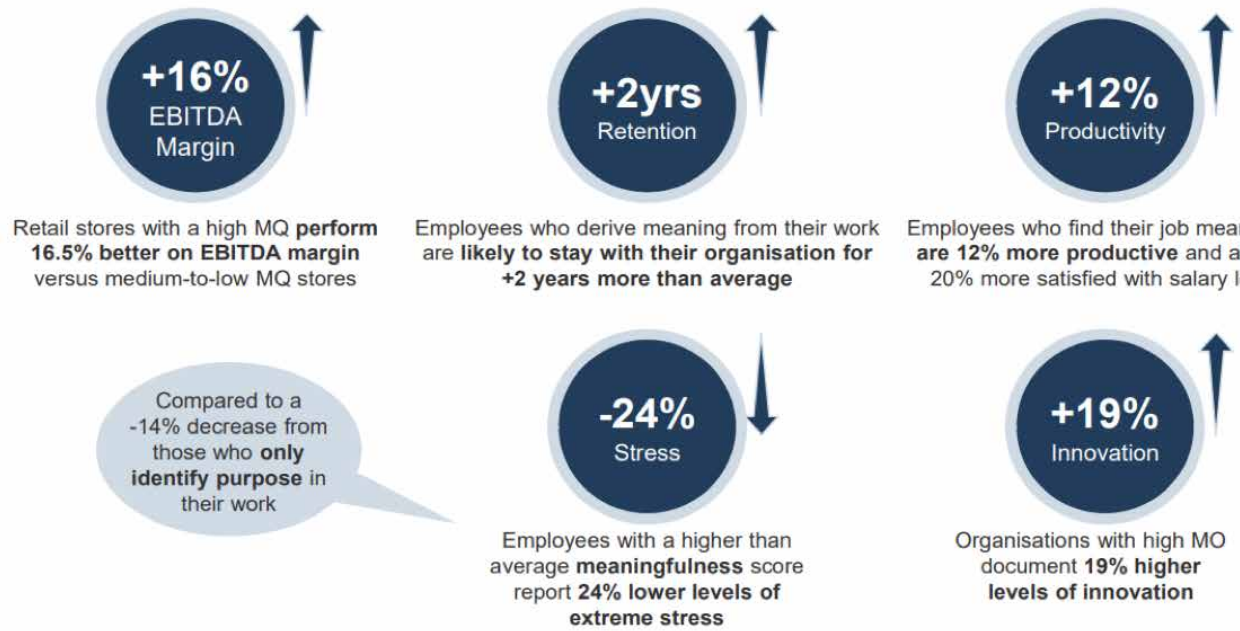
In performance reviews, could an employee outline their spiritual and mental development goals for the year ahead? Could they say what their physical development goals are? Have they discussed any of this with their leader? No. It is not accounted for. However, Covid-19 is increasing awareness that some of the dimensions that we had thought we could address in isolation from work - such as our spiritual, mental, and physical aspects - need to be considered and implemented into employee development plans by any modern, progressive employer.

Instead of employee development plans, we need to have human potential development plans. One must consider spiritual, mental, and physical progress, as well as the intellectual, professional, and technical.

7. Companies and countries use various indicators to measure performance. We even have a happiness index; you come from Denmark, apparently one of the happiest countries in the world. For a long time, you have argued for a meaningfulness index. Would you please elaborate?

Regardless of whether we are addressing a country or an organisation, to facilitate constructive change we have to

Figure 1 – The Meaningful Organisation significantly outperforms on EBITDA margin, retention, productivity, stress levels, and innovation



Source: Harvard Business Review (2014), Amabile & Kramer (2011), Deloitte (2015), Cranton & Keller (2013), Voluntās Research 2016-2020, Sisodia et al. (2013)

be precise in what we are measuring. With the happiness index, we have confused the differences between satisfaction, happiness, and meaning - three completely different metrics. Satisfaction is about need realisation: if you have your needs met, you will feel satisfied. Therefore, when we measure satisfaction in organisations, we should actually be measuring the capacity of the firm to meet the needs of the employees.

Happiness, meanwhile, is tied to a specific moment in time. It comes and goes, so it is impossible on a personal or organisational level to strive towards happiness 24/7. Happiness is a useless indicator from which to draw a conclusion, because it is so subjective and dependent on the individual. Denmark has been celebrated for many years for a superficial indicator which, essentially, does not measure happiness, but instead societal trust. This is a metric that Denmark obviously performs well in, being a small, homogeneous country. Imagine a reality in which nations not only boasted about being the happiest on the planet but also the ones whose people experience the most meaning. One cannot be both happy and unhappy or satisfied and dissatisfied in the same moment, but meaningfulness can co-exist with either of these emotions. When I laid my father to rest, I was satisfied by the life he had lived and provided for his family, but happiness was the last feeling I could conjure. That moment was, nevertheless, deeply meaningful for me.

To understand why an organisation is not performing to its full potential, leaders should measure by a meaningfulness quotient rather than by happiness or satisfaction.

8. Voluntās specialises in advising companies, boards, leaders and governments on how to create, adapt, and drive a meaningful organisation, brand, society, and planet. Can you tell us how you go about doing this?

I start with the two following actions. Firstly, I replace values with virtues, and let that drive meaningful leadership from inside the organisation. This creates a curriculum of virtues that all leaders in the organisation should uphold. Secondly, I measure meaning using the four drivers I detailed earlier. After this, the meaningfulness quotient can be tied into the performance goals of the executives and senior leadership, ensuring employees' potential is maximised and the value that is created for stakeholders grows as much as possible, as fast as possible. The transmission mechanism for this process is as follows: if you conduct virtuous leadership, you will increase your meaningfulness quotient which, through gains in efficiency and engagement, will trickle down to generate tangible benefits in EBITDA, gross profits, and your company's bottom line. The clients I work with see this evolution within twelve months when they commit to the philosophy and apply it diligently and repeatedly.

Undeniably, the work-life balance philosophy tries to impose on us the notion that life is one thing and work is something different. Logically, if they were not two different things, then they couldn't be balanced against each other! Can you actually say the true opposite of life is work? Of course not.

MORTEN ALBÆK
Philosopher, Bestselling Author, International Public Speaker,
and Founder & CEO at Voluntās

Impact focus is at the core of modern leadership in large organisations

Author STINE BOSSE

STINE BOSSE *is a Danish businesswoman with a global mindset. She has distinguished herself by her dedication to ambitious company goals, growth and sustainability and by the remarkable results she has achieved through strong leadership, clear governance and efficient turnarounds. Today Stine works full-time as board member in internationally orientated companies. She currently serves as Director of the Board in Allianz, AssistansBolaget, COOP, Samlino Group, and as Chairman of Nunaoil.*

When you as part of your leadership role want to create real impact, and not just shallow change, it must start with **letting go**. This feels uncomfortable for most leaders, because steering, and trying to generate ideas and forcing these into the organization and further, still feels safe for many leaders. But this is the longest, the must inefficient, and the least enabling way to create impact.

Impact means **solving real problems** – whether it be social, environmental, or just delivering a solid product where one is a needed. At the receiving end is the customer and/or society. A capable organisation will be led through **trust and involvement**, in a way in which the best ideas are picked up by the employees and made into real products, services, investments, etc.

To make this possible you need a clear **strategic offset**, clear **values** to work within and an understood **purpose** to guide your people. Only then can you let go, trust, control, and make sure that mistakes are tolerated, but not repeated, and that responsibility and consequence is clear.

When I took over the responsibility as CEO of a large Nordic insurer, Tryg, I realized that the strategy was unclear, secret, and without clear goals. So we designed a top-down and bottom-up process with a strong analysis of our now position. This gave us insight, it meant speed in implementing change, and it gave enough direction, meaning that the organization itself came up with the real ideas and made the difference. Our value tripled in six years, customer and employee satisfaction went up at an unbelievable speed.

The tool we used was "The Balance Scorecard" – transforming and breaking down our main goals towards all stakeholders into team goals that everybody could relate to. All done completely transparently, so that everybody could click from bottom to top and the other way around.

So, after your leadership has embraced letting go, you might think about the following three dimensions, which unfold into six key points of leading the organization and freeing up energy and ideas – which is of great value, more today than ever before, because speed in implementation of change is needed.

1) **Movement**, meaning that you must work with the **agility** of the organisation. You must make sure that no infrastructure, be it geography, remuneration structure, or prejudices can get in the way. Also meaning that you let emotions be part of the collective relationship. You **move your people** and let them move you. This happens when you start adding parts of yourself to the story, and when you accept that you are in control by doing exactly this.

2) **Balance**, meaning that you remain aware of **all stakeholders** – investors, customers, employees and the societies you serve in, and make sure that there is a balanced contribution in all relations. But also meaning that you allow your people to live **balanced lives**, and acknowledge that happy employees create the best results.

3) **Consciousness**, meaning that you know what you want to **achieve**, and that you are able to **communicate** this clearly in your strategy and your purpose. But also meaning that you in your leadership are aware that your **decisions come with great impact,** why you must be cautious and reflected when you decide on the big matters, lay out the guiding principles and paint the bigger picture.

When you work within these dimensions in your organizations, you might find inspiration in what I call 'the organizational employee interview'. Here you engage your organization in themes – everything from stress to hard care financial issues, and you do it in a week in the existing teams and gather data from their conversations. This gives you a perfect idea on where your people are, it moves the desired issues, it trains, and it keeps up the alertness that may deteriorate in large organizations.

If today's leaders shy away from real IMPACT, they won't last long. Results of any kind are measured by impact. Without a clear strategic, organizational, and value-driven mindset to achieve impact, you will not deliver on what your stakeholders want collectively.

Photo: Flemming Leitorp

Impactful Leadership

Author LOUISE HERPING ELLEGAARD

LOUISE HERPING ELLEGAARD *co-founded one of the first EdTech startups in Denmark, Clio Online, and then Bonnier Education in Sweden (exited both in 2018). Since then, she co-founded a HealthTech startup, MYiNNERME, with a Danish child psychologist (exited in 2021). Today, she invests in startups and scale-ups and sits on different boards and committees. She is also one of the investors in the new season of the Danish investment show ''Lion's Den'' (2022-2023).*

By now, this book has given you plenty of advice on how to get the idea for your startup, how to develop a prototype, how to go to market, and so on. But how do you make sure you don't burn out with all these tasks lying ahead of you? In my first start-up, CLIO, we quickly realized that unless we started to delegate tasks and responsibilities to others, we would crash and burn and not make our deadlines. For us, this was a success because it turned out that in some cases others were doing a better job than us. So here are five simple ways for you to become an impactful leader:

1. Do what you do best – and leave the rest to others
Start by identifying the tasks and responsibilities that you really love doing. Then identify what needs to be done in your startup that you hate doing. What part can you delegate to others? Maybe the bookkeeping? Sales? Each time we hired a new salesperson in CLIO, our revenue increased proportionally. Founders are usually product people and often not salespeople. But this part is one of the most important parts of your journey. To generate revenue. Especially now that we have economic crisis hanging over our heads.

2. Hire for attitude – train for skills
Let's face it. Startups can't compete on salary with the bigger companies. So sometimes you have to settle for second best. And this is where "Hire for attitude – train for skills" comes into place. If your first hires have team spirit and believe in the company's 'why', but lack some skills, then train them or provide them with courses to upgrade them. One benefit is that you can shape these people to fit the business. Experienced employees can sometimes be more angular, which you may not have as much time to deal with in the early days.

3. Diverse teams perform better
In numerous studies, diversity — both inherent (e.g., race, gender) and acquired (experience, cultural background)

— is associated with business success. But also, the type of person we all are. In CLIO, we initially used the Myers Briggs Type Indicator to map our different types of personality and thus assign tasks and responsibilities in relation to it. Later, as we got a professional HR department, we started using many other type tests - partly to map our existing teams and partly in the recruitment of new employees.

On a personal level, all these tests have given me a better insight into what motivates me and what I should stay away from. The better I got to know myself, the better a leader I became.

I'm proud to say that in CLIO about 50% of the leaders were females, and many ages, races and nationalities were represented. It not only resulted in better ideas and solutions, but also better company parties.

4. Accept that others solve tasks differently from you

Unless you have hired a clone of yourself (and I hope you don't because you will not get new perspectives), then you can't expect your employees to solve the tasks 100% as you would have done it. You simply must leave it at that. In return, you may be surprised that your employees come up with better and completely new solutions and perspectives. We experienced this in CLIO time and time again, and how instructive it was! Magic happens when several disciplines develop together.

5. Be transparent

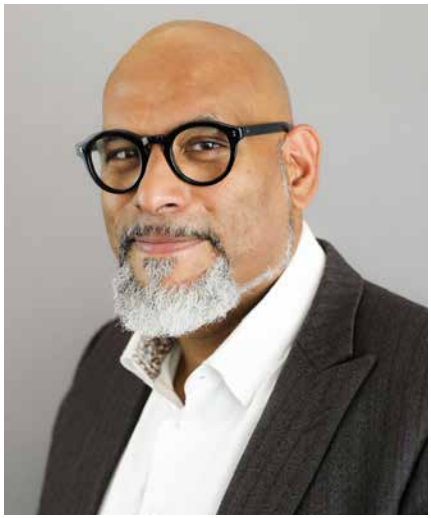
If there's anything I've learned in my fourteen years at CLIO where we went from being a startup - scale-up - exit, then it's that the more transparent you are as a leader, the more information and context you give your employees, the more they will follow you. It's important to get everyone on board because otherwise you'll go nowhere.

I've experienced employees opposing the strategy because they didn't understand it or support it. But the moment I included them early in the process, the more they would execute on the strategy. I think it's about them wanting to feel seen and heard. And when they trust you because you invite them in, they will go the extra mile for you and the company. And you need that, especially in the early days.
I understand that you probably don't want to tell them about everything, such as the financial situation, because you fear that they will quit if the numbers aren't good. But try it anyway. You'll be surprised.

Good luck with your new role as a leader. Remember that no one is perfect, neither you nor your employees. It's okay to make mistakes – as long as we learn from it.

Creating an environment that no one wants to leave

Author JOHN AMAECHI



JOHN AMAECHI *OBE is a respected organisational psychologist, Chartered Scientist, international business bestselling author and Founder of APS Intelligence. He is a coach and mentor to numerous C-suite executives and a strategic advisor who uses his deep psychological insight combined with real world experience to provide a touchstone for people and organisations that want to thrive through the disruption and change inherent in this new world of work. John is an Honorary Professor at University of Exeter Business School.*

1. How did you decide to switch your profession from an NBA player to an organizational psychologist? Where is the passion for psychology coming from?

I think people need to reframe how transitions from jobs happen. I played basketball. It doesn't mean that it's what I was. I was studying while I played, I was studying for my doctorate 30 thousand feet in a plane. So, it was always the plan, it's not like I just kind of miraculously one day said "oh, maybe a psychologist.", I knew I was going to be a psychologist when I was very young.

I knew that how people thought and the way people think and interact has an impact on behaviour. I thought that was fascinating. I wanted to be a practitioner in that space, even when I didn't know what a psychologist was. The transition happened because I planned it meticulously, I worked on the qualifications required while I played, so that when I retired from my first job, I could then immerse myself in my career.

2. As an organizational psychologist, what type of observations do you do at an organisation? Can you walk us through a typical day on the job?

I just had a reporter from America who shadowed me for a couple of days, and that helped me realise that I don't really have a typical day. I get up very early, because I like to. I'm usually at my desk relatively early, 6 o'clock-ish or so, I usually have a conversation with my CEO, who is an early riser.

I may have work that has come in overnight that clients want done yesterday. And that can be helping write a job spec for a CEO of a major company, because they want to make sure they are hiring on the basis of criteria that matter, not on the basis of traditional criteria of leadership, old-fashioned leadership.

I had been working with an organisation on how to completely restructure themselves and with individual

leaders on coaching them through difficult transformations for their companies or for themselves.

And then a bunch of advisory, talking to people and trying to find out what their challenges are, really describe them so that we can solve them, or at least create solutions for them.

3. Do you go to organisations and make reports based on that?

Yes, we have a couple of inventories. We have a leadership inventory, which is not a test, it's based on trait and social identity leadership research, so it helps understand what are the traits related to being a high-performing leader, and also what are the traits and elements that are likely to make you someone somebody will want to follow.

We have got a really effective inventory that helps us to understand cultures, the culture snapshot inventory that we use. Through these, we can talk about differential experiences of different types of colleagues, whether it be colleagues from one region versus another, or whether it be colleagues who are women versus colleagues who are not etc.

We use a lot of that analytics work to guide the understanding of what is the status quo, because we don't think you can really devise a solution until you know what is exactly happening.

4. You are the Founder of "APS Intelligence". Could you tell the readers of this book, what the business is all about and what is its story?

We want to help people thrive. We don't think that performance has to have a body count, even through disruption, even in the craziness we have experienced in the last couple of years, even through the ongoing transformation that's required. Whilst we know work can be difficult and challenging, and will always be, and adapting to change is always going to be energy expensive, we think there is a way to create modern workplaces, that respect the differential needs of people, that respect the adaptations that are required for some people.

And we are trying to help people create environments that no one wants to leave, that's our goal. And for me personally, especially in the coaching work that I do, to create leaders who are compelling, driven, ambitious, but understand their duty of care.

5. At APS Intelligence, you state that inclusion is a performance prerogative (exclusive right or privilege). How can companies build inclusion?

It shouldn't be a question that we have to ask, but it is. So, the data on inclusion and on belonging are related but not quite the same, which is unequivocal. We know that inclusive environments, where people feel like they belong are environments that have fewer errors, higher performance, more engagement, and so on. So that's why I think it's important, not for 'kumbaya' moments, not so companies can create an ad with a black person, and a white person, and someone who obviously has a disability, and somebody who might be LGBTQ.

Creating those environments just requires managers to be skilled, and not just technically brilliant, but interpersonally skilled, to understand their responsibility to have coaching skills, developmental skills, skills to develop people around them, to make sure that you audit your processes and your procedures and your unwritten rules so that you understand what your organisation is likely to produce as an experience for different types of people.

It requires diligence and attention to detail and a willingness to invest in hiring and skilling up people, to fulfil the

promises that all those companies already make. It's why most people don't bother, because it's easier to create a fancy lunchroom, than it is to insist that all your managers are both technically skilled, and requisitely interpersonally skilled.

6. You recently published the book ''The Promises of Giants", where you discuss transformational leadership. What are the practises and behaviours that describe this type of leadership?

I'm torn by this, because part of me says that we add words in front of the word leadership to varyingly important degrees of value. Transformational leadership at its best is the idea of somebody who can allow people to develop and grow to adapt, to go from one level of understanding, accomplishment, competence, to a higher level of that.

More than that, it's the kind of leader that people want to change for, want to grow for, be better, more accomplished, more diligent, more dedicated, more ambitious for. It's the type of person who acts as a catalyst for the people around them, an excitation agent that makes even mundane work feel important and valuable, and even those who do mundane work feel valued and important. I'm sure the description I have written in the book is more academically sound, but to me that's what it's about.

7. What is a good leader in your experience? What are the qualifications one should possess?

Good leaders have to be technically competent individuals. Outside of the drive and ambition, some of those theory types and elements, is the idea that you are compelling enough and the way you operate and behave is so consistent that people want to follow you and can trust that when you give an instruction or a direction, that you do this because it's the only way.

I talked with a gentleman, he used to be the commandant of Sandhurst, the military school here in London, and it was really interesting, because my thoughts about the military were perhaps a little old fashioned. There was this idea that in the military someone barks the order at you and you go, and that is very true, there is a strict chain of command, but what this guy was talking about is the idea that really great leaders, in the military and outside, have the ability to compel people to do the most difficult things.

8. Is there a particular book, podcast, or film that made a significant impact on you? Can you share a story or explain why it resonated with you so much?

I have shelves full of books that I think are important, but the one that had the biggest impact on me was probably Star Wars, it's the idea of the group of people whose power is bound by some combination of will, focus, presence, attention and a deep authentic connection with the world around them. It was completely compelling for me as a child.

It's why I'm a psychologist. The power in psychologists, and indeed in great leaders, is the function of the purposeful application of our attention. Our ability to block out distraction and noise, and allow the person in front of us to know, that in this moment there is only you, I think is so incredibly powerful.

Something I always remind leaders of, because so many times with leaders, the interactions they have, especially the ones that are inconsequential to them, have this massive rippling impact on the people around them.

9. This book is all about impact. What is impact for you?

It is the transfer of energy. It's either done carefully and thoughtfully, in such a way that a person is refuelled by that interaction or it's done thoughtlessly, carelessly, or

maybe even with malicious intent, in such a way that a person is wounded, or dented by that exchange.

10. You are the first Briton to have a career in the NBA. Can you tell us about the journey that took you there?
I started playing basketball at the age of 17, I had never played basketball before then nor had I played sports. I WROTE 3000 letters to high schools in America, to see if any of them would take me. I ended up going to a small school in Toledo, Ohio.

I spent a year in high school, because I was not very good and I needed a year to get good enough to get a scholarship. I went to Vanderbilt University, where my coach told me halfway through the year that I would never play, and that if I really wanted to play, I would have to go to what they call a division 2 or 3 school, which is lower down the chain, I didn't believe him.

In fact, I got really good advice from my roommate's dad, he was a coach as well in a different university, he told me "You either have to believe yourself or you have to believe this man", and I believed myself. I went to Penn State, in the Big Ten, played for about three years there. Didn't get into the NBA, which was devastating. Ended up being the first undrafted player to play in the NBA, to start at the beginning of the season of the NBA. Played for 6 years, retired in 2005, and that's it.

11. Back in 2007 you were the first NBA player to came out as gay. How has sharing this with the world helped you? Do you have an advice for others who are in a similar position?
Sharing it with the world hasn't helped me particularly. People who cared about me and who I cared about knew. While I played, before I played, people knew. I simply ended up telling the entire world, which is a very different thing.

My advice to anybody who is LGBTQ is to find one person who you care about and who cares about you enough to tell. No one should have to be forced to be alone with their identity as if it's something unsuitable for public consumption.

Inspire a movement of growth

Author WHITNEY JOHNSON

WHITNEY JOHNSON *is the CEO of Disruption Advisors. She is a former award-winning Wall Street analyst. She co-founded the Disruptive Innovation Fund with the late Clayton Christensen. Whitney hosts the popular Disrupt Yourself podcast. She is a WSJ and USA Today bestselling author of Smart Growth: How to Grow Your People to Grow Your Company. She is LinkedIn Top Voice in 2020 with 1.8 million followers.*

1. You've stated that the fundamental unit of growth in any organization is the individual. What does that mean?

You want to grow your business, but you can't grow your business unless you grow your people. And you grow your people by starting with the individual, because that's where the locus of control is. The only thing that I have any control over is ''Do I grow?'', and if I grow then there is a contagious act.

If I'm growing then my people are growing, and if everyone in the organisation is growing then, by definition, the organisation is growing. So now, you have this contagion effect of growth throughout the organisation. And what's interesting is when you grow, you are basically disrupting others. You make them make a choice of whether they want to grow or not. But you are also modelling growth for them.

2. Let's say a company has its own growth goal and a growth goal for the individuals. Sometimes it can be tricky to align them. Maybe the individual wants to develop personally as well, go to courses, and so on. How do you make these work together?

I would say it's fantastic! If they say to you, for example, "well, I have a goal that I want to run a marathon" then say to them "okay, then walk me through how running a marathon is going to help you achieve this goal." If I'm training for a marathon what does that mean? It means I'm in better physical shape. It means I have more stamina. It means I'm more productive. I have more intellectual acuity. I feel the sense of accomplishment. I'm modelling for people around me. So, if I have more stamina and I'm more productive, then I'm going to be able to bring that into the workplace. And it might be that as I'm training for the marathon, I'm going to learn something that I'm going to be able to apply at work that is going to make us more productive at work.

3. I loved the phrase "Inspire a movement of growth". I think that many of us dream about doing so. What's the secret to succeeding at it?

When you think about creating a movement, it means that all people are going in the same direction. One of the things that we use is this S Curve of learning to look at how groups change over time. One of the a-ha's that I had when we were using it for investing, was that you could use the S Curve to understand how individuals change over time. And so, when you introduce something like the S Curve, which is very simple and very visual, it's useful because it allows people to have a conversation about what does growth look like. Everybody can picture where they are in their growth, what emotional experience they are having.

4. For people who don't know what the S Curve is, can you please explain it and how you use it for the individual?

The S Curve is a very simple model; there are three major parts to it. You've got the launch point, the sweet spot, and mastery.

What happens is your brain runs a predictive model; whenever you start something new it's making predictions about what it is going to take to get to the top of that curve. At the launch point many of these predictions are inaccurate, leading to drops in feel-good brain chemical dopamine. Your emotional experience is that you have no idea what you're doing, but growth is happening. So, it just feels slow, and that normalises the experience of being at the launch point, of starting something new.

The sweet spot, this is the steep, sleek part of the curve. You are running a predictive model that is becoming increasingly accurate, so you are getting all these upside emotional surprises, the dopamine is spiking, so it feels exhilarating, and the growth feels fast, and is fast. That's the sweet spot of the curve.

Then you have mastery, where you have figured out the model, you are getting a little bit of dopamine but not a lot, so here is the place where the growth is, in fact, slow.

This traces the emotional arch of growth. It helps explain why it is so hard to start something new, why it's easy once you do start, and why you can be very good at something but feel like you can no longer keep doing it. You use this model to understand what growth looks like, because once you understand the process then you increase your capacity to grow.

5. Will there also be people who, once they have reached mastery, will be happy just staying there?

We have an assessment tool that we use for this. If someone is very good at what they are doing and they're not bored, and they are motivated, it may be that they have got a portfolio of S Curves and maybe they are on a very steep curve at home or running marathons, but they come to work every day and they are motivated and are contributing at a high level. If a person is in the sweet spot, they are doing the job that they were hired to do, and they are enjoying it.

You want to be aware of the individuals who are very good at what they're doing and are a little bit bored and less happy. These are people in mastery who are not contributing at the level they once were. They have lower innovative capacity; what do they want to do about it?

There are many ways to deal with it. It can be that they need a new project or role, or team configuration; they can do S Curve loops to bring other people along. But you need to find a way to unleash their capacity again, because if you don't what looks like a plateau to them where they are just kind of there will, over time, become a precipice.

6. What is an A-team?
On an A-team every single person is in growth. It's a team optimised for growth by having at least 60% of members in the sweet spot, 20% at the launch, 20% in mastery, so you are in a high-performing place. Everybody is building momentum around that growth and the team itself is optimally contributing to the growth for the organisation. I would argue that a peak performer isn't just a person in the sweet spot, it is a person who is able to successfully navigate all stages of the curve because they can iterate and continue to grow.

7. Some people have a hard time with the word disruption, and now we even have to disrupt ourselves. What is the difference between change, transformation, and disruption?
I would say disruption is a subset of change, transformation is where you go from a launch point to mastery, but personal disruption is a mechanism or rather a tool in your backpack that helps you to make it up the mountain.

Transformation starts at the launch point of an S Curve when you're not yet a runner, for example. But you want to be one and you do this gradual work to reach the top of the S Curve, then you can say 'I am a runner, I have run a 5K'. From the launch point to mastery, transformation occurs because you are growing.

I would use the S Curve and think about it as the mountain. You go from one learning curve to the next, from one mountain to the next mountain; you are disrupting yourself. But often the more potent disruptions are micro disruptions, like a tool that you put in your backpack. It's the willingness every single day of your life to step back from who you are to slingshot into who you can be. And that's what I consider self-disruption.

8. You've written about many women not daring to dream at all. Why is that, and is it still the case today?
I think it's improving so much. I wrote a book "Dare, Dream, Do: Remarkable Things Happen When You Dare to Dream" and I was really trying to understand what was happening there. I was having conversations with other women and asking them what their dream was, and they would say, "Well, I don't have a dream," and I would think, "What do you mean you don't have a dream?" I started to do some research and found some work by the psychologist Anne Phelps that shows that women are only seen as feminine in the context of their relationships, or when they are doing something for someone else.

This is part of your development. You need to learn how to dream for yourself to grow up and be a model for your children if you have them. Because if you don't dream, the children around you, the next generation, won't know how to dream.

9. In a time with many people being stressed and depressed, is it healthy to talk about building high-performing teams? Shouldn't we rather discuss how to build teams that don't become ill because of the high-performance requirements?
One of the gifts of the pandemic is that we are much more willing, as a society, to talk about emotional wellness, about the importance and need to rest, the importance of taking a break. I think this is a tremendous gift.

A high-performing team is a team who knows how to run and then walk. Back to the S Curve, I think one of the ways that you can use this is to talk about how you are going to manage performance. Well, if you understand where your people are in their growth, then you can manage them so they can perform. You can manage them so they can get

the rest that they need, so they can be recharged and rejuvenated, so they can do the work that they want to do. Because they – or rather we – all want to do good work.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

The way I think about impact is that it starts with me, with what I say and what I do. The fundamental unit of growth is the individual. There is an assumption that impact brings good into the world. When we say impact, we're thinking, "good is happening" not "bad". Impact is when who I am and what I do inspires people to grow as human beings, in all aspects of their lives.

I believe if I do that within my sphere of influence, I will inspire other people around me to grow. Beyond that, I have no control, but I do have control over what I do right now, to grow myself and to grow my people and then as we know, that will grow people around me and grow the company and grow the world.

11. You have inspired impact in a lot of people. So many people have read your books; why do you think they resonate with a lot of people?

What's inspiring is that growth is our default setting, and I believe that human growth is unbounded. Sometimes we believe in the growth mindset until we don't anymore. But when I can talk to someone, and I can say "growth is your default setting; your ability to grow is absolutely unbounded," that resonates in people. Also, I continually focus on practicing what I'm teaching.

Double your impact by not taking credit

Author BRUCE KASANOFF

BRUCE KASANOFF *is a transformational listener who partners with leading entrepreneurs to serve as a ghostwriter, co-creator and/or coach. Over 175,000 people read his Mountain Minute newsletter on LinkedIn. He is also the founder of Bend Reality, a community for expansive individuals. Learn more at Kasanoff.com.*

Once you reach a certain point in your career, a stunningly powerful tool becomes available: you no longer need to take credit for everything.

Many leaders never recognize this gift, and as a result, they fall victim to a litany of ego-based traps. Few things are sadder than a leader who already has money and power, but loses it because s/he just can't stop thinking that s/he is personally responsible for every success.

Leadership is not about personal glory; it is about shared accomplishments.
If you have earned significant authority and responsibility, it's time to stop taking credit and instead empower—and recognize—other people.

Is this a selfless act? No. It's a selfish act, because by giving credit to others you will ensure that your business as a whole thrives, and you will benefit greatly from that.

Here are five ways to get started:

Work quietly in the background. Instead of being a loud voice at the front of the room, increase your frequency of quiet one-on-one conversations. Let it be known that you believe in your key people. When you suspect that one of them may be struggling, look for ways to help without revealing that you are helping.

You often can accomplish more by working behind the scenes. This is because you are using your power discreetly and giving the glory—i.e. the energy and fuel—to others. When someone's boss intervenes in a tough situation, they may feel deflated. But when you help behind the scenes, they don't even know it; all they see is the satisfaction of getting stuff done.

Demonstrate by doing. Don't be a do-nothing leader who talks too much and prances around; be a colleague who listens well and acts wisely. Through your actions, allow others to see what success looks like. If you believe in others and support them actively, the people around you will notice and adopt your habits.

Encourage vulnerability. Everyone has weaknesses. Bring them out into the open by encouraging people to ask for help and—this is the important part—give them a way to do this discreetly and safely. In this way, you can quietly help to pair people who have complementary strengths and weaknesses. When someone is honest with you, be certain to protect their confidentiality and reward them for being honest and open.

Take joy in the success of others. Redefine success so that it does not entail an immediate ego boost for yourself, but rather the satisfaction of knowing deep inside that you accomplished an important goal by empowering others to do their best. This is not entirely altruistic behavior; you will be creating the type of world in which you wish to live, and people will eventually form a subconscious sense that everything works better when you are around.

Allow things time to happen. Change takes time. Just because an idea enters your head does not mean that others will react immediately, especially if you are trying to effect change without taking credit. Be persistent but patient.

Remember this: the higher you are in the chain of command, the greater the impact you can have by sharing credit or giving it away entirely.

One last point: I actually live this way.

As a ghostwriter, for 95% or more of what I write, only one other person in the world—my client—knows that I wrote it.

In this manner, I am able to reach a huge number of people with highly positive and actionable insights; this number is dramatically higher than I could reach on my own.

Does it bother me that I don't get credit for this work? Not at all.
I only have two goals, to delight my client and to help other people.

To help other people, do I need them to know that I was involved?

Nope.

There are many times when you can have a greater impact when you abandon the need to take credit. Try it out. You'll be amazed at your results.

Every person is a teacher, every experience is a lesson

Author JENNIFER DULSKI

JENNIFER DULSKI *is CEO and founder of Rising Team. She has been leading teams for more than 20+ years as an executive at both big tech companies and scaling startups, including Facebook, Google, Yahoo!, and Change.org. Her lifelong passion is centered around empowering people to reach their full potential. She currently teaches management at Stanford Graduate School of Business, serves on several boards, and writes about leadership and the future of work as a LinkedIn Influencer.*

1. You're committed to change the way we lead. Why?
There are two key factors I believe impact the potential that each of us has to accomplish something meaningful in the world. One is our education and access to continued learning over time, and the other is the leaders, mentors and champions we encounter in our lives. If we can help people become better leaders, especially those who have more formal leadership positions—managers at work, community leaders, teachers in schools—then they will better support, guide and empower the people they lead, creating more opportunity for everyone.

2. What did you learn from your background as a top executive at Change.org, Facebook and Google?
Two primary lessons come to mind from among the countless lessons I learned from these experiences. The first is the importance of a clear vision that is communicated frequently and in an inspiring way to everyone in an organization. In my book ***Purposeful***, I describe that a strong vision has three components.

One is the ***desired future***, which is what the world would look like if we're successful. Two is the ***purpose***, which explains why that articulated future matters, and three is a personal story about why this vision matters to you. Great companies get their teams excited about the vision by repeating it, telling stories about the people who benefit, and giving people line of sight to how their own work connects to the vision.

The second lesson I took away from these experiences is the importance of relationships. I have worked with incredible people at each company, and I have found that over the course of a career, paths often cross again. Investing in the strength of relationships at each place we work and volunteer, not only creates lifelong friendships, but also people

who can help each other at various points in their careers.

3. You work with a fully remote and distributed team. What were the considerations around this?
Starting a new company in mid-2020, there were few options at my disposal other than a fully remote team given the state of the world at that time. That said, once we got started, we realized how great it was to be able to hire talented people from any location, and we were dedicated to making it work.

We realized that with the right tools and practices, we could help our teams maintain a feeling of being connected, even though we're a distributed team. So, in addition to good documentation and productivity tools, we've implemented lots of fun traditions, including themed all-team meetings, daily "magic hat" questions in Slack, and regular use of our own Rising Team product. With all of this in place, we ensure the team is focused, productive and deeply and consistently connected.

4. Peter Drucker famously said 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast'. Can you really build a truly passionate culture without the strength of having people physically together at one or more office spaces?
Absolutely, 1,000%, you can build a strong and deeply connected culture without having people together in physical offices. It is not something that happens automatically on a distributed or remote/hybrid team, but with intention, you certainly can build a happy and healthy culture. I saw this in my role at Change.org where teams were spread across 18 different countries and various time zones, and we would only do a retreat once every other year, due to budget constraints.

Even in that environment, we were still able to build traditions to keep people feeling connected and engaged. Sharing customer stories, having themed dress-up days, doing deep-connection activities, and even making videos of songs that we would rewrite the words to were all fun things we could do in a distributed way that helped us build a strong, unified team. Of course, it is also great to get people together in person when you can. Our leadership team at Rising Team gets together every six to eight weeks to help boost our connection even more. So, a little bit of both is ideal if you can do it.

5. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact is about improving the current state of people's lives and the planet we live on. Essentially making something meaningfully better today than it was yesterday, or better 10 years from now than it was 10 years ago. It's one of the reasons I wrote my book ***Purposeful*** and interviewed movement starters all over the world. What I found in my research is that people who are able to create real impact in the world have the same three traits and skills. I call them the three Cs: **Courage, Community, and Commitment**.

The first element is about having the courage to take a step forward and do something even if it may be scary, you might be criticized, or you're worried you might not be effective. The truth is, every single movement that ever started, every change that was ever made, every company that was ever created, all began with individuals taking some small action. So, I always tell people, it's little "c" courage, not big "C" courage. Just take one step. It might be sending an email to friends telling them about your idea, it might be starting a petition, it might be hosting an event; little c courage means just getting started with one small step.

Then once you've started, momentum grows when you bring people along. Community means understanding we can't do these things by ourselves, and it's more effective with a community of people. The people who are most

successful at creating impact are those who take that first step, and then encourage and welcome other people to join them. When people ask "Do drops in the bucket matter?" of course they do! In fact, the only way you fill buckets is with many, many drops.

The third C is commitment, because there will invariably be challenges along the way and the people who make the most impact are those that just keep moving forward, regardless of the challenges. It's like climbing a mountain; the only way to get to the top is to keep climbing, one step up at a time, sunny or stormy, to keep pushing forward.

6. If people get inspired to work more with remote or distributed teams, what would you advise them to do? Please be as hands-on as possible.

First, let's acknowledge the fact that remote and hybrid work is definitely here to stay. People appreciate the flexibility it adds to their lives and the data is clear that people can be as or more productive from home as from an office. You can see this trend quite clearly in the petitions that both AT&T and Apple are receiving from their employees about not wanting to go back to work full time. So, let's assume the benefits of a more flexible and hybrid workplace are here to stay. Companies and organizational leaders should now focus and invest in a few things to make hybrid teams successful. One is clear documentation - make sure that organizational things like mission, values, and processes are clearly defined and live somewhere that all employees can access. As an example, our team uses Notion as a way to categorize and document all our information in one place and make sure everybody in any location can easily find what they need.

Second, invest in connection. In the recent Top Gun movie Maverick, when the flight team is working on this life-or-death critical mission, their leader, Maverick (Tom Cruise), takes the team out to play football at the beach. His supervisor comes in and heavily criticizes him for taking time out from critical training. "Maverick says, "You told me to make them a team, Sir." And he's right. All teams need time to bond and leaders need to invest in that connection time, whether we're remote or in person, but even more so when remote. It's one of the reasons we built Rising Team, to make it easy for any team leader to pull their team together into an engaging interactive session where they learn about each other more deeply. So, it can be a tool like Rising Team or other fun traditions that create community. Doing a check-in at the beginning of every meeting, sharing stories on an all-team call, and doing randomized "coffee chats" are all examples of ideas that will actively build connections between people.

The key is consistency. Whatever mechanisms you choose to keep people informed, connected, and feeling valued, it's important to keep doing them consistently over time to keep your hybrid and remote teams successful.

7. How do you become an impactful leader in the future?

One thing I've realized as I look back on my life so far, is that there were lessons and teachers all around me. In fact, I now say, "every person is a teacher, every experience is a lesson." Part of the way we can be successful in our careers is to take advantage of the lessons and the mentors all around us. When I think about that, everyone from my parents, to my early teachers, to my first ever manager at work, all had incredibly valuable things to teach me in different ways. As long as I stayed open to the lessons, it helped me get better at what I wanted to do in the world and helped build my skills as a leader.

The other thing I have found in my life is that there's a lot

of serendipity to what happens. I have found that saying ''yes'' more often than ''no'' has been helpful in giving me exposure to new opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise. When people ask me for career advice, I often say yes; if people need help or support, I often say yes, and when I have had the chance to meet someone new or try something new, I often say yes. When I look back, many of those "yes" moments have led to unexpected and valuable experiences and opportunities.

8. Finally, a very hands-on question about blogging and blog content. You have a method named 'finish this sentence'. What is this method all about?

When I was first asked to be an influencer on LinkedIn, and they said I had to write quite often, I was worried about how I would come up with enough content to write regularly. So, I started a process of just thinking about the people and the experiences in my life and starting the sentence of each blog post or article with the words: Five lessons I learned from…. That process helped me to craft my thoughts and the words after it. I did 'five lessons I learned for my dad,' 'five lessons I learned from teaching high school,' etc.… and as it turns out, I could write five lessons about basically anything I had done in my life or any person I was close to, and this gave me renewed appreciation for what all these people and experiences have taught me. So, it had a double benefit. It made it easier to write content, and it made me appreciate all the learning that was all around me.

Remember who you are and what you represent

Author DAVID SIMAS

DAVID SIMAS *is the former President of the Obama Foundation. He was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff to Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick in 2007. Simas then joined President Obama's administration in 2009 as a Deputy Assistant to the President, working with senior advisors David Axelrod and David Plouffe. In 2012, he served as Director of Opinion Research for President Obama's reelection campaign. Following the reelection, Simas returned to the White House as Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Political Strategy and Outreach.*

1. You come from humble beginnings as the son of Portuguese immigrants, and you made it all the way to becoming a key White House advisor. What has that journey been like for you?

The journey has been humbling, and not preordained nor planned. It has been a series of friends and acquaintances opening doors, culminating in that day when I walked into the White House for the very first time, as an employee, someone who worked for the President of the United States. I promised myself that, every day when I walked in and every day when I walked out, I would repeat the same mantra consistently, and that was "remember who you are and what you represent". For me, it was both a way to be grounded, but also to have a little bit of confidence. The 'who you are' is a reminder of my roots, and my family, and my teachers, and my coaches, and all of the people who opened doors – I am a product of all of those connections and relationships. And then 'what I represent' flows from that.

Especially in a position like in the government and in the White House, you are not representing yourself; ego, vanity, pride, prestige, status, title – all of those things can be intoxicating, but it's not about you. It's about making sure that every single day that you do the work you do you do it in the service of and on behalf of other people.

2. This book is all about impact. When you look at the world, is politics currently making the world a worse or better place to live?

It depends. There is reality and there is aspiration. Politics for me, especially in a democracy, is the way people mediate differences in a constructive fashion. It's based on pluralism, many different people from many different

backgrounds, with many different ideas. If you believe that people are sovereign, politics is the way all of those people mediating the path forward. It can be good or bad, because it's the function of people.

It's good when politicians from different groups and different parties can come together, sometimes for self-interest, other times for partisan interest, but ultimately in service of the public good. Politics can also be manifested in a very negative way, because embedded even in democracy is the idea that the majority rules. Sometimes the majority throughout human history has tyrannized the minority.

And so, politics that's anchored in tribalism. My side against your side - that isn't about bridging divides, that's about zero-sum - I win at all costs - that's negative and toxic politics. When I think about this question, it's neither good nor bad. How it's used and what are the incentives of the people who are using it, and even in the United States you can see some examples that are aligned with the pluralistic public good, and then you see other instances which are very clearly tribal and dangerous to certain segments of the population. And so this is where leadership matters.

Because in those moments, when negotiations are occurring, in those moments when elected people are making decisions, about this path or that path, a leader that is informed by winning at all costs, and that they are always right, rather than people who believe that pluralism is an important value and they are not a repository of all truths or the only right ways to go, those are two very different styles and there is a continuum in between. Leaders choosing pluralism over purity is at the heart of whether or not politics turns pro-social, toward the public good, or anti-social, towards division.

3. From politics you moved on to become the CEO of The Obama Foundation. How does working in philanthropy differ from working in politics?

Politics can be a zero-sum exercise, especially in elections, you either win or lose. And in many of the jobs that I've had in politics, especially in campaigns, you are always looking for a way to get the 50% plus 1.

In philanthropy, you are not constrained by an election season, you are no longer thinking about 2 or 4-year cycles. You have the ability to take a longer view. But, if not disciplined or focused, philanthropic efforts can be diffused. That's one limitation.

In philanthropy you benefit from not being constrained by the electoral necessity of 50 plus 1. As such, you can think in a much more expansive way. On the negative side, sometimes that results in a lack of precision and focus.

A final key difference is if you win an election, it is clear that you have the mandate to represent a certain group of people. In philanthropy that connection is less clear. At times, you presume to speak for people, but there is no functional handoff of, 'I am empowering you to speak for me and act in my service'.

So, what that requires, on the philanthropic side, is humility to listen, to make sure that you are not presuming too much, that you are building coalitions of people embedded in communities, who do have good relationships and connections with people.

4. A lot of the work in the Obama Foundation is centered around mentorship and education. Are those two things the most important aspects of building a better tomorrow?

Those two are critically important. I divide mentorship and education into three components:

The first is, going back to the foundations of democracy, is a radical expression; 'we the people, we govern'. In order to do that, what does the leadership of 'self' look like? How does any individual who has this civic responsibility, who ultimately governs, what do they need to know and what are their responsibilities in their community?

Our leadership programs initially stress 'leadership of self'. What are your strengths and weaknesses, blind spots, biases? How do you approach persuasion and critical thinking? How do you temper your emotions? How do you move from reaction to reflection, before action?

Component number two is understanding that each person has agency but can rarely have impact alone. We are interdependent. There are few instances where any human being can be truly self-sufficient. So, the importance of your group, who you choose to relate with, who you choose to engage with, is an essential source of education on a daily basis.

The third component is grounded in intergenerational connections. A mentorship where I am able to say, 'this may not work for you, but when this happened to me here are some choices that I made". Importantly, one of the detriments of age is that you can become very stuck and rigid in your views, and the beauty of intergenerational connections is folks who are younger, who see things a little bit differently and aren't so constrained by habit are able to jar your perspective open a little bit.

It's those three elements; leadership of self, a connection with your peers, and intergenerational connections that are essential elements of our view of education and mentorship.

5. Another part of the Obama Foundation's mission is to connect people. Today social media is connecting people, but many experts also challenge if this way of connecting people is only a good thing. When you talk about connecting people in the Foundation, what does this mean? How should we do that?
We are social creatures who need connection for our well-being and contentment. Virtual connection, while good, isn't sufficient, people need to be in a community, in person, with others.

At the Obama Foundation people come together by their view of the President and Mrs. Obama, and what they represent. That's hundreds of millions of people, and each of them views them a little bit differently, but essentially that is the connection that serves as the basis for a community. We then leverage geography or proximity by facilitating interactions, and connections for people to come together based on where they live. And then the third piece is around salience. What are the things that they care about the most? And that's when you begin to see people collaborate, work together around shared interest within a specific place, in unified, or at least brought together under Obama community standard.

And this is a way for us, through normal social interaction, to begin to develop some empathetic connections. And perhaps I am naive or overly optimistic about this, but I truly believe that anyone can make these types of connections with anyone on the planet.

6. Technology is not good or evil. It all depends on how we use it. Where do you see the good technology in today's world? And the (potentially) bad?
There are numerous ways where you see technology being used in a way that enhances connections and understand-

ing, and works towards virtue, rather than division. As you said, technology is neither good nor bad - tools are neutral. How they are used by humans is the difference. And so, technology that is used in a way that threatens, that divides, that obstructs, is a negative use of technology.

President Obama recently spoke at Stanford University to the technology community and asked them to consider how these tools can be, and are being, used.

For example, on social media, there is a distinction between speech and reach. The ability of someone to use a platform like Twitter to express themselves is extraordinary. Now, it is a different question all together when an algorithm takes a divisive message, and then turbo charges it, and gives it much greater amplification because of the algorithm.

And so, the choice for whatever incentives to privilege certain types of speech over others is something that individuals in companies and in all society should understand. When you stand in front of a group of people to give a talk you have a choice, will the talk be inflammatory, will it enrage, will it marginalize. Technology simply grows in an exponential way.

7. What is impact to you?
For me, it comes back to the primacy of each individual, the voice, the agency, the power, which is the heart of democracy.

If any think, that you do or you engage in enhances the capacity of a human being to determine the future in a greater way, that opens the opportunities for them, not to preordain what they are going to do or what outcomes they are going to have, but something that increases the opportunity, the agency and the voice of an individual to live their life in a way that they determine is best, that's impact. It is foundational, it is the basics. Health, poverty, all other important aspects of well-being, in some ways flow from the decisions, choices and opportunities that each person has. And so, the spreading of opportunity to each person is for me the ultimate level of impact. That's one person's perspective, it's not the best, it's not the worst, for me it's what governs the way I think about the work that I do.

Finding damn good people

Author PAYMAN TAEI

PAYMAN TAEI *is the founder of Visme, an all-in-one visual communication platform empowering over 16 million businesses and individuals to create beautiful on-brand assets in engaging presentations, infographics, documents, graphics and everything in-between.*

1. What inspired you to start Visme?
Visme is a leading Visual Communication company that is empowering millions of non-design professionals to create next level presentations, docs and other visuals in less time. My own struggles in creating design and seeing others struggle is what inspires me to create it.

2. What is your advice to those who want to move from dreaming to doing?
Everything that is a success began with a vision or a dream. So don't stop dreaming, but realize that a dream means nothing if you can't get up on your feet and start working on it.

Have a business idea? Yes, do you research, but please don't ponder for 6 months and work on an extensive business plan. Start and no matter how much you plan; along the way you will have to make iterations and figure some things out.

3. If you could change anything from when you first started out with Visme, what would it be?
Lots of things. In hindsight we would change a lot of things. I would have focused even more on the product, focused earlier on user experience, and would trust my own instincts more over what others feel/say is right for your product.

4. Can you share with the readers, what are the three most important tools in your daily work?
Visme: Yes, it's our own tool but I built Visme so it would solve my and other's visual communication problems and for marketing/sales.

Slack: I think I depend way too much on it now; But that's literally the heart of our communication across my entire company.

Google Sheets: I spend a lot of time analyzing, tracking,

and managing tasks. We use other productivity tools but Google sheets is where I link / park ideas/tasks and share among the team and track some of our analysis and metrics.

5. What does success mean to you?
For many businesses it's Revenue and MRR. That matters of course as it's the lifeblood of what pays your bills and is the bottom value of your business. I define it as where you take an idea you truly believe in and make it into a successful product or service. What inspires me even more is those that create products that solve big world problems, that help humanity and nature and their impact is in no way associated with $$.

6. Do you think that the details and the big picture are connected?
Details don't matter if they aren't part of a big picture. The big picture is meaningless if it's filled with a glut of short cuts and lacks fine details.

7. What are the 4 tips you have for building a great team?
A. First and foremost, they are a good person and you can trust them in hard times. B. They believe in your vision. C. They're not just looking for another job to hop on and move to the next shiny thing just to realize grass is not always greener on the other side. D. They are great problem solvers and self-starters.

8. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Seeing people do a lot with very little. A founder who raises many rounds and builds a multibillion-dollar company doesn't really impress me; but one who can from the ground up build a successful business and product that although may not be #1 in the industry, but is a formidable product that stands next to the big boys, earns my respect any day.

Is Fractional Capacity what your organization needs?

Author NEAL SCHAFFER

NEAL SCHAFFER *is an authority on helping innovative businesses digitally transform their marketing. Neal has served as a Fractional CMO for several leading organizations helping them with their digital, content, influencer, and social media marketing. Neal also teaches executives at Rutgers Business School and UCLA Extension. He has also authored four marketing books, including The Age of Influence (HarperCollins Leadership), a ground-breaking book redefining digital influence.*

1. You are a Fractional CMO. How does that work in practice and what are the main actives you work on?
Well, I should explain that I did not become a fractional CMO by design. My main role was as a social media marketing consultant. I have helped a lot of companies since I began in 2010 by developing their social marketing strategy.

Back in 2018, I had a local client who wanted to work with me and develop a deeper relationship. They said, "Neal, can you actually come into our office, four hours a week? Develop and implement a strategy, and report to the CEO? Help our junior marketing team, learn and develop our digital marketing?" So that's really what launched what I call a fractional CMO service.

The term fractional CMO is something I first learned in a speech in Japan. I think it's a new way of working and I think if you are an expert in something, it can be a fractional CMO/CFO/CRO, it doesn't matter what function it is. It's this lifestyle of helping multiple companies at once in a fractional capacity. I think it's a great way to have an impact not only with the businesses you serve but also impact you personally to grow your experience.

2. You are the author of The Age of Influence, a guide to influencer marketing. In your book, you say that influencer marketing generates a high ROI for companies when used intelligently. How does that work?
The problem with social media is that organically it's very hard for businesses to be heard, and the whole idea about social media is about inciting word of mouth. The only way to do that is to get people to talk about you and that is the role that influencers can play. I'm not talking about the Kardashians or people with millions of followers. Even the influencer marketing industry defines a nano influencer as someone that has 1000 followers or more.

There are a lot of people out there who are content creators that talk about certain niches and they're building communities and those communities trust them. Working with these people across any social media platform is going to get visibility that you cannot get organically. In terms of inciting word of mouth, some of these people might want to work with you from an affiliate marketing perspective and affiliate marketing is a type of influencer marketing. On their post caption, they might have a discount code, which can lead to business that you can track the ROI of and know how they performed. So, we're not just talking about brand awareness; it can work for sales as well.

One of the biggest ROI factors of influence marketing is the content that influencers create because smart companies are leveraging this content for their own organic social media, for their ads, product pages and even shopping cart. They're finding that it converts better than their own content. It helps reduce ad spending, and because they're getting a lower cost per click using this influencer generated content, they're finding that they're reducing the costs that they used to have for creating content by leveraging an army of influencers to create the content for them in a much more authentic way.

3. You have been an advisor to many company leaders throughout your career. What would you say are the main reasons they all chose you?

Back in the early days of my career, I was in charge of sales in China for a Japanese semiconductor company. My top salesman was from Shanghai, and he said something that still resonates with me today: "The smartest CEOs surround themselves with people that are smarter than they are", and I have taken that to heart in my own company when hiring other people.

I don't want to do work if it's half-assed, pardon my English. I only want to do work that has impact, that's based on best practices, and that contributes to society. Once leaders have a one-hour conversation with me, they understand that about me. I think they see that they can have an impact because I can design and help implement impactful actions that they want but don't know how to do.

4. For the past 10 years, you have been a faculty at Rutgers Business School. Can you explain what the executive education program is comprised of and why it's important?

I believe the executive education programs that I teach at like Rutgers Business School, UCLA Extension, or the Irish Management Institute serve a need in the market to tap into current thought leaders to gain a better understanding of various trends in the market. I teach about digital and social media marketing trends and those are very important not just for marketers but also for managers and executives throughout the company.

5. Back in 2009, you wrote a book about maximizing LinkedIn. What has the last twelve years brought to LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a very comfortable environment for most professionals and it also has been successful in inviting younger generations. There are still some that prefer LinkedIn the old way but considering that millennials are a majority of the workforce at least in the United States, it's only natural that LinkedIn is going to change over time.

I think that's been a good thing for LinkedIn and they've been able to adapt. Whereas Facebook just gets older, LinkedIn has become younger or the average age of active users seems to have become younger over time, and I think that's one of the secrets to their continued success and relevance.

6. You're also a keynote speaker. How did it all start and what advice do you have for younger speakers who want to make a name for themselves?

I started very organically; I started by giving. Back in 2008, I just launched a blog about LinkedIn that became nealschaffer.com. I would offer advice on LinkedIn and I became known in local networking groups as the go-to person for LinkedIn. Then I spoke at a panel at UCLA in July 2009.

Afterwards, I started getting asked to speak more from word of mouth and it was in September 2009 when I published my first book where I offered to speak in exchange for them buying copies of my book. That gave me the ability to start charging like most speakers.

With each speech you have to deliver and you have to make sure you're going to get recommended to speak at other events. You want to:

- be there before the event starts,
- hang out until after the event ends,
- get feedback from the organizers,
- ask them if they have any referrals,
- network with the audience.

7. What are the biggest mistakes companies make when using social media?

I think that many companies still see social media as a promotion channel instead of a conversation channel. They see it as a way of leveraging paid media when that's really not the intent of social media. They're posting content just talking about themselves on social media rather than talking about the pain points that their community might have or that social media users might have. They might be too serious when social media users just want to have fun. They're posting content that looks like stock photos or web content, instead of truly social content. They're just not leveraging it as frequently as they should be, they're not following back other people, they're not engaging in conversations and not replying to conversations. They're not proactively trying to reach out to new people. They're not acting like a person within social media and that's what companies need to do to be successful.

8. There are many metrics to measure the success of content marketing. What are the most important ones in your opinion?

The most important thing for marketing is to align your metrics with a framework. The most common framework is a funnel, in which you need to develop relationships with people or businesses to convert them. They need to first know that you exist. They need to begin to like, know, and trust you. You then need to convert them into becoming customers, and then hopefully they become your advocate. So that's a very simple way of looking at a funnel but that's the way that I prefer.

Different content marketing initiatives are going to target different stages of the funnel or stages of the buyer's journey.

For instance, how many web traffic visitors did the content attract? How many new followers did it attract to your social media? How many leads did it generate in terms of coming to your website, but also signing up to receive something?

Just them coming to a website or them becoming a follower of us on social media or even engaging with our content is a way for them to begin to know, like, and trust. I think the next level is to get their e-mail address, so that we can drop them into a marketing funnel and better keep in touch. Then obviously we have the conversion: How is the content

marketing contributing to actual conversion of business? And then advocacy, how does our content marketing bring old customers back or get them to sign up for our brand ambassador program, etc.?

I believe those are the most important content marketing metrics by funnel category and every company has different metrics they use. But those are the ones that I like, to focus on the big picture and make sure that everything we do is serving the big picture.

9. What are your thoughts on AI and content creation? Are they a good and helpful match or a disaster?
Leveraging AI or natural language processing tools for content ideation is great, if it saves you more time to do more strategic things. Now the actual content creation, I believe, should be done by humans. The AI can provide you with the analysis and give you some sample ways of saying things. For very short form content such as FAQs or ad copy, it's great because you can get multiple variations very quickly and it can help you accelerate the ideation. But that breaks down when you get the long-form content like blog posts or chapters for books.

People resonate with storytelling and it's the job of the human to make sure that their content represents that. That's something an AI is not built to do and therefore you still always need a human touch.

10. Finally, this book is all about impact. What is impactful content on LinkedIn for you?
Impactful content on LinkedIn will always be defined by answering the question of did it engage people and drive them to whatever action you desired them to do after consuming the content. Unfortunately, as with any other social network, the algorithms decide who will see what content that you publish. LinkedIn themselves have said that they want to see content that provides knowledge and advice. In other words, not only do they want to keep users on their platform, but they want your content to add more value to their day and make them more productive and successful. Thus, educational content that truly adds value will be impactful by definition.

On the flip side, we are all human beings, and as such we are visual animals. Visual content is the most impactful type of content, and LinkedIn is no different. Although LinkedIn is not Facebook, there is still no denying that open, authentic, and at times emotional content that is displayed visually can have an impact. We've all seen numerous posts of videos and professional selfies that tell a story and draw us in. In a similar vein to what I mentioned before, there are an equal number of visual data attached to posts as well as the currently popular carousel posts which are truly trying to educate us and can have impact as well.

Whatever you post on LinkedIn, it should add value through truly educating, incorporate storytelling, and ideally being visual. Adding authenticity to the mix to make it sound like only you wrote it is the final layer to add on top to maximize its chance of succeeding in the algorithm and maximizing potential impact.

The modern workplace - A mix of individuality and accountability

Author EILON RESHEF

EILON RESHEF *is a co-founder and Chief Product Officer at Gong, the leading revenue intelligence platform, unlocking reality to help people and companies reach their full potential. Before co-founding Gong, Eilon co-founded Webcollage, a SaaS solution in the e-commerce infrastructure space. Eilon holds an M.Sc. and B.Sc. in Computer Science (summa cum laude) from the Weizmann Institute of Science and the Technion.*

Month by month, as the Great Resignation continues, the talent shortage deepens.

As the Wall Street Journal reports, more than half of all business owners have roles they can't fill. And while the shortage stems from many factors, one key factor is that many people are no longer interested in working in a "traditional" power setting, in which the employer sets the rules and the employee obliges.

It's not surprising that people find the traditional power dynamic antiquated. It's hundreds of years old. In fact, it was set after the industrial revolution and has consisted of employers looking to maximize their returns on wages paid, and therefore telling employees how to act, dress, and operate.

If we can learn anything from what is happening right now in the job market, it's that this model is breaking down before our eyes. People don't want to fit themselves into a box and to be told what to do. Instead, they want to be themselves, be treated equally, and be a true part in setting their goals and the methods to achieve those goals.

The good news? Encouraging individuality and working toward a common goal works. We've seen proof of that at Gong, where rethinking the employer-employee dynamic earned us a spot on Fortune's 2020 Best Workplaces in the Bay Area. Our team is engaged and motivated and people want to contribute as much as possible.

Personally, I've also seen proof in a somewhat less predictable place: around the picnic grounds with my son.

What happens when you let people express their individuality?

My son's class was holding a picnic and posted a signup sheet online. They listed everything they needed, from

disposable plates to hard-boiled eggs. When the sheet was posted, families rushed to sign up for the easiest tasks. It's much easier to buy paper plates than to prepare a platter of hard-boiled eggs.

The next time we held a picnic, we changed the process. We simply wrote an email to the families, saying, "Bring whatever you want!" In theory, a recipe for disaster. But then, this gave each family two very important things. One is individuality: each family can bring whatever they feel would be great for everyone. Second, accountability: now each family has to bring something that will be appreciated by everyone. So, people got creative. They baked pies, bought bread from local bakeries, brought gourmet cheese, and chopped up watermelons. It ended up being such a great event that we continued with this practice until my son graduated.

This naturally should make us all think: can companies inspire this same mix of individuality and accountability? Can removing the guardrails in the workplace have the same effect?

How can companies rethink the social code with their employees?

A workplace is not a class picnic, and one can't expect to simply suggest to employees to do whatever they want. Companies have business objectives, and they hire employees for specialized roles.

But the key is a deep change in the social code between employers and employees.

Our lives are defined by relationship prototypes. We act differently with our spouses than with our co-workers. We bring flowers to our spouses on their birthdays, but it would be odd to do that for co-workers. We also act differently with friends than with family. We might share the restaurant bill with friends, but it would be odd to offer our parents to share the cost of our Thanksgiving dinner. Relationship dynamics come with written and unwritten rules. Functional lives depend on following both.

The first step to change is to thoroughly rethink the relationship dynamics between employers and employees: how would we want that dynamic to be in the modern world? Employers must realize that employees are not "resources," but true partners for the journey. They are people who come to the workplace to enjoy their time at work, to have personal fulfillment, and with the expectation that the workplace is responsible for their success and career progression.

In such settings, employees need to trust the workplace in order to follow these guidelines. When there's trust, people naturally contribute more without feeling that they're being leveraged. When we host our friends or neighbours for dinner, we would gladly spend hours cooking the meal. But when the relationship dynamics are incorrect, spending extra time at work when needed might feel inappropriate.

The social code does not change on its own. Employers must actively work to change it. Here are some realizations and steps to make it happen:

1. It starts with a mental shift: employment is not a zero-sum game

Too many employers view their employees from a capitalistic perspective—as wages on which to gain a return. This, in turn, causes employees to reciprocate by viewing the employer as a place where they need to maximize their own personal gain. This leads to a dynamic like a pre-di-

vorced couple—neither trusts the other, each is constantly looking for angles.

As with all paradigm shifts, this one starts in the mind. When company leadership treats employees as truly equal partners, the thought stops being "how can we pay less and get more," and becomes "how can we take the best care of our employees."

When an employer actively ensures that employees are satisfied at work, professionally and personally, and are paid adequately, the relationship naturally becomes more symmetric, and employees worry less about maximizing their own return.

2. An environment where people can celebrate their individuality

Employers often try to fit employees into a well-defined pattern. Admittedly, there has to be a professional fit. We'd all expect surgeons to know something about how to run a medical procedure. But employers sometimes forget that employees are human beings, and force them to create a different persona at work.

This is also a mental shift. Companies can encourage people to be themselves. It's partially up to the company's management: they also need to be authentic and avoid acting as executives in suits. But it also means setting an expectation to be oneself.

In our class picnic, one of the fathers drove to his favorite local farm to pick up gourmet cheese. He could have bought simple cream cheese from the nearby supermarket. But setting up an environment that allowed him to express himself made our picnic much more fun. In our Gong development center, each engineer who wraps up a first product enhancement invites his team to join in a toast with his favorite type of drink. In this case, too, most people select the drink they most enjoy and appreciate.

3. Behaving in a radically honest way

Honesty is key to a healthy relationship. If we showed up to a family event and realized we've forgotten something, we'd most likely apologize rather than make up a story about getting mugged.

However, many employers feel that honesty is not mandatory for the relationship with their employees, and would be reluctant to transparently discuss the rationale behind promotions, salary, team assignment, and more.

Consequently, there's a belief among many employees that companies are somehow trying to disadvantage them—negotiating them out of top compensation, giving them the least health benefits possible, and so on. Then, they also don't feel the need to be truthful.

Employers should go out of their way to invert this idea.

Rather than paying employees minimally, they should proactively give them fair packages that make them want to stay. They should ensure there are candid discussions across the organization. When people know they're being treated fairly, they put trust in the company and behave in a way that resembles friendship rather than cold employment.

4. Giving people autonomy

A key part of our picnics' success was that each family was accountable to bring something without being told what to bring. This way, each family made sure they brought something that made sense.

At work, many employers fall into the trap of instructing employees what to do up to the fine details. And, admittedly, giving people more autonomy introduces risk. Indeed, in one of the picnics, three different people brought a watermelon. Clearly imperfect, but not a disastrous scenario.

Giving up control is a leap of faith. In the long run, emphasizing the company's goals and giving employees space to drive towards that goal lets people put more substance into their role and increase their contribution.

A new social code is the key to high employee contribution

A new social code is not just a slogan, but a new configuration that is becoming more prominent.

By doing the right thing and treating people with respect and encouraging individuality and autonomy, the employer-employee relationship dynamic is more balanced and people feel free to be themselves. And good things follow:

- **We are more passionate about our work.** Wherever we are, we want to feel that we own our destiny. Individuality brings employees that feeling, and we naturally have more passion for our work.

- **We enjoy coming to work.** When we feel empowered at work, we look forward to coming in — and we don't think about leaving.

- **We make a greater contribution.** When we feel we have autonomy at work, we contribute more. This is obvious to many, as we've seen in my class's picnic, but it has also been backed by research.

Your company needs decision intelligence

Author PASCAL BORNET

PASCAL BORNET *is a recognized global expert in Artificial Intelligence and Automation. He is a keynote speaker, a lecturer, and a tech influencer. Pascal is also a senior executive with 20+ years of experience leading digital transformations. He is the founder and former leader of the "AI and Automation" practices at Mckinsey and Ernst & Young (EY). He is currently on the leadership team of Aera Technology.*

Companies make decisions every minute. Typically, these decisions range from strategy design and market selection to talent recruitment or the authorization of invoice payments. The success or failure of a company depends on the effectiveness of the decisions made by its people.

However, people often have to make decisions under time pressure and with limited information – or with too much information, causing information overload. Even the most important decisions are often made thoughtlessly or influenced by bias, emotions and subjectivity. Most decisions are made by isolated individuals based on limited experience and siloed data, cutting companies off from the benefits of collective wisdom and shared information. According to a survey by Signal, the largest obstacles to decision making are an overwhelming amount of data (44%), not enough time (21%), stakeholder alignment (16%) and implementing the solution (19%).

Finally, there is a lack of systematic assessment and feedback on the success of decisions, which prevents people from learning and improving the way they make decisions. All of this results in poor decision-making processes.

These decisions made poorly have a significant financial impact. A McKinsey survey found that ineffective decision making costs the average S&P 500 company $250 million per year, and Harvard Business Review noted that a company's financial performance correlates 95% with the effectiveness of its decisions.

The Increasing Pace

Increasingly, human decision making is unable to keep up with the demands of a modern environment boosted by technology. According to Gartner, Inc., 65% of executives think the decisions they make are more complex than two years ago.

Current technologies and approaches to try to support human decision making are not sufficient to close the gap. On the one hand, machine learning technologies focus on producing accurate insights through predictions or optimizations. However, they lack the link with both the specific expected outcomes and the execution of the decisions they help inform. On the other hand, process automation applications (e.g., robotic process automation) focus on the process tasks, partly improving the efficiency but with no impact on the quality of decisions.

Signal found that 85% of executives believe an additional $4.26 trillion in revenue could be brought into the U.S. economy (almost twice the GDP of the U.K.) by applying technology to help decision making.

The Need for Decision Intelligence

Decision intelligence (DI) is a new field that uses technology to support, augment and automate business decisions. DI was popularized in Lorien Pratt's 2019 book, Link, and identified by Gartner as one of the most impactful technology trends for 2022. DI technology combines the data-focused insight and power of artificial intelligence and machine learning with the task-focused capabilities of process automation tools, connecting them into a decision-oriented streamlined pipeline. DI connects data, decisions, actions and outcomes. It also incorporates the capacity to monitor and improve its decision-making abilities based on human feedback and by comparing the actual outcomes of decisions with the predicted ones.

DI can help decision making by leveraging three approaches.

- **Decision support**. Machines provide tools such as data analytics to support human decision making. Typically, this is what we call business intelligence technologies. The decision is made by people with the support of the machine.

- **Decision augmentation**. Machines generate recommendations for decisions, including an expected business outcome such as: "Buy X units from supplier Y, then you will save $Z million." The machine proposes the decision, but people make it. The user accepts, rejects or changes the recommendation for a decision.

- **Decision automation**. Machines make autonomous decisions and implement them without human intervention. People focus on monitoring the system and reviewing the outcomes.

The right approach will depend on the complexity and frequency of the decisions. The more straightforward and repetitive a decision, the more easily it can be automated, and the more value can be unlocked by releasing humans from it.

As they develop confidence in the technology, users can choose to evolve their decision-making approach from support to augmentation and, finally, automation. They can also choose to scale back from automated to manual in the face of unpredictable black-swan events such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

How to Succeed with Decision Intelligence

Begin by defining your business goals and the key decisions that are being made or could be made in service of those goals. Calculate the financial impact of each decision to enable you to prioritize them and define how you'll measure their success.

Next, rate the decisions along two axes: complexity and frequency. This will allow you to categorize them into groups suitable for decision automation (the simplest and most frequent decisions), decision support (the most complex and infrequent decisions) and decision augmentation (those in between).

Build your implementation roadmap, starting with the highest-impact decisions, and use a phased approach to roll out the rest of the implementation.

Set up the proper governance—a center of excellence to take ownership of the DI deployment and an automation operation center to maintain it. Get analysts to specialize by decision type rather than by business function. Practice continuous learning and improvement by comparing decision outcomes to predicted outcomes.

Decision intelligence is a new lever for business success in our modern times, and the paths to implement it are clear. Has your company already started its journey toward decision intelligence?

There is a lack of systematic assessment and feedback on the success of decisions, which prevents people from learning and improving the way they make decisions. All of this results in poor decision-making processes. These decisions made poorly have a significant financial impact.

PASCAL BORNET

Global expert in Artificial Intelligence & Automation

The ability to prioritize

Author ANNE STAMPE OLESEN

ANNE STAMPE OLESEN *is a Business Angel and an award-winning investor. Anne is CEO and co-founder of the investment company, Nordic Female Founds. Through her job, Anne is primarily investing in early-stage start-ups and has been successful in developing businesses into growth. Anne, together with her co-founder, Mia Wagner, won the prize: "Investors of the Year" in 2021. Furthermore, she has a master's degree in structure and leadership.*

The ability to execute – a phrase that is often referred to as the recipe for success in entrepreneurship, and I completely agree, however, there is another phrase in my recipe that is more important…

The ability to prioritize!

As an entrepreneur, you are always busy. In the early stages, when you are few or no employees, you need to do everything by yourself. Product development, marketing, accounting, finance, customer service and IT. You must solve all the tasks without necessarily having the competence in any of the areas - at all!

Most entrepreneurs start their own businesses because they want to make a difference for themselves or others. They may have invented a product that solves a problem they once experienced or maybe they want to make the world a better place with a sustainable solution that doesn't already exist. Those people are often creative and think differently.

In relation to my master's degree in project and process management, I studied the decisive factor for successful public projects. Only one thing could be classified as being the overriding factor for projects ending up successful. It was not finances, or time and resources, which were the factors that I would have assumed. It was the project owner. Since I discovered this, I did my own (non-academic) investigation and looked at successful entrepreneurs, and not surprisingly the same matter applies in successful entrepreneurship.

An entrepreneur who is passionate about the product and company is key for the success of the company. But at some point, in the future, the company should be able to run without its founder... We know that, but how do we ensure that entrepreneurs do not burn out when they have to take care of all areas within the company, including the tasks

they are not passionate about. As humans, we typically experience that some tasks don't bring energy, and that it will take 3 times as long to complete as the tasks we like and find inspiring.

My point is, that it is important to identify solutions to avoid the entrepreneur being suffocated by administrative tasks that drain their energy. As an investor I see it as my most important job, to promote good entrepreneurs and help them find profits to do what they enjoy.

My mantra is prioritization and structure; two words that often sound hollow when it comes to entrepreneurship. These two words do not only apply to the start-up entrepreneurs, but also on a longer term, as the tasks often become more extensive the further you get.

Structure:

If a company has 80 % structure, then you have an overview and the ability to be creative and impulsive in the last 20 %. As a result, the structure enables you to spend 80% of your time on the 20% that develops your company.

In other words, if we ensure that we have a budget and that our accounts are updated monthly then we will have the ability to act and adapt in time. On the other hand, if we don't meet plan for a month, we must reassess our budget and adapt it for the following months. The same applies if we are way over plan one month, we must reassess and investigate the matter as well, thus be at the forefront the following months. I meet an astonishing number of companies that do not have this part under control, which is crucial for running a good business.

It is not just accounting that we can benefit from. A good plan or strategy for what needs to happen during the year, contributes to everyone working in the same direction, both employees, entrepreneurs etc. Maybe you are considering outsourcing your warehouse, and you are aware that it must happen within the next year. That thought often returns to the back of your mind. Plan all your company's activities, note that in August you must start thinking about a new warehouse. The team will then be aware that there is dedicated time for this. It frees up head space, as you in a way, also planned not to think about it until August.

I can easily come up with more examples, as I am a big fan of structure. I love having structure in everything I do, because it gives me an overview and the energy to do what creates value for my company, and these are typically the tasks in which I find energy. I have created an everyday life with structure that allows me to be busy and still keep a good work-life balance.

Obviously, I also run my own company, Nordic Female Founders according to these principles. I founded the company together with Mia Wagner. We are busy and our business is growing, and at the same time I commute across the country every week. I work out almost every day, I have 2 children, a husband, 4 horses, a dog and I volunteer in both a riding and a football club.

I can understand that some people might get tired when I tell them this, but I am not tired myself. In fact, I have never had more energy. Why? Because 80% of everything I do is planned. I know when I must do what and as a result, I don't have to spend energy thinking of new things or deciding when to do what. At the same time, I am good at prioritizing my time, and sort out things that do not create value for me.

As an example, from my private life, it is not important to me whether the children have a home-baked cake with them for a school event or whether my home is tidy when I

have guests. I would rather spend my time on other things that give me energy.

On the job, it is not important that we do all assignments 100%. In addition, it is my thesis that at least 20% of the assignments we do on the job, do not really create any value. When I talk about value in the workplace, I focus on the tasks that create value for customers. An example could be the choice of website design. An incredible number of e-com stores spend a lot of time updating the website with new inspiration etc. Perhaps because they visit the site every day themselves and therefore quickly get bored of the old look, but your customers may only visit the site once a month and could like the recognizable look. My point is, analyze the tasks that require a high effort every month. This can only be confirmed by using statistics and data.

In my company, we prioritize our assignments strictly according to the priority board, as we know we cannot achieve all assignments, despite having employees and being privileged with accountants etc. I know from experience that it reduces stress for employees and entrepreneurs when you work on "what brings the most value" to the organization. We have all experienced how frustrating it can be to do a good job on a task, and after, you discover it adds no value.

How should I prioritize?

"Do what requires least effort but creates most value first. " The prioritization board originates from the agile princi-

Figure 1. The Eisenhower Matrix; created by Stephen Covey

ples, and there is plenty of knowledge about the use of it. The tough question "How do I decide what to do first?" To answer, it is a condition that you and your employees have defined, where you are heading. In other words, what is your business goal? It is important that the goal is clear to everyone, therefore it is important, as I mentioned, to have a solid long-term plan that everyone is aware of and committed to. The priority board can be used daily right now by everyone, enabling them to execute now and prioritize., This should be combined with an entrepreneur who is passionate about the product and 80% of the tasks in organized structure, then the internal factors for success are present.

This model (Figure 1) works for prioritizing both small and large projects, and for us, it has been a key tool in the struggle to prioritize time.

In addition, we can then celebrate the time saved on all the projects that we did not find necessary to solve.

The five levels of autonomy

Author MATT MULLENWEG

MATT MULLENWEG *is co-founder of WordPress, which now powers over 40% of all sites on the web. He is the founder and CEO of Automattic, the company behind WordPress.com, WooCommerce, Tumblr, WPVIP, Day One, and Pocket Casts. Additionally, Matt runs Audrey Capital, an investment and research company. He has been recognized for his leadership by Forbes, Bloomberg Businessweek, Inc. Magazine, TechCrunch, Fortune, Fast Company, Wired, University Philosophical Society, and Vanity Fair.*

In early 2020, as COVID-19 began to shift the way people and companies work, I had the opportunity to sit down with Sam Harris, author and host of the Making Sense podcast, for a wide-ranging conversation. Given the moment we were living through, we naturally touched on the way companies were adapting to a new reality — one where remote work was a model to which they had to adapt in a matter of days, rather than years.

As I mentioned to Sam at the time, "any company that can enable their people to be fully effective in a distributed fashion, can and should do it far beyond this current crisis has passed." It was a moral imperative. But that doesn't mean it was going to be easy, or that the chaotic and stressful first taste some workplaces were getting at the moment would inspire them to keep trying.

To make sense of this journey — from a company's cautious exploration of remote possibilities to a fully realized distributed experience — I like to think of how it plays out through the concept of levels of distributed work, which I modeled after self-driving car levels of autonomy. The following is an overview of how I see distributed companies evolving.

LEVEL ZERO autonomy is a job which cannot be done unless you're physically there. Imagine a construction worker, a barista, a massage therapist, a firefighter, and so forth. Many companies assumed they had far more of these than it turned out they really did.

LEVEL ONE is where most co-located businesses were at the time. There was no deliberate effort to make things remote-friendly, though in the case of many knowledge workers, people could keep things moving for a day or two when there was an emergency. More often than not, they would likely put things off until they were back in the office. Work happened on company equipment, in company

space, on company time. You didn't have any special equipment and may have had to use a clunky VPN to access basic work resources like email or your calendar. Larger level one companies often had people in the same building or campus dialing into a meeting. Level one companies were largely unprepared for this crisis.

LEVEL TWO is where many companies found themselves in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. They accepted that work was going to happen at home for a while, but they recreated what they were doing in the office in a "remote" setting. Employees were probably able to access information from afar and they adapted to tools like Zoom or Microsoft Teams, but everything was still synchronous, the day was full of interruptions, no real-time meetings had been canceled (yet), and there was a lot of anxiety in management around productivity. This is the stage where companies sometimes install surveillance software on laptops. Pro tip: Don't do that! And also, don't stop at level two!

At **LEVEL THREE**, companies are really starting to benefit from being remote-first, or distributed. That's when you see people and companies investing in better equipment — from a good desk lamp to solid audio gear — and in more robust asynchronous processes that start to replace meetings. It's also the point at which companies realize just how crucial written communication is for their success, and they start looking for great writers in their hiring. When on a Zoom, teams often also have a Google Doc up with the other meeting participants so they can take and check real-time notes together. The company has a zero-trust

BeyondCorp security model. In a non-pandemic world, meetups are planned so that teams can break bread and meet each other in person a week or two a year.

LEVEL FOUR is when things go truly asynchronous. People's work is evaluated on what they produce, not how or when they produce it. Trust emerges as the glue that holds the entire operation together. A shift to better — perhaps slower, but more deliberate — decision-making takes place where everyone, not just the loudest or most extroverted, is empowered to weigh in on major conversations. Companies tap into the global talent pool, the 99% of the world's population and intelligence that doesn't live near one of their legacy physical office locations. Employee retention goes way up, as does investment in training and coaching. Most employees have home-office setups that would make office workers green with envy, and they have a rich social life with people that they choose. Real-time meetings are respected and taken seriously, and almost always have agendas in addition to pre-work or post-work. If you get good at baton passes, work follows the sun 24/7 around the world. The organization is truly inclusive because standards are objective and give people agency to accomplish their work their way.

Finally, I believe it's always useful to have an ideal that's not wholly attainable — and that's **LEVEL FIVE**, Nirvana! This is when your company consistently performs better than any in-person organization could. It's effortlessly effective, and everyone in the company has time for wellness and mental health. At this level, people consistently bring their best selves and highest levels of creativity to do the best work of their careers, and just have fun!

A highly influential book for me in designing Automattic was Daniel Pink's Drive, where he eloquently introduces the three things that really matter in motivating people: mastery, purpose, and autonomy. Mastery is the urge to get better skills. Purpose is the desire to do something that has meaning, that's bigger than yourself. These first two principles physically co-located companies can be great at. But the third, autonomy, is where even the best in-office company can never match a Level 4 or above distributed company.

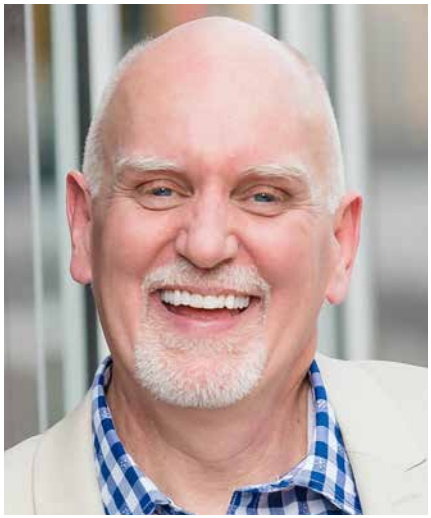
Autonomy is our desire to be self-directed, to have agency over ourselves and our environment. Close your eyes and imagine everything around you in a physical office: the chair you're in, the desk, distance from a window, the smells, the temperature, the music, the flooring, what's in the fridge, the comfort and privacy of the bathrooms, the people (or pets) around you, the lighting. Now imagine an environment where you can choose and control every one of those to your liking — maybe it's a room in your house, a converted garage, a shared studio, or really anything, the important thing is you're able to shape the environment fit your personal preferences, not the lowest common denominator of everyone an employer has decided to squish together for 8 hours a day. The micro-interactions of the hundreds of variables of your work environment can charge you and give you creative energy, or make you dependent, infantilized, and a character in someone else's story. Which do you want to spend half of your waking workday hours in?

> **Any company that can enable their people to be fully effective in a distributed fashion, can and should do it far beyond this current crisis has passed.**

MATT MULLENWEG
Co-founder at WordPress

When your culture works, everything works

Author CHESTER ELTON



CHESTER ELTON *has spent two decades helping some of the world's most successful businesses engage with their employees to execute on strategy, vision, and values. Elton is co-author of multiple award-winning New York Times and #1 Wall Street Journal bestselling leadership books including All In, The Carrot Principle, The Best Team Wins, and Anxiety at Work. His books have been translated in more than 30 languages and have sold more than 1.5 million copies worldwide.*

1. You're the founder and partner at The Culture Works. Could you tell the readers of this book what the business is all about and what its story is?

Adrian Gostick is my co-author and we have been studying workplace culture, leadership, and teams for over 20 years now. We first started working together and writing books back in 1999. We worked for a bigger company, and so as we started to write, we started to speak and to develop training materials. And so, we created a company within a company, or a group within a company, and called the Carrot Culture Group.

In 2010, Adrian and I left and went out to do our own thing, and so we needed to form our own company. Our work had morphed from employee recognition to culture, so we really liked the name Culture Works. When your culture works, everything works. And so, we started to write books that we could own, as well as training materials and did speaking.

2. You also mention the carrot principle. Can you tell me more about this principle and how you discovered it?

Adrian and I have written 14 books together, and The Carrot Principle is by far our best-selling book. We started writing about employee recognition early on, and the recognition books all had carrots in the principle. It was Managing with Carrots, 24-Carrot Manager, and A Carrot a Day. That's why I always wear orange. Most carrots are orange so that became our colour.

The carrot principle is very simple – when somebody on your team does something great, you recognize them and you give them a metaphorical carrot. More carrots, less sticks. That's really the whole idea behind it. We saw that recognition and gratitude become a very important part of any culture. My work matters. My voice is heard. I want to do something great because someone notices and says thank you.

3. Stress and anxiety are unfortunately affecting more and more people at work. In your most recent book, Anxiety at work, you talk about the causes of stress at work. Can managers and leaders create a stress-free work environment? And what can they do to prevent it?
Adrian and I never really wanted to write a book on anxiety. Our generation doesn't really talk about anxiety. It was Adrian's son, Anthony Gostick, who really pushed us. Anthony has dealt with a lot of anxiety and I have a child who has dealt with it, too. So, it was very personal for Adrian and me. And so, we asked ourselves how you can build a great culture if you aren't talking about and addressing probably the number one issue in the workplace? And that's anxiety, mental health. We did a deep dive, and sure enough, the numbers were ridiculous.

What we can do about it? Leaders really need to focus on three things:

• **You need to normalise the conversation**. When we looked at the numbers, pre-pandemic, around 18% of employees said they had an anxiety disorder. By 2021, 2022, that jumped to 30%. Not only that, but workers in their twenties also jumped to 42%. So, you need to normalise the conversation. It's a natural human emotion.

• **Destigmatise it.** We think, 'oh, if I talk to my boss, they will think I'm weak or not tough enough. I'll get passed over for the promotion or a raise'. And the fact is, if you have 42% of your workers in their twenties show up with a broken leg, you are going to say 'hey, we have got to talk about broken legs!'. It seems so obvious but because it's mental health and there's still that stigma, it's harder. Only 10% of employees feel comfortable talking to their boss about mental health. So, think about that, 90% of employees don't feel safe talking to their boss about their mental health. So is it any wonder that 50% of millennials and 75% of Gen Z say, 'it's easier for me to quit, take time off, and find another job than it is to talk to my manager'.

• **We need more empathetic leaders.** People often ask what the characteristics of great leaders are right now. Pre-pandemic, I would have said that it's being a great communicator, a great motivator, and getting people to follow them. Right now, there is only one characteristic that matters, and it is empathy. If you don't have empathetic leadership, none of that other stuff matters.

Our work for 20+ years is based on gratitude, so when we looked at the eight strategies of how to deal with anxiety, it became really apparent that one of the methods that a lot of counsellors use is that you can't hold two emotions at the same time, so we say choose gratitude. When you are in a state of gratitude, you can't be in the state of anxiety. So, our 8th strategy in dealing with anxiety is get in the state of gratitude.

4. Can the employees do something to feel less stressed at the job? And how can they themselves increase their day-to-day motivation?
The first thing I really encourage people to do is find an ally at work. Someone that you can trust, someone that you can talk to. Ideally, it's your manager but if not then someone that is more than a co-worker, probably a friend. There's a lot of ways we can feel like we don't quite fit and having an ally can really help reduce this anxiety.

And second one is to be present and control what you can control. Depression is worrying about the past, things I should have done. Anxiety is worrying about the future. Well, so much in the future is out of our control, the recession, the war in Ukraine. So, control what you can control and stay in the present.

I'm a big fan of personal rituals. We have got a wonderful podcast, Anxiety at Work, and we interview businesspeople, counsellors, coaches, and they all have got personal rituals. They go for a walk in the morning. They exercise. They meditate. And it's different for everybody.

The message needs to be that in the workplace or in our personal lives, you are not alone. There is always somebody you can talk to.

5. You have been a well-known coach for a long time now, can you tell us about the journey that led you to your coaching career?

Years ago, Adrian and I would get approached by businesses, we would go speak at their conference, they would want our training and workshops and so on. And they would say 'hey, I think I have a manager and I would like you to coach' and we would say 'yeah, we don't know how to do that'. We have a writing methodology and we have a training methodology, but we didn't have a coaching methodology.

And then we met Marshall Goldsmith. And Marshall is arguably the greatest executive coach. He's kind of credited with inventing executive coaching. And he invited Adrian and I to join his 100 Coaches Group, and he said, 'by the way, you need to start coaching' and we said 'yeah, but we don't have the methodology'. And he goes, 'yeah but I do, let me teach it to you'. Which was wonderful! And ever since then we have really enjoyed it.

Speaking at conferences is great fun. With workshops, you can go a little deeper. One on one, that's where you really make a difference. You will coach someone for six months to a year. And you can see it not only impact their leadership style, but also impact their personal lives, their families, and their communities. So, it's very gratifying work.

6. Have you always had a passion for writing and speaking? Do you have any advice for the young writers and speakers?

Partner up with a great writer. That's what I did. Adrian Gostick is the writer. I go to high school reunions. I grew up in Vancouver, Canada and they will say 'let me get this straight, you are New York Times' best-selling author?' and I will go, 'yeah'. And they will say, 'you know, I was in your English class. I'm pretty sure you're not writing those books", and I will say 'oh, you're absolutely right! Adrian Gostick is a brilliant writer!'. So, find a partner, find somebody to write with, and find somebody who can mentor you and just write.

7. You have an impressive following on LinkedIn. 630,000 followers. How did you grow your network and how do you stay engaged with so many people?

Early on LinkedIn, I had a friend who worked there, and he said, 'we're developing these influencers. You write a lot of books. You would be great!' So he actually got me early into the influencer group. This was very helpful in building a followership. And because I'm an influencer, I get opportunities to test new products, like LinkedIn Live. We got invited to test the newsletter within LinkedIn. So twice a month we published a newsletter, in which Adrian and I would write an article. We called it our gratitude journal. And while we had 630,000 followers, I was amazed at how quickly we got 200,000 subscribers to our newsletter.

How do you engage your followers? You need to have a regular cadence. Twice a month we would publish our journal and I post a little almost every day. And know what your brand is. For us, our brand really is gratitude. We don't write about project managers, or family dysfunctions. We write about gratitude in the context of how it helps you build a better culture. If you google 'the carrot guys', it's me

and Adrian. If you google 'gratitude', it's me and Adrian.

8. This book is all about impact. What's impact for you and how do you understand impact in context of leadership?

Impact for me is all about 'the ripple effect'. So, when we talk about our coaching, we coach executives, and we want them to be better executives. And the methodology that Marshall taught us, if you do it, it works!

What we look at as impact is the ripple effect of that great leader. That leader is now a better leader in leading with gratitude, being kinder and more considerate and empathetic. That then ripples through their team and then through their family, and then through the community. So, impact to me is when you start with that one person, and then watch the ripple.

9. My last question for you is, what's motivation for you and how do you keep yourself motivated?

What really motivates me is making a difference. I grew up in a ridiculously happy home. My father was my best friend, my mentor, and my cheerleader. I just love the way he had such a positive impact on people. He had an ability to make people just feel great about themselves. My dad's motto was 'be kind to everybody, everybody is having a tough day'. And it's a motto that I have really carried forward.

My motivation is that the world needs more kind people. And by the way, there are more than you think. I'm convinced that 99% of people are good in their hearts and we just need to give them an opportunity to be good. What motivates me is putting people in those situations where that goodness and kindness can come out of them, because that again brings the ripple effect.

Culture is forever

Author BRIAN CHESKY

BRIAN CHESKY *is an American entrepreneur who started Airbnb along with his partners. He also serves as the CEO of Airbnb, and was listed in Time magazine's '100 Most Influential People of 2015'. There are many reasons for his success with Airbnb and one of the most important reasons is the fact that he gave more importance to his customers and the services they needed rather than the ideas of the developers.*

Hey team,
Our next team meeting is dedicated to Core Values, which are essential to building our culture. It occurred to me that before this meeting, I should write you a short letter on why culture is so important to Joe, Nate, and me.

After we closed our Series C with Peter Thiel in 2012, we invited him to our office. This was late last year, and we were in the Berlin room showing him various metrics. Midway through the conversation, I asked him what was the single most important piece of advice he had for us.

He replied, "Don't fuck up the culture."

This wasn't what we were expecting from someone who just gave us $150M. I asked him to elaborate on this. He said one of the reasons he invested in us was our culture. But he had a somewhat cynical view that it was practically inevitable once a company gets to a certain size to "fuck it up." Hmm... How depressing I thought.

Were we destined to eventually "fuck up our culture?" We talked about it a bit more, and it became clear that it was possible to defend, and actually build the culture. But it had to be one of the things we were most focused on. I thought to myself, how many company CEOs are focused on culture above all else? Is it the metric they measure closest? Is it what they spend most of their hours on each week?

Culture is simply a shared way of doing something with passion.

Our culture is the foundation for our company. We may not be remembered for much after we are gone, and if Airbnb is around 100 years from now, surely, we won't be a booking website for homes. We will be far past this in

our evolution (not to mention that kids 100 years from now will be asking their grandparents what websites were).

The thing that will endure for 100 years, the way it has for most 100 year companies, is the culture. The culture is what creates the foundation for all future innovation. If you break the culture, you break the machine that creates your products.

So how do we build culture?

By upholding our core values in everything we do. Culture is a thousand things, a thousand times. It's living the core values when you hire; when you write an email; when you are working on a project; when you are walking in the hall. We have the power, by living the values, to build the culture. We also have the power, by breaking the values, to fuck up the culture. Each one of us has this opportunity, this burden.

Why is culture so important to a business? Here is a simple way to frame it. The stronger the culture, the less corporate process a company needs. When the culture is strong, you can trust everyone to do the right thing. People can be independent and autonomous. They can be entrepreneurial. And if we have a company that is entrepreneurial in spirit, we will be able to take our next "(wo)man on the moon" leap. Ever notice how families or tribes don't require much process? That is because there is such a strong trust and culture that it supersedes any process. In organizations (or even in a society) where culture is weak, you need an abundance of heavy, precise rules and processes.

There are days when it's easy to feel the pressure of our own growth expectations. Other days when we need to ship product. Others still where we are dealing with the latest government relations issue. It's easy to get consumed by these. And they are all very important. But compared to culture, they are relatively short-term. These problems will come and go. But culture is forever.

Having more skin in the game

Author KATHERINE SALISBURY

KATHERINE SALISBURY *is co-founder and co-CEO of Qapital – an app that empowers users by putting their personal goals at the core, and then supercharging their savings, investing, and budgeting efforts. Katherine brings twenty years of finance, legal, and business experience to Qapital. She began her career as a bank finance attorney at law firms White & Case and Simpson Thacher. Afterwards, she served as VP and Counsel at Jefferies Finance.*

1. For the people who don't know you, can you please tell the readers of IMPACT what Qapital is all about?
On the surface, Qapital is a money management app that helps you better understand your finances so you can achieve your goals. But what makes Qapital so unique is how the app sets you up for success.

Our brains aren't wired to navigate tradeoffs between immediate gratification and long-term stability. Saving or investing for the future instead of spending our money on things we want or need in the moment is actually counter intuitive. So, if you find money management difficult and stressful, that's only human. Qapital's money management tools were designed to anticipate and compensate for those innate human instincts that make getting our finances in order such a struggle.

A customer once told us, "money doesn't buy happiness, but it does provide you with peace of mind and freedom. Peace of mind knowing the last dollar in your checking account isn't the last dollar to your name. And freedom to enjoy life without stress or pressure of feeling like you're always just getting by." We have set out to help everyone achieve this kind of peace of mind and freedom, regardless of their lifestyle or current financial situation.

2. You founded Qapital together with your partner George, who you share the CEO position with. What are some of the biggest advantages and disadvantages of a family-owned business?
Running a business together while raising our four girls together is a big advantage when it comes to managing priorities and work/life balance. We understand if maybe this summer isn't the best time to go on a big family vacation because there's so much going on with our work. Or, on the opposite side of the spectrum, maybe tonight is the night we all plan to celebrate a big win – get some extra ice cream or plan a fun trip. Or maybe today was rough and we need

some extra comfort. We're on that roller coaster together and will always be there for each other to navigate the same highs and lows. This has worked extremely well for our family and our company.

3. Investors are reluctant to invest in partnered co-founders. What are your observations around this?
I understand investors' apprehension around partnered co-founders and CEOs. But based on the evidence I've seen and my own personal experience, I think this dynamic does very well.

Historically, family businesses have been around for hundreds of years in all cultures and are often highly successful. You have more reasons to stay aligned and stay on the same team. Essentially, you have more skin in the game.

In my personal experience, having my partner as my co-founder has actually been an advantage. Whether you're looking at a romantic partnership, or running a business, trust in your partnership is key. George and I are the type of partners that hash everything out in real time and are very transparent throughout our thought process. The dynamic is less guarded and more honest. Because we've had to work through much bigger problems already, the lines of communication open more naturally. Which is key in any partnership – business or romantic.

4. When is the right time to start a company?
There is no right time to start a company, and you can't guarantee success. However, when you find a team of talented people who are energized and passionate about moving your vision forward, you shouldn't walk away from that opportunity. Ideas can come and go, and the market will always ebb and flow. But if you and your team are really dedicated to making it work, you find your way.

5. You have a law degree; how did this help you lead two successful businesses?
In a way, my law degree offered a certain sense of security. Getting a business off the ground can feel risky, but my background in law offered me a sense of safety. I know how to incorporate a company, and I know how to navigate risk. Also, if you have a law background, people often leave the negotiations up to you. Many of us know the 10,000-hour theory popularized by Malcolm Gladwell's Outliers, which states that it takes roughly 10,000 hours of practice to achieve greatness in a skill. Well, my law background meant that I was able to achieve my 10,000 hours of negotiation earlier than many. This gave me an advantage with investors, with terms on contracts – things that matter substantially when leading a business.

6. What is your leadership style and who makes the best leaders?
I've been lucky enough to experience some fantastic leaders throughout my career. I've also had the opportunity to experience leaders who have not fostered healthy or high-functioning environments. I've learned from both.

As a leader, I think you need to set people up to own their work, giving them the ability to make mistakes, try new things, and inevitably grow. Everyone screws up. I screw up all the time. But I think one key to successful leadership is creating a work culture that allows your team to screw up in a safe environment.

My leadership style has evolved since I've started Qapital. Previously, it used to be more like, 'I have a role that needs to be filled, who can I find to fill this role?' Now I look at my team more like, 'this is a human-being – let's see what they are good at and let them be themselves.' Some people will be superstars overnight, others will be great teammates, and both types of personalities play an essential role.

7. In 2021, Inc. Magazine featured you in their Top 100 Female Founders. This is an amazing achievement. What helped you get there?

Both the financial and tech industries are heavily male dominated. Being a female leader at the intersection of these two industries has set me apart. It was a huge honor to be named Top 100 Female Founders. The group was a collective of changemaking women, and I was extremely proud to be able to call them my peers.

Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to work with and learn from brilliant colleagues and industry leaders. I've also had the chance to wear many hats. I've been a lawyer, worked in finance, led a sports agency, and I now run a fintech company. Each of these experiences, and the great teams I've had along the way, have led me to where I stand now.

8. What advice would you give to the young females, who want to follow your steps and become entrepreneurs?

My advice would be – DO IT. Being an entrepreneur is the best job you could ever imagine, so if you feel passionate about it, make it happen. Some other tips I've learned along the way are:

- It's okay to get help when you need it. Feeling comfortable having nannies and leaning on my support system has made all the difference in the world.
- Ask all the questions as soon as they pop in your head, even if you think they're stupid. Don't waste time not understanding something.
- Feel as though you can enter any conversation and be a part of it. Forget imposter syndrome and join the conversation. You have every right to be there.
- There is no right way to get educated. In fact, there are a million ways to learn something new. You can get caught up on any subject if you put the work into it.

9. You are also a mom of four daughters, how do you ensure a work-life balance? Any advice that could help other business moms?

I'm huge on no meetings over the weekend. This helps me prioritize my family time. I also am a big advocate for getting help when you need it.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?

Impact is something I think about a lot. Qapital is a mission-driven company, and when you're doing something because you want to make the world a better place, rather than just make money, the work feels very different. My mom always says to me, 'Katherine, I am proud of you because what you're doing helps people.' It's as simple as that. Her pride isn't earned by awards I've won, money I've made, or the leadership roles I've held. Her pride is due to one simple thing – I get to make a positive impact on people every day.

The truth is, you have more freedom when you have financial stability, and you feel less pressure to put up with a bad situation. Whether that's a job, a landlord, a relationship, or so on. At Qapital, we take this need very seriously. We understand our impact can go beyond just helping people save, invest, or build a budget. We help people get control over their finances, which is truly empowering.

Historically, family businesses have been around for hundreds of years in all cultures and are often highly successful. You have more reasons to stay aligned and stay on the same team. Essentially, you have more skin in the game.

KATHERINE SALISBURY
Co-founder & co-CEO at Qapital

Good luck, bad luck, who knows?

Author PETER DOCKER

PETER DOCKER'S *latest book, Leading from the Jumpseat, delivers the message that leadership is about lifting people up and giving them the space they need so that, when the time is right, they can take the lead. Co-author of Find Your Why and formerly a founding Igniter at Simon Sinek Inc. Peter draws on his 25-year career in the Royal Air Force, and 14+ years partnering with businesses around the world, to inspire others to Lead from the Jumpseat.*

1. This book talks about doers and dreamers. Where do you stand on the subject?
I feel I fit in the middle. There's a time for dreaming and a time for doing – we need both in this world. That said, I am supported by people who are very much doers, who help me accomplish so much more than I would otherwise. So, perhaps in comparison to them, I'm more of a dreamer!

2. What fascinates you, when it comes to developing new ideas?
I'm fascinated by connection – how ideas from one realm can apply in other contexts, bring new perspectives, increase understanding, and enable us to move forward. Because of that fascination, I'm curious about everything, always keen to discover a new connection and the possibilities it can create. My ideas tend to occur when I'm not actively thinking about anything in particular, and when I'm close to a meditative state with my mind freewheeling. This occurs most frequently when I'm running through the countryside – or in the shower!

3. Knowing what you know now, is there anything you would have done differently when you were first starting out?
Absolutely not. That's not because I believe I got everything 'right' – far from it. What I do firmly believe is that the journey we each take in life is an opportunity to learn and, hopefully, build judgment and wisdom. That rarely occurs if we stay in our comfort zone.

Everything I have done and experienced, the highs and the lows, have led me to where I am – including what I'm writing now. Times when I thought my plans had completely fallen apart have gone on to reveal fresh opportunities. As the Chinese proverb says, "Good luck, bad luck, who knows?" It all works out okay in the end, and if it isn't okay, then it's not the end.

4. Have you had any role models during your military and business career, and what did you learn from them?
Yes. During my military career I had the privilege of working alongside Brigadier Jim Dutton RM. He was, and still is, one of the finest leaders I have known. He later became Lieutenant General Sir James Dutton KCB CBE and, following his military career, went on to become the Governor of Gibraltar.

Before retiring, he held high-level roles in business, too. What I learned from Sir James was how to lead with humble confidence. This means being absolutely resolute on what you are aiming to accomplish and ready to take the decisions when they need to be made, while also having the humility to listen to the input of others and engage in the collective genius of your team. He also taught me the value, as a leader, of learning to ask the important questions, rather than being focused on trying to lead by knowing the answer.

5. What are your three things you follow in your daily work?
- Remaining genuinely curious.
- Striving to ask the important questions and the ability to listen to others.
- Computer technology, including the internet, to access and process information.

6. From a leadership point of view, are the details or the big picture more important?
The big picture. There will always be people who can help with the detail. What is needed is someone to paint the big picture so that the detail can come together in a way that is coherent and has meaning. Like a jigsaw puzzle: all the puzzle pieces on the table have no meaning whatsoever until we can see the picture on the puzzle box. A leader's role is to paint that picture as clearly and as vividly as possible for all to see – and then to keep it alive.

7. Which technologies will fundamentally change the leadership and people industry in the next 5-10 years?
The word 'technology' is derived from the Greek words: techne, meaning "art" or "craft", and logos, meaning "logic" or "reason". This is relevant in my work which is focused on leadership and people.

Over the next 5-10 years, great leadership will be defined increasingly by those who practice the art of truly caring for their people, lifting them up so as they can become leaders, and nurturing a work environment in which people feel they belong. In other words, focusing on what it means to be human, and how human beings interact with one another. As artificial intelligence grows and becomes more prevalent in the workplace, it will become ever more important for us to draw on what makes us distinct as human beings.

8. How can one build a great team? Do you have any tips from your leadership career?
Start by looking in the mirror and identifying what is deeply important to you – what you stand for. These stands will equip you to lead when facing the unknown or leading in times of uncertainty. Put those stands into action by turning them into commitments. A commitment is a promise we make to ourselves to follow through and complete what we have started.

Practice humble confidence – being resolute on where you're heading and yet asking for and being willing to listen to the input of others. Become comfortable leading when you don't know the answer and build that strength. Those who lead by trying to know the answer all the time

become the "constriction in the pipe" with progress limited by their own knowledge.

Nurture a sense of belonging in your team. Everyone wants to feel they belong – it's a fundamental human need. When people feel they belong, they will step-up, take responsibility, and start to lead, too. One of the most important ways of nurturing a sense of belonging is by genuinely caring for our people.

9. How has your career shifted over time?
The greatest shift has been how I've been able to connect with people to share ideas. I've moved from mainly keynote talking and in-person workshops, to book-writing, audio books, online and hybrid sessions, to courses that can be facilitated by others so that broadening the reach of my ideas is not dependent on me being in the room.

Now I'm working on teaching Jumpseat Leadership to companies in the US and Europe. I will also shortly be releasing a Jumpseat Leadership course that can be taught by an organization's own facilitators.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Impact to me is about the significant difference we make in the lives of others. In my experience, being significant is not about the big headlines. It's about the small things – the often-fleeting one-to-one human interactions. It's the opportunity to be like a pebble in a pond: we will likely never know how far the ripples will go.

What is needed is someone to paint the big picture so that the detail can come together in a way that is coherent and has meaning. Like a jigsaw puzzle: all the puzzle pieces on the table have no meaning whatsoever until we can see the picture on the puzzle box. A leader's role is to paint that picture as clearly and as vividly as possible for all to see – and then to keep it alive.

PETER DOCKER
Speaker, Teacher & Author

Key ingredients for high-performing teams

Author JANNE MÜLLER-WIELAND

JANNE MÜLLER-WIELAND *is a three-time Olympian, Olympic Medalist, TEDx Speaker, and former captain of the German National Hockey Team. She has also successfully completed an MBA, worked for big corporates, invested in startups, and founded two companies herself (Futury and Unthink), currently working with leaders from all around the world helping them achieve their goals.*

1. What fuels you to drive action?
The excitement of fulfilling my dreams is what fuels me to drive action. If I think about my life to date, Olympic Athlete, MBA, founding two start-ups, it means that I have always been doing something and I guess it's the blend of doing lots of different things at the same time to achieve my dream – that's what inspires me.

People often ask how I manage to do so many things or even doubt that I can do them properly... But, doing lots of things that stimulate me at the same time, inspires me, and can occasionally help me connect the dots or come up with new ideas in ways I couldn't have imagined.

The most important part is that you enjoy what you are doing! If I hadn't enjoyed (loved) playing hockey at the highest level as well as really enjoyed (loved) founding and growing companies – no way it would have worked. I would have got injured or performed poorly in either of them.

2. How does collaboration with others inspire you?
When I am at my most creative point and developing new ideas, it's always in collaboration with others from different backgrounds who have different viewpoints. I think this comes from my early experience with CISV. I have such fond memories of coming together with children from all over the world and learning from each other. There's so much you can learn from literally anything, so it's about having a very open mind, being curious, and constantly trying to connect the dots in a new way.

3. From your career as an athlete and entrepreneur you must have learnt a lot on being action-oriented, what is your advice to others who struggle with getting started?
Just start. It seems so simple, but it works. I founded my last company, Unthink, during lockdown and at a time when others were saying 'now is not a good time to start something, just leave it a while'. On this occasion, I'm happy I didn't listen as it was the best decision I could have

made. It was at a time where people were craving connections with others, wanted to share their stories and loved meeting people from all over the world.

As high-performing athletes, we are used to failing and learning. We know we have to put ourselves out there, step out of our comfort zone, in order to grow. We know that when something is very painful it actually means that you are learning and growing, which is great – maybe not in the particular moment, but in the grand scheme of things. But again, it comes down to doing it and trying. I could watch a lot of videos about how to do a certain skill, read everything I can find about it, make a plan, and visualise a movement. But if I never use a stick and ball to actually try doing it physically myself, I will never be able to master the skill. So, whatever it is you are trying to achieve just get yourself out there, try, fail, get up, learn, and try again.

4. What are the definitions of a great team and how can we build one?

This is one of the most important questions in order to succeed. At Unthink, we work with a lot of teams from emerging leaders to executive boards of fast-growing tech startups as well as established corporates.

People love to skip a few steps and just hope there is an easy way out. But there's a difference between working and functioning as a team when things are going well and being a team when sh*t hits the fan. Which is why the basis of trust is so crucial. Trust is at the heart of a high-performing team. It's the most important quality and characteristic. This won't happen overnight, it takes time – so take time to build vulnerability-based trust, have shared experiences, credibility and get to know each team member's values and motivations.

If you have a good level of trust within the team, you should be able (or learn) to approach conflicts well. Teams often avoid conflicts because they find it uncomfortable. But the only purpose of conflict is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time. So having passionate debates and engaging in productive conflict is essential to any great team.

When you do conflict well and people have been heard, you are able to commit – even the ones who initially disagreed with the decision. If people just half-heartedly go along with decisions, you most probably won't achieve your goal. There are two main reasons for lack of commitment: the desire for consensus and the need for clarity. Great teams must be able to commit, even when the outcome is uncertain and not everyone initially agrees. Remember – great teams are great because they are diverse. Which means there will be diverse opinions (which is what you want!) so get used to the thought of not having consensus on everything. If anything, that's probably a good sign. Once we commit to a game plan, we need all players to buy into it in order to be able to execute successfully.

Once you've committed to something, you need willingness to call out your peers on performance or behavior that might hurt the team. If team members don't call out someone's behavior to avoid interpersonal discomfort the team becomes dysfunctional. Great teams don't avoid difficult conversations, they hold themselves and each other to account. Accountability is a shared team responsibility. It can be uncomfortable and difficult, but it's crucial for performance and helps to avoid costly situations later. As the captain of the team, I had to hold myself accountable as much as everyone else. Start with yourself.

And lastly, a great team strives for the collective team goals instead of individual status. You would never do anything that improves your position at the expense of your team. But just being a part of the team is not enough. You don't

just want to be selected for the Olympics, you want to succeed with the team. Great teams make sure, every team member – no matter which role – does everything they can to help achieve the team goal.

These components are key ingredients and are built on one another. So don't just skip to the last one. Remember you have to start with trust. Everything is easier if the team builds great trust and knows they can rely on each other when it gets tough. Because it will get tough if you are trying to achieve great things.

5. What are you working on currently?
We work on so many exciting projects with different clients. We work with some of the biggest companies in the world, but also with scaling start-ups, that have totally different needs and challenges to solve.

We do everything in an 'Unthink' way, meaning we connect the dots between People, Learning and Experiences. We don't do workshops! We create learning experiences. That means we bring things alive, make them immersive, memorable, practical and enjoyable which accelerates the learning and therefore makes real impact.

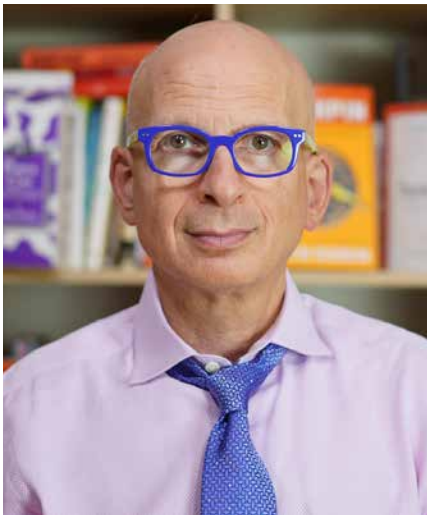
A few things that kept us busy last year:

- An offsite with the executive boards of a big company helping them to define culture, values, behaviours for their buy and build strategy; an offsite with the executive team of a SoftBank-backed startup to support them become a high-performing team;
- Anti-harassment workshops with all employees of a British unicorn (because this is not about compliance, but about CULTURE);
- Bespoke Leadership Academies for emerging leaders, tech startups as well as corporate partners like P&G;
- Different exciting conference formats; several high performance sessions with Apple;
- Our legendary Unthink Women's Leadership Programme, where we bring wonderful women together from different companies and backgrounds from all over the world to connect, learn, and develop as leaders.

What do they all have in common? We get to work with amazing people and help them to become even better leaders which will have a direct impact on their peers and teams and therefore the company's success. I have played in teams with brilliant players, and we didn't win. I have played in teams with players that – on paper – would not have stood a chance against the teams we competed with. But guess what? We beat them. We won the trophy. Why? Because we were a great team. So, your priority should always be your people and making sure you get the team chemistry right as that will always beat individual talent. The companies and leaders that understood this are the ones who are able to not only achieve high performance, but to sustain it.

As high-performing athletes, we are used to failing and learning. We know we have to put ourselves out there, step out of our comfort zone, in order to grow. We know that when something is very painful it actually means that you are learning and growing, which is great – maybe not in the particular moment, but in the grand scheme of things.

JANNE MÜLLER-WIELAND
Three-time Olympian, Olympic Medalist, TEDx Speaker,
& former captain of the German National Hockey Team



You don’t need more time

Author SETH GODIN

SETH GODIN *(USA) is the author of 21 books that have been bestsellers around the world and have been translated into more than 35 languages. He writes about the post-industrial revolution, the way ideas spread, marketing, quitting, leadership and most of all, changing everything. Before his work as a writer and a blogger, Godin was Vice President of Direct Marketing at Yahoo!.*

As organizations and individuals succeed, it gets more difficult to innovate. There are issues of coordination, sure, but mostly it's about fear. The fear of failing is greater, because it seems as though you've got more to lose.

So urgency disappears first. Why ship it today if you can ship it next week instead? There are a myriad of excuses, but ultimately it comes down to this: if every innovation is likely to fail, or at the very least, be criticized, why be in such a hurry? Go to some more meetings, socialize it, polish it and then, one day, you can ship it.

Part of the loss of urgency comes from a desire to avoid accountability. Many meetings are events in which an organization sits in a room until someone finally says, "okay, I'll take responsibility for this." If you're willing to own it, do you actually need a meeting, or can you just email a question or two to the people you need information from? Thus, we see the two symptoms of the organization unable to move forward with alacrity, the two warning signs of the person in the grip of the resistance. "I can take my time, and if I'm lucky, I can get you to wonder who to blame."

You don't need more time, you just need to decide.

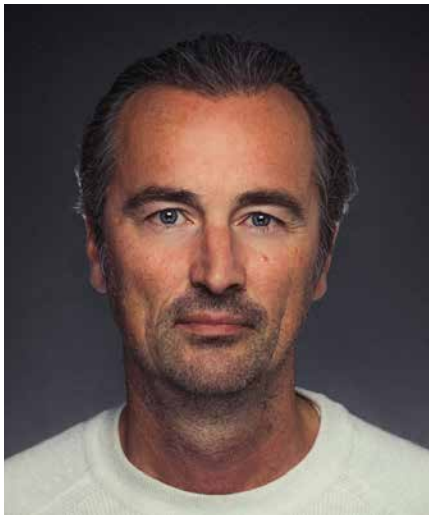
Read the history of the original Mac and you'll be amazed at just how fast it got done. Willie Nelson wrote three hit songs in one day. To save the first brand I was responsible for, I redesigned five products in less than a day. It takes a team of six at Lays potato chips a year to do one.

The urgent dynamic is to ask for signoffs and to push forward, relentlessly. The accountable mantra is, "I've got this." You can feel this happening when you're around it. It's a special sort of teamwork, a confident desperation... not the desperation of hopelessness, but the desperate effort that comes from being hopeful.

> **Why ship it today if you can ship it next week instead? There are a myriad of excuses, but ultimately it comes down to this: if every innovation is likely to fail, or at the very least, be criticized, why be in such a hurry?**

SETH GODIN
Bestselling Author

Maximizing your impact and influence upon the people around you



Author BORIS VELDHUIJZEN VAN ZANTEN

BORIS VELDHUIJZEN VAN ZANTEN *is a successful Internet Entrepreneur who has started, managed and sold several companies. Since 2006 he's managed The Next Web, as its founder and CEO, until selling the company to the Financial Times in 2019. Boris writes a weekly newsletter about management strategies and innovation.*

Ironically, Harry Truman gets recognized for saying, "it is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." In reality, the quote actually dates back to 1863, when those words were spoken by a Jesuit Priest named Father Strickland.

There's one field in particular where you can achieve a lot, but get little recognition: your impact on other people's lives. If you're lucky, someone will give you credit at your funeral, because that's where people openly talk about the influence our loved ones have had on our lives.

You might not be aware of how many people you influence, but it'd be beneficial to think about this more, because it's rewarding and productive — even if you never receive a thank you.

I've started and sold several companies, and I've been CEO of my latest for 15 years. Am I proud of the companies I started, the projects I completed, and events I built and produced? Definitely, but I feel strongest about the people I've influenced and seen grow.

For example, a volunteer who helped at our conference then took on an internship, became a manager, moved into the management team, and is now a director at a promising new startup. I'm not claiming to be responsible for her success; she worked hard and had all the talent and tenacity needed to get to where she's at now. But I do take pride in having helped her make some tough decisions and having taught her some things along the way.

This brings us to the question of maximizing your impact and influence upon the people around you. So here are some tips which are my way of impacting and influencing you, the reader.

Share your failings as much as your winnings. When you're taught to 'lead by example,' the assumption is that

you're showing people how it's done so that they can copy you. More often, it means showing them the mistakes you've made so that they can avoid them. This practice has more impact on people than pretending you're perfect.

One life-changing quote is, "nobody else knows what they're doing either." It's depressing, but also empowering, to learn this is a universal truth. So, whenever someone asks me how they should do something, I share this quote. And what I mean is: there's no set way. I trust you to do the right thing. And if you screw up, that's okay.

You can't help everyone, so selecting people you believe in makes it clear to them and the world that you're invested in their success makes sense. You might be accused of favoritism, but that's fine. Make it clear you have favorites, but there are open positions for those who are ambitious and willing to learn.

Constructive feedback is usually saved for correcting people whose attitudes you don't like. More productive is to focus on what people are doing well and tell them how to do it even better. For example, when you speak with a person whose presentation you liked, praise the best parts of it. Ask them what part they liked the least. And ask them if they need feedback on what didn't work — and respect them if they already know the answer.

When people leave your company, treat them with respect and gratitude. Here's someone who has dedicated a part of their life to your business. It doesn't matter that you paid them; they could've done anything else. So, stay loyal, offer to find them a better job, write a glowing referral letter, and invite them back to company events whenever possible. Former employees are unpaid ambassadors for you and your business.

Don't keep track of favors: help as many people as you can, and assume 90% of your efforts are wasted and never repaid. Make helping others and having a positive impact as natural as brushing your teeth. In most cases, it can take years for your influence to have a noticeable impact on them, but if you mean well, one day, you'll be surprised at how many people will thank you for your help, and hopefully, it won't only be at your funeral.

Solving the world's biggest challenges requires investing in diverse startups

Author JANNEKE NIESSEN

JANNEKE NIESSEN *is an award-winning serial entrepreneur and founding partner at CapitalT. She is an angel investor, board member, diversity advocate, and co-initiator of InspiringFifty, an initiative to increase diversity in technology by raising the visibility of female role models. Janneke has been named one of Harper's Bazaar Women of the Year, one of the 10 most prominent angel investors, Most Innovative Leader, and EY Entrepreneur of the Year.*

One must only scan the news headlines to see the myriad global challenges we must work together to fix.

The technology and resources now at entrepreneurs' disposal offer more opportunities than ever to tackle issues plaguing society, the environment, and everything in between. Entrepreneurs already tend to be out-of-the-box thinkers that fail fast and use available resources to keep innovating until they've achieved their light bulb moment. What can turbocharge this problem-solving process is when diverse founders are thrown into the mix. Here's why.

Why tech startups need diversity

First, a quick state of the state on VC funding for women and diverse founders. In 2022, only 2% of VC investments go to women-founded startups. That might be because only 12% of decision-makers at VC firms are women. Even worse, less than 1% of VC funding goes to Black founders. This is all while VC funding increased by 4.4 times between 2013 and 2021.

There's a ton of research showing that more diverse startup companies and investing teams drive more innovation, make better decisions, and generate more money. Research has found this leads to 30% higher multiples on invested capital when companies either get acquired or go public, and better valuations when these companies have at least one female founder and one ethnically-diverse team member who reports into the CEO. As Harvard Business Review found, the more similar investment partners are, the lower the performance.

How and who you invest in makes or breaks diversity

At CapitalT we don't have a diversity mandate or target. We simply don't believe we need one. And yet, 84% of com-

panies in our portfolio have a female, BIPOC, or LGTBQ+ founder.

That's because we know four factors contribute to a lack of investment in startups with female and diverse founders despite the clear benefits. Here's how VCs can start shifting their mindset about these areas so they can create a more level playing field.

- **Network:** People hire within their networks, so it's critical to be visible in different ones catering to different types of entrepreneurs. It also helps to be open to cold intros so founders aren't beholden to the typical, homogenous networking circles. This is how VCs will naturally look at all potential founders and select the best ones.

- **Bias:** VCs must be aware of unconscious bias. 60% of companies fail because of their team. CapitalT uses proprietary technology based on scientific research to evaluate entrepreneurial teams. This data-driven approach helps not only remove bias, but also generate better results.

- **Stereotypes:** Resumes often don't tell you the complete story. So many bright, driven people have non-linear, unconventional career paths. That's why we hire via skills testing instead of resumes. It lets us understand if somebody has the abilities, not the background, of an investor which results in a more diverse team.

- **Pattern-matching:** VCs often invest in founders that remind them of other successful founders they've backed (or on the other hand, founders they did not back or whose companies failed). The problem here is clear: if VCs typically invest in white, male founders, they'll continue this pattern and reinforce biases. Changing the previous three factors is a way to reduce pattern-matching — the more diverse founders with whom you engage, the more likely you will be to do so going forward.

Growing the next generation of diverse tech talent

With all those women and BIPOC founders are up against, it's critically important that they have examples of founders like them who have beaten the odds.

This is why I co-created InspiringFifty, a global nonprofit focused on increasing diversity in tech by making female role models more visible. The InspiringFifty list honors female expertise in deep tech, young talents, and men who are allies. As part of the InspiringFifty initiative, I wrote *The New Girl Code* to encourage young girls to pursue a career in technology and invest in an educational foundation focused on math and computer science. Over 50,000 copies of the book have been sold, and 25,000 more donated to underprivileged girls.

Diverse founders solve diverse problems—having a diverse portfolio raises, not lowers, the bar. You get there by being open and accessible to all founders, reducing bias, scrapping stereotypes, and avoiding pattern-matching.

Digital transformation and workplace wellbeing in non-profit organizations

Author BETH KANTER

BETH KANTER *is an internationally recognized thought leader and trainer in digital transformation and well-being in the non-profit workplace. She is the co-author of the award-winning Happy Healthy Nonprofit: Impact without Burnout and co-author with Allison Fine of The Smart Nonprofit. She was named one of the most influential women in technology by Fast Company and is a recipient of the NTEN Lifetime Achievement Award.*

1. You have dedicated your life and career to non-profit organizations. Can you tell us about the journey that took you to non-profits?

When I graduated from college, I was trained in music, in flute, and I had aspirations to play in a classical music orchestra but those jobs are very hard to come by. My flute teacher said "Well, you are very organized and you might be interested in Orchestra management." This is 40 years ago, I would say 1980-1981. I got my first job at the Boston Symphony in the fundraising department.

Then, I decided, I always wanted to be the manager, so I asked the general manger at Boston Symphony what I needed to learn. He said that the best thing would be to start with the small orchestras. So, I applied for job at a very small chamber orchestra in the Boston area, called the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra and I became executive director there for a couple of years. I helped the organization grow, raise a lot of money, get a lot of attention and after that people start coming to me and hire me as a consultant. So, I started consulting with arts organizations.

I became an expert in working with small to mid-size arts organizations and then a federal agency that funds arts organizations came to me and said 'Oh, we're developing this grant program, could you be an evaluator? Cause you know so much about small arts organizations'. So, I did that and I got to go all over US. Almost every state to evaluate organizations that had applied for funding.

From then, I learned about that there is an organization in New York called the New York Foundation for the Arts. They had launched this program called Arts Wire, which was getting artist on the internet, which was in the '90s. I launched their program and helped thousands of artists

and arts organizations get online and from there I decided to work more broadly, beyond just the arts. I started working at a non-profit tech. At the time, the field was just beginning so I was one of the people who helped start it.
As I reflect on my career path, I followed my curiosity and huge appetite for learning.

2. What are the types of non-profits you are focused on and how do you usually assist them?
I've worked with all different types of non-profits. Mostly through foundations. A lot of funders not only provide money to grantees but also capacity building, helping them do better at work. I'm working in two areas right now: digital transformation and workplace wellbeing. I work with small, medium and large non-profits through their funders.

3. You have co-authored the book The Smart Non-profit, in which you talk about smart tech and staying human-centered in an automated world. What's smart tech and what does it mean for non-profits?
Smart tech is advanced digital technologies that help organizations make decisions based on data and help automated tasks. It includes things like artificial intelligence, machine learning, chat robot, etc.

The key benefit of it, as we write in our book, if organizations were human-centred in the way they use it, they can save a lot of time because the technology helps get rid of grunt work: a lot of menial and copy-paste work that can be so tiring and exhausting. And that frees up more time for them to think about better relationships with their funders and people they are serving, and ultimately create more impact or raise more dollars. They call it in the book the dividend of time. So, right now it's more in the early stages of technology cause the price of it has just started to come down and more and more applications are available to people at a lower cost. So, if organizations can approach it and adopt it thoughtfully, they can reap these big benefits. Especially after two years of pandemic, this will bring a lot of relief.

4. In one of your previous books The Healthy Non-profit, you talk about strategies for impact without employee burnout. Can you tell the readers more about those strategies?
That book was one the first in the US, and maybe around the world to focus on workplace wellbeing for nonprofit organizations – who knows? Along the way, I've seen people in my field experience burnout because they are so passionate about what they are doing or because the people they are serving need their help so much that they don't take a break. They don't stop. Many people end up in the hospital or sick or even dying because they are working themselves to death.

The book was about changing that mindset, to understand that you do need to take a break, so you can improve your resilience to have the ability to better deliver on your mission. It takes two components: work-life balance and having a culture that centres well-being in the way that we work. That's how people collaborate together and communicate with each other in a sense of community.

5. You were named as one of the most influential women in technology by Fast Company Magazine. What led you to receive this title?
It was just after I was one of the first people to raise money on twitter and social media, so I was one of the pioneers there and I had just won the America's giving challenge where I raised money to support an organization that works with children in Cambodia. It got a lot of media at-

tention, so that's why I got on that list or I was given that award.

6. Your blog, Beth's Blog, is one of the oldest and most successful blogs for non-profits. What topics do you cover and how did you make it so successful?
It was one of the first blogs that I started in 2002 or 2003. That's before people even knew what blogs were and when they knew about it, they thought it was just a little trend that wasn't going anywhere. I managed to get a lot of followers because there wasn't anything else out there. When I first started it, one of the purposes of blogging was that it was like a personal journal and I just happened to write about my work topics involving technology and non-profits and fundraising and all topics non-profits, and I didn't even realise anybody was reading until I started getting a lot of comments and I looked at my numbers like "oh my God, there are 5000 subscribers".

The topics I write about are things I'm working in my professional life. Now, I'm very much more occasional with the blogging. I'm not investing as much time in it because I'm writing books.

7. How important is social media for non-profits? What difference do you see from 10-15 years ago?
While it was new, at the beginning of the field, people were resisting it. Thinking it was, again, just hype and it's not going anywhere. In the beginning, I was much more optimistic, thinking it was so great to connect with people, this technology allows you to build a network and inspire those people to take action, but one thing we didn't anticipate was that it could be used for not-so-good causes and especially because of the value of the companies like Facebook now. So, I feel divided about the social media because it has also had negative influences. I was reading how it has increased teen depression on Instagram because of body dysmorphia, etc.

It's a double-edged sword. It's a very powerful technology but it can also be dangerous. In one example in the US, they overturned abortion nationally and it's up to the states, and they are talking about persecuting women who go out of state. And I'm seeing on Facebook, which is not a secure platform, people offering to help other people cross state lines, so that could potentially be a position where Facebook to be submitted for evidence and women can be arrested for basic human rights. The technology is never really neutral, even if Facebook says they are. Bad actors. We know all the things Facebook has done in the last couple of years which makes me less optimistic about it.

8. You have an impressive following on LinkedIn of over 530 000 followers. How did you grow your network and how do you stay engaged with so many people?
LinkedIn was founded in May 2003 and I think I got it a few moments later. Somebody in my network of non-profit techies hit us on joining Linked so we can actually help each other out if we are connected, and we can see if we know anybody at a company and that might help us help the non-profits we were working with. So, I decided early on that I would build my network one person at a time, one relationship at a time. Connecting with somebody personally, making sure you don't approach them first and then ask, but you are supporting their work.

A little bit later, when I mentioned the fund-raising contest, I used my LinkedIn network quite a bit to help me win that contest because I was posting great content about my cause, people would ask 'how can I help or donate?' Back a few years ago, Conan O'Brien, a talk show host, actually started making fun of my profile because I had more followers than he did. It's really not about the number of fol-

lowers. It's really the depth of the relationship and how you connect with people. I might have a lot of followers there that are part of my work, but people that I've connected to that are my direct connections, it's much smaller and those are the people I routinely stay in touch with.

9. Have you always had a passion for writing and coaching? Do you have any advice for the ones who want to pursue similar career?

I never consider myself a really good writer. I always struggled with writing early on, even through college, but I had this desire to want to improve, so I made myself do it. I got a lot of help, a lot of coaching from other people who were good writers. It was maybe uncomfortable to have to write. That's why I actually started to blog so I could practice writing, and putting it out there and publishing, you get a lot of feedback. I remember I got a lot of feedback if I made typos or lapses of grammar. But writing is not about that, it's about the ideas and refining those so it was a passion from wanting to practise it. It's really about developing your listening skills, be able to hear people, and empathise with their problems. There's lots of training you can take and I've done a lot of that. There are lots of good books you can read and of course it's all-around practise, practise, practise.

10. This book is all about impact. What is impact for you?

When we talk about impact in non-profit work, we are talking about getting results that you see. There's a change you want to see, and you are collecting evidence to see if you've been successful. So, in a non-profit kind of context, that's how I would define it: getting results and you have the evidence to back it up. It has an impact. You know you are making a difference that makes you feel good because you are getting something done, one small step at a time, every day and you are improving along the day.

Digital transformation is an effect not a cause

Author ANTONIO GRASSO

Founder and CEO of Italian startup Digital Business Innovation Srl, **ANTONIO** *is regarded as one of the top digital transformation influencers and researchers on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, the Internet of Things, blockchain, and sustainability. He's an enterprise and public sector consultant. He collaborates with large multinationals and public institutions as an advisor, B2B influencer, author, and software innovator.*

1. How did you get to become an expert in the data science field?

Data science is at the intersection of statistics and computer science, aiming to seek out the meaning of data. I'm genuinely passionate about statistics, and I'm a computer scientist, hence, my expertise.

Today data is no more mere numbers and letters. It's essential to the new AI algorithm, which uses data to create features.

2. You are a start-up mentor. What expertise do you offer to start-ups?

Apart from technical expertise in designing the business model's core (I usually join a tech start-up), I'm an entrepreneur, and I can share with them my experience made of failures and resiliency. Keeping the right KPIs in focus is another important aspect for all the start-ups I follow. It's a mix of technical expertise, experience, and verified methods for performances.

3. You're the founder and CEO of Digital Business Innovation Srl. What made you start this company and what are the main goals of the business?

In 2016, after a long time, I decided to create my own company pursuing the best fit for my knowledge accumulated in the last 31 years. With my funds and all my passion, I started Digital Business Innovation Srl, relying on three pillars: strategy, technology, and influence. I was aware of the shift in the complexity of the market toward digital technology adoption and the consequent digital transformation. Only technology is not sufficient. You need to add strategy and position your value proposition with the right influence in the industry.

4. You have over 37 years of experience with information technology. What are your predictions for the industry?

A significant shift is happening now with the transition from deterministic software to probabilistic ones. Let me

explain. Deterministic software is the one we are used to interacting with. The programmer writes each line of code detailing the expected features step by step in a predetermined way. The software is executed strictly as the programmer wrote. Artificial intelligence has created a new kind of software which don't need to be programmed for a specific feature. Still, it's programmed to learn from data and perform a feature based on a metacognitive process. Hence, in a probabilistic way.

Another big move in the field is the convergence of more technologies to consolidate their features, creating a more valuable outcome. Let me say one plus one no longer equals two, but rather it's more. Definitively, information technology will be the backbone of our personal and work life, becoming even more pervasive.

5. What would you say is the most interesting trend in digital technologies?

Hybrid cloud for digital-first companies is one of the most interesting trends to improve organizational efficiency and customer experience.

Additive manufacturing, edge computing, digital twins, and private 5G are great technologies to watch out for manufacturing companies.

Blockchain, web30, and DAOs are the most disruptive technologies for the financial sector and government. Overall, AI, data governance, and data literacy are horizontals to all the industries.

6. What's digital transformation for you?

It's an effect not a cause. The cause is digitization (when a product or a service becomes digital) and digitalization (when a business model – or part of it - becomes digital).
We can say that when a company exploits the opportunity brought by digitalization and digitization, it's transforming the business toward digital; hence, digital business transformation is happening.
Overall, we must consider all the aspects of it, and technology is only part of the shift. Culture and mindset are essential to succeed.

7. What would you say are the digital transformation benefits?

There are many and they are critical to each company. As an exercise, we can name a few:

- increased efficiency and productivity
- greater agility
- better resource management
- faster time to market
- increased resiliency
- increased product/service quality
- improved customer experience
- innovate the core business model

8. You're a supporter of sustainability. What sustainable initiatives do you support in your professional life?

Apart from my commitment to consuming sustainably, I'm involved in some business projects that harness technology to create inclusion, like the one that uses blockchain to reward small farmers in developing countries directly. For example, a coffee producer can put a QR code on the coffee package linked to the farmer who grew the coffee beans. After enjoying the coffee, the consumer can send his reward to the farmer by saying, 'thank you for caring about the coffee I drink.'

Another project is the agrassoblog project on Facebook and Instagram that aims to "empower people by harnessing the social media contaminating power for a more inclusive world." Each day I post a pill of knowledge based

on my own experiences and those of others. I'm doing it because the trajectory we, the Westerners, impress on our world is siloed. It creates silos instead of building bridges. In my small way, I'm trying to share knowledge and experiences' bridges with those less fortunate than us.

9. In one of your most recent publications, you say that "Artificial intelligence impact is expanding". Could you explain why that is and what should we expect?
Artificial intelligence is used mainly to improve business efficiency and effectiveness, but we can aim to reach more. For example, by creating new ways of experience for our customers and stakeholders or exploring new opportunities for new products, new services, and new markets. These last are not yet mainstream, and that's why I published the tweet to foster a more expanded AI adoption. It is part of my storytelling on technology.

10. Lastly, you create infographics for your LinkedIn. What would you say are the three reasons that make your infographics successful?
The brain processes 90% of information by visuals, and visuals are processed in the brain at 60,000 times the speed of text. On social media, we search for something to assimilate faster.

I choose the topics based on what I think is insightful, creating a link with those with the same interests and views.

Most of the infographics I create are educational, and that's precious to whoever wants a different outcome for the time they spend on social media. In my opinion, we must start considering social media also as a kind of info entertainment.

The brain processes 90% of information by visuals, and visuals are processed in the brain at 60,000 times the speed of text. On social media, we search for something to assimilate faster.

ANTONIO GRASSO

Founder & CEO of Italian startup Digital Business Innovation Srl

AI is the future. Are you prepared to manage the risk?

Author GIULIANO LIGUORI

Co-founder & CEO of Kenovy – Key of Innovation, **GIULIANO LIGUORI** *is a leading voice in AI, Industry 4.0, and Digital Transformation. Over the past 18 years, he has helped organizations and enterprises become smarter and more efficient by embracing innovation, leveraging awesome technologies, and successfully integrating OT and IT. His blog Digital Leaders promotes digital transformation, industry 4.0, and AI adoption. He is also a member of the executive board of CIO Club Italia.*

Is model operationalization really necessary? Every single day, companies spend millions of dollars on data scientists, software engineers and AI applications. Most of these companies have no strategy for making the most of their investment. They don't know how to leverage their technology investment for maximum impact on revenue or profits.

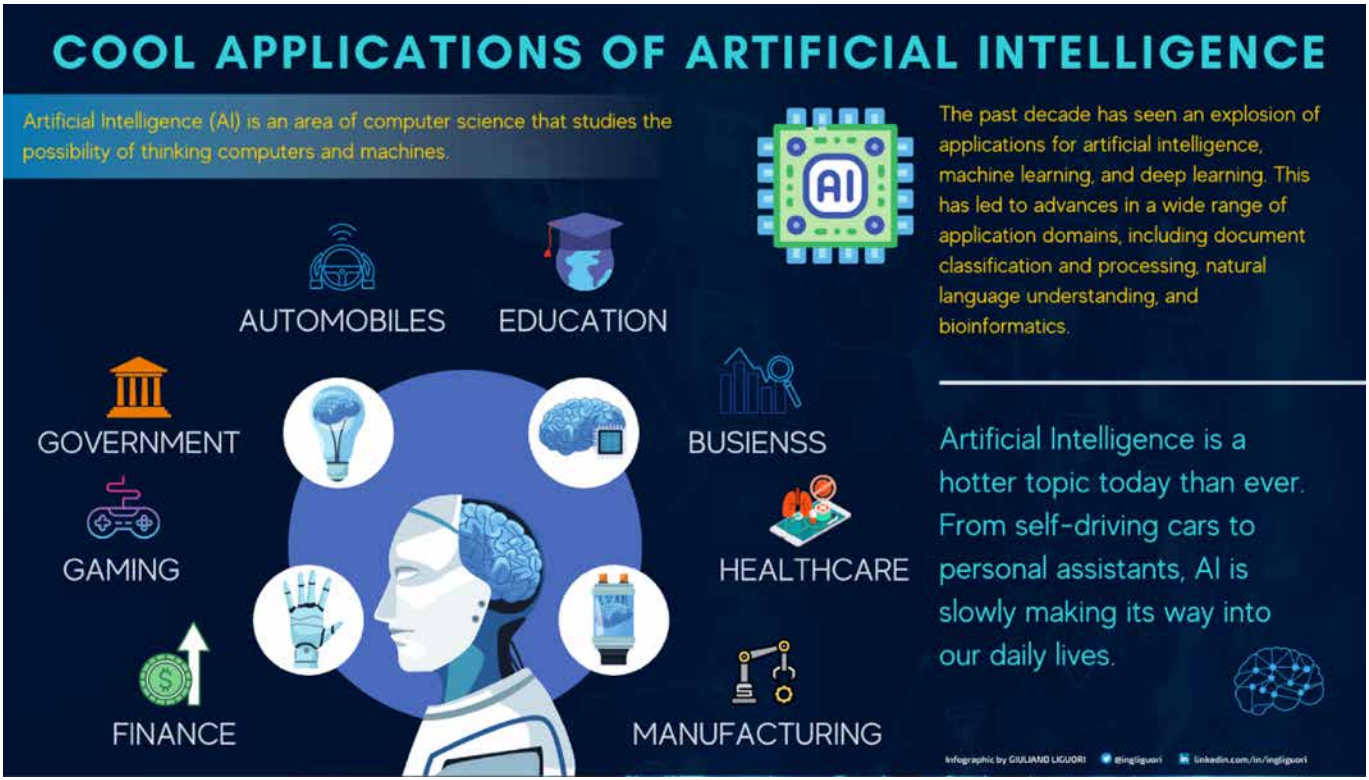
Cool Applications of Artificial Intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence is a hotter topic today than ever. From self-driving cars to personal assistants, AI is slowly making its way into our daily lives. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an area of computer science that studies the possibility of thinking computers and machines.

What's more, it's no longer a theory but a reality in many ways. There are already many applications in place that have been developed with the help of AI, including business applications.

The past decade has seen an explosion of applications for artificial intelligence, machine learning, and deep learning. This has led to advances in a wide range of application domains, including document classification and processing, natural language understanding, and bioinformatics.

A growing number of highly effective methods for speech processing and image classification are being applied successfully to robotics and computer vision. We are witnessing exponential growth in the use of deep learning in web search algorithms, translators, speech recognition, image and photo classifiers. Furthermore, artificial intelligence has allowed us to automate repetitive tasks with little or no human intervention.



Credit Giuliano Liguori

AI Is the Future. Are You Prepared to manage The Risk?

There has been a lot of talks lately about the promise of value linked to the potential of artificial intelligence. However, the return on investment in AI is proving difficult for many organizations, and worse, they see themselves falling behind others who have overcome the challenge. Often, the discussion revolved around technologies that were fundamental and enabling, but not enough to generate business results. For most organizations, interest in AI has initially been focused on the delivery of analytical and machine learning models as artifacts in this first phase of its exploitation. On the other side, the aspect of their integration with IT and business delivery processes has been overlooked, that is, the aspect of their "operationalization". The latter aspect is fundamental to reduce the "time-to-value", considering that it takes months to integrate an AI model within a business workflow and to achieve the first benefits.

There are many reasons for this, but a key one is that AI requires different skills than traditional software development. Most companies have data scientists who can create models and algorithms that power their artificial intelli-

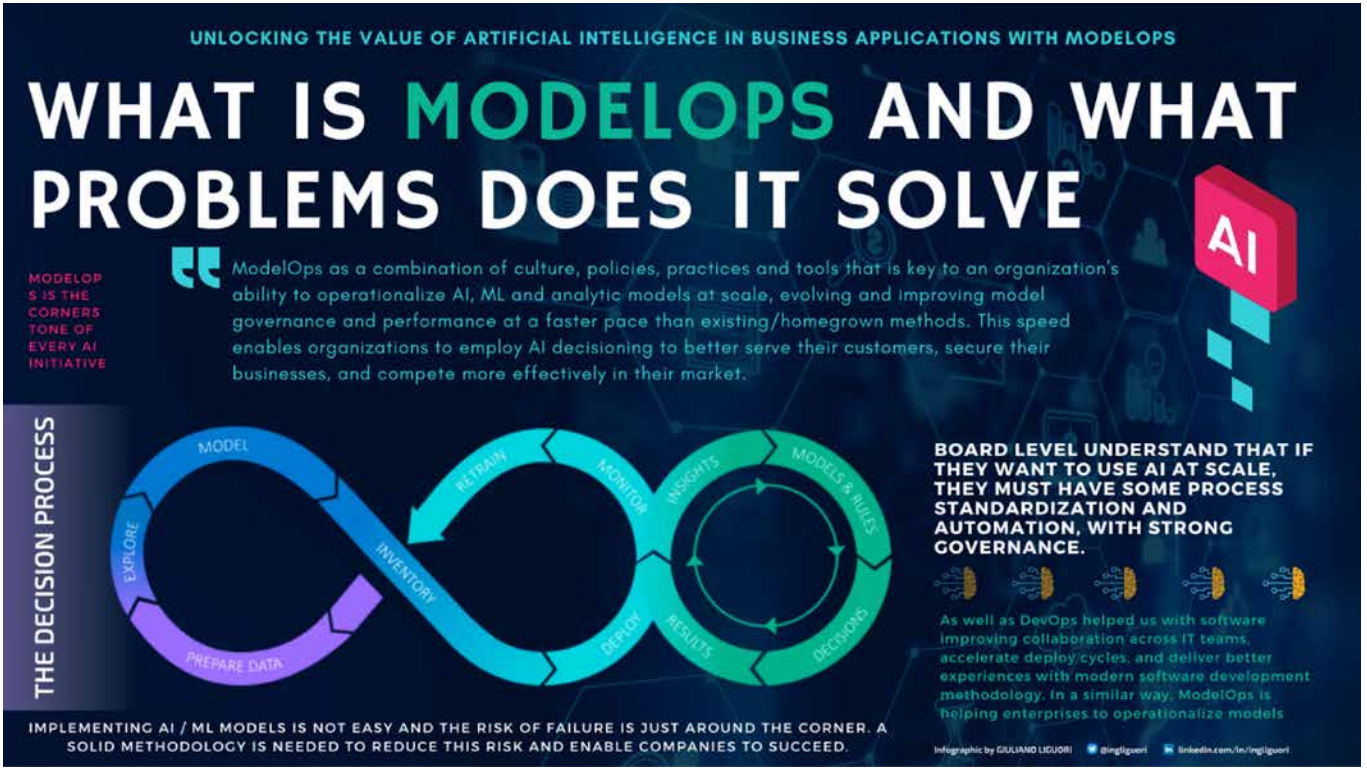
gence systems, but few have technical staff who can create and maintain the software infrastructure that enables these models to run and large-scale algorithms. At a high level, the software infrastructure required for AI may seem similar to that required for traditional software development. But at a lower level, it requires different skills and thinking. The people best suited to build this infrastructure are those with experience in both technology, process management and a strategic vision of business and innovation.

The reasons behind the complexity are different. The lack of security and privacy, inadequate volume and quality of data, accessibility challenges, limited understanding of the use cases and related benefits, insufficient internal skills, to name just a few. The real risk of such a situation is to create scepticism on the part of important stakeholders about the benefits and transformative impact of AI on their organization. The enthusiasm for AI may fade and AI will be perceived as just another technology, rather than something that can fundamentally change the way organizations operate.

ModelOps

What can we do to handle this complexity? Data is of course the common element underlying all of the interde-

Credit Giuliano Liguori



pendencies. Although it is necessary to work on technologies, it is also necessary to consider the aspect of work practices and operating models. All that is necessary in order to integrate data and AI in an industrialized way into operations and business processes.

ModelOps (AI Model Operationalization) is undoubtedly at the heart of any AI strategy. ModelOps is a holistic approach to making predictive analytics and machine learning workflows operational. Teams benefit from putting these workflows into action, making the most of them while minimizing wasted time on repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on what really matters. Gartner defines ModelOps, which are practices whose goal is to automate a common set of operations that arise in data science projects, such as model training pipelines, version control, data management, experiment monitoring, testing, and distribution. It aims to operationalize all predictive analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence models. It helps in building Automated Test Procedures that detect coding errors along the project delivery pipeline.

ModelOp Center: A Platform to Connect You and The World of Models.

Organizations that are making huge investments to develop AI models can do a lot to improve their efficiency. They can optimize their processes, streamline their activities, and increase their margins by shifting from traditional manual practices to industry-best model operations. A ModelOps platform like ModelOp Center automates all aspects of model operations, no matter the type of model, how it is developed, or where it is run. Automation has a number of benefits. It improves decision-making to increase lead times and maximize production rates and capacity. It helps businesses plan better and cut costs by minimizing personnel costs. It helps capture data that otherwise would have been lost with manual methods.

ModelOp Center is an innovative solution that automates all aspects of model operations, regardless of the type of model, how developed, or where the model is run. Using ModelOp Center's platform, organizations can easily and effectively automate and manage model operational processes. In addition to delivering significant operational efficiency improvements for their internal teams, ModelOp Center's clients also benefit from reduced costs and improved control over model operations.

Customers can choose to install ModelOp Center in their environment, either on-premises or in their private cloud whether AWS, Azure, or Google Cloud Platform (GCP).

An Introduction to the Modelops for Dummies: A Complete Guide.

The ModelOps for Dummies is a good book to read. Taking the stance that no one reading this book is a dummy, not before, nor after. This book is for Board and C-levels Executives that want to survive and thrive in the coming model-driven. This book is not for data scientists it is aimed at leaders in charge of innovation management, that are responsible for transforming their organization into a model-driven enterprise. They don't create the AI models; they just use them in business to do. They are the people who have the responsibility to provide value to their organizations by proving the actual ROI from any AI project. This book is intended for those who want to protect their business from model risk and compliance issues.

There is a lot of reading about Python, C ++, and how to train AI/ML models. But everyone seems to be discovering

the real issue in AI: how businesses can put these things into operation and scale. This is the real reason why I recommend you read this book because it focuses on the topic of business and risk management.

In my opinion, ModelOps for Dummies is a must-read for leaders that aim to:

- measuring their return on investment from AI;
- capturing a 360 view of their models across the entire enterprise;
- managing model risk and compliance issues.

This book is unlike any other book on AI. It's written by a business executive for business executives and easily navigates through what is typically a very technical topic and is not intended for the data scientist.

Conclusion

ModelOps is a capability that lies at the center of any organizations' enterprise AI strategy. It is a technology that can be used to converge and centralize various AI artifacts, platforms, and solutions while ensuring scalability and governance.

By integrating business processes into ModelOp Center, not only do we solve deployment, monitoring, and governance of models, but we also create a bridge between Operations, IT, and Data Science.

Whether you're a seasoned veteran in AI or ML, or just beginning to explore the possibilities, the book ModelOps for Dummies will teach you how to leverage ModelOps and make your organization more competitive.

A growing number of highly effective methods for speech processing and image classification are being applied successfully to robotics and computer vision. We are witnessing exponential growth in the use of deep learning in web search algorithms, translators, speech recognition, image and photo classifiers. Furthermore, artificial intelligence has allowed us to automate repetitive tasks with little or no human intervention.

GIULIANO LIGUORI
Co-founder & CEO of Kenovy

Bad meetings - how to reinvent them

Author LORRAINE K. LEE

LORRAINE K. LEE *helps organizations and teams supercharge their professional presence — i.e. how they come across to others and where others come across them. She's a top-rated global keynote speaker, a consultant, and an instructor for Stanford Continuing Studies and LinkedIn Learning. Lorraine has 300,000+ followers on LinkedIn and 10+ years of experience leading editorial teams at top tech firms. She has appeared in publications including Inc., ReadWrite, and Entrepreneur.*

Learning how to facilitate and participate in virtual and hybrid meetings will be one of the biggest competitive advantages you can give yourself in this new world of work.

Why?

A concerning (but not unsurprising stat): We have 250% more meetings every day than we did before the pandemic, according to a Microsoft study. Another 15,000-person Reclaim.ai study showed that we spend more than half of our standard workweek in meetings, for a whopping total of 21.5 hours (an increase of 7.3 hours per week since the pandemic started).

For many of us who have likely seen an uptick in meetings on our calendar since the world went remote, and then hybrid — these numbers aren't too shocking.

The issue at hand isn't the number of meetings, however. It's bad meetings.

Meetings should not disappear from our work culture. They are vital for collaborating and building relationships. But the rise in meetings has been seemingly correlated to a decrease in meeting quality — meaning that facilitators show up unprepared, participants are multitasking, and decisions are postponed into yet another meeting because no clear goals are set at the start.

Times are changing, and if our daily work and schedules are going to adapt to the times, then meetings — a critical element to any workplace — should be reinvented, too.

Below are elements of virtual meetings and collaboration for your organization to consider.

Include an Agenda

One of the biggest meeting faux pas is not preparing for it ahead of time. I have been in countless meetings where someone wants to "have a discussion" about something. The topic isn't considered thoughtfully beforehand and there's no structure to the call, so conversations veer off topic and it's not clear what we're meant to accomplish.

Enter: Agendas.

Have a clear agenda that you share at the start of the meeting, and clearly state the goal or outcome you want to achieve by the end that would indicate the meeting was successful. This will keep your meetings focused and push the facilitator to think through the meeting before they click "Join Call."

It's also a good idea to ask attendees ahead of time if there is anything they'd like to add to the agenda. This creates two-way engagement in your meetings right from the start, ensures everyone feels heard, and also allows the host to manage the meeting time appropriately.

Did you receive a meeting invite with no agenda? Politely push back and ask for one, or ask how you can contribute or what you can prepare ahead of time to ensure the facilitator is thinking through the meeting before you join.

Having trouble coming up with an agenda with a clear goal? It's likely a meeting you can remove from the calendar and replace with asynchronous (async) communication.

Embrace Async Communications

Speaking of async… async should be used in place of meetings that don't involve two-way communication. Even better — try async video.

Async video, in particular, is an impactful alternative to simply sending an email or Slack message because it allows you to convey your message and tone, which can be more difficult to pick up on in written text. Videos leave less room for misinterpretation, and provide another way for your colleagues to see you and feel connected. Examples of async videos can be status updates, announcements, and product walk-throughs.

On top of that, async allows your team to watch or view content *when it's convenient for them, no matter their time zone.* When you can provide more flexibility and allow teams to work when they're most productive, you end up with a happier team. And who doesn't want that?

Create an Experience

Sharing your screen may have worked well at the start of remote work, but as technology advances and your audience's attention continues to get pulled in countless directions, it's become the bare minimum and won't be enough to capture their attention or create a lasting impression. Meetings need to become experiences, à la your latest Netflix or Hulu binge. Whether you're using a PowerPoint deck or creating a Prezi presentation, your presentations need to include essential elements for virtual engagement, such as moving graphics or video, visuals that pop, and thoughtful ways to engage your team.

Even better? Have engaging on-screen content to make your virtual meetings more immersive – and to give your audience a reason to look at you instead of their phones. You can create inclusivity through features like on-screen responses to give all personality types a chance to contribute to the meeting without interrupting the flow of conversation.

Follow the Passive to Active Meeting Framework — a simple step-by-step process to ensure you're warming up your audience (yes, like an entertainer), taking moments to pause to welcome discussion, and leveraging the many tools out there to engage your team (a few of my favorites include Slido, Miro, Kahoot, Stormboard, Asana, and Slack).

Conclusion

There is ample opportunity to rethink meetings so that they're actually productive and, dare I say, enjoyable. They're not going away — nor should they — so there's no better time than now to turn a dreaded pastime into something that motivates, energizes, and inspires your teams (yes, it's possible!).

> **The issue at hand isn't the number of meetings, however. It's bad meetings**

LORRAINE K. LEE
Global keynote speaker, Consultant, and Instructor for Stanford Continuing Studies and LinkedIn Learning

Conformity kills all good ideas

Author KIM NØHR SKIBSTED

KIM NØHR SKIBSTED *is former Vice President in the Grundfos Group and former VP of Communications, CSR & HR at JYSK Holding. He leads the Secretariat and drives strategic development in the Foundation. He is the Foundation's voice towards the press and media. He holds a degree in literature and journalism and has extensive experience in Public Relations and copywriting. He is on the board of a number of companies.*

1. Should entrepreneurs be doers or dreamers? Which one are you?
Both. You have to be a dreamer and imagine things in order to do stuff. All great entrepreneurs have had a dream – maybe not defined in detail – but a dream about making a difference for the customers and the world.

2. What inspires you, when you develop new ideas?
Silence and talking to others…

Silence to begin with. In my car, on my bike, on a walk. Just silence. And then talking to others about it. Enthusiastically - and suddenly the ideas become clearer.

3. Are there any Danish role models in your professional life that you have looked up to?
The Danish entrepreneur Lars Larsen was a fantastic visionary man who betted everything he had on a crazy idea about offering low-income people access to pillows, duvets, mattresses etc. at reasonable prices by keeping the stores simple. He got the idea from outlets in the US and introduced it to Europe at the right time and with enormous ambitions. He dreamed and did it.

4. What type of personalities motivate you?
Passionate and engaged people who dare to dream, believe and execute their ideas with others. People who engage in what the world looks like and should look like. People who are just in it for profit does not interest me at all.

5. What types of people should leaders hire to build a high-performing team?
Do not hire people who are just like you. You need a team that can supplement each other with diverse competences, backgrounds, personalities and approach. Conformity kills all good ideas. Only hire people who are able to see the big picture in the details. But also people who are motivated for creating a better future for the business, the customers and their own children.

6. How has sustainability and AI changed your business?
Sustainability has been the most important component in doing business for the past 30 years. Being responsible is not special anymore, you need to be a caring and conscious and document your progress all the time for the greater good for all of us. If you do not, you will not be able to attract talents or customers. Digitalization is the newest component for all businesses and this will continue with AI. Digital tools will help us take care of the environment, predict flaws and make user interface easier.

7. How do you define success?
Whether you really made a difference for people and that your results will be remembered after you have left this planet.

8. Which technologies will fundamentally change the industry that you work in in the next 5-10 years?
AI, quantum physics and something we have not see yet.

9. This book is all about impact. What is impact to you?
Real change and added value. We should not just measure impact on the amount of money, we make. We need to see impact and value in other parameters than just money. Adding value to customers (time, services, satisfaction) and adding value to society (knowledge, positive change, sustainability) will be just as important to measure that the profit in business.

5 Steps to accelerate, fulfill and exceed your leadership potential

Author DR. SARAH WOOD

SARAH WOOD *co-founded Unruly in 2006, scaling a global video advertising marketplace that was acquired by News Corp in 2015. A former board member of Superdry plc, and author of the business book, Stepping Up. Sarah is currently a trustee of children's mental health charity Anna Freud. She has been named Veuve Clicquot Businesswoman of the Year, City AM Entrepreneur of the Year, and awarded an OBE for services to technology and innovation.*

1. For the readers that have never heard about Unruly, can you please explain, what your company is all about?
Today, Unruly is one of the leading video advertising platforms in the world. I co-founded the business with Scott Button and Matt Cooke in 2006 and together we pioneered the growth of digital video advertising, helping brands to create, disseminate and measure ads that people loved to watch and share online. The business went global as social media exploded and we sold it to News Corp in 2015. It was quite a ride!

2. From academia to tech entrepreneur, how did your journey lead you to this career?
I absolutely loved being an academic - researching and teaching early American fiction - but when I had my second child, I realized that I wanted a career where I could be more in control of my own time and at the same time have more impact on the world today rather than excavating books of the past! Unexpectedly, my academic connections were super helpful as we grew Unruly: we brought in visiting academics to analyze our vast data sets and help us objectively identify the drivers of virality and video engagement. Instead of giving lectures on Moby Dick at Sussex University, I was giving presentations on short-form video at media and technology conferences, though both were actually exploring the transformative power of storytelling within the context of invisible power structures and global economic systems. As a company, Unruly was always curious, always asking questions, and never afraid to challenge the norms and disrupt the status quo: the pace of start-ups may be faster but the innovator's mindset is in many ways not so different from the academic mindset.

3. As a female tech entrepreneur, what would you advise the women, who want to take a similar career path?
I'd advise any aspiring entrepreneur to heed the wisdom of the CLAN. I'm a big fan of acronyms (as well as alliterative frameworks) and the CLAN stands for…

C is for Choose your Company carefully: your place of work, your workplace mates, your mate for life - all of these will have a massive impact on the trajectory and enjoyment of your life, so choose wisely! Choose the people and places that bring out the best in you and you won't go far wrong.

L is for Love What You Do: if you want to be a leader in your field - and particularly if you're growing your own business - it's a marathon, not a sprint; there will be many speed bumps and sacrifices along the way so make sure you're doing something you truly believe in, something that aligns with your self-image and brings you satisfaction on a day-to-day basis. Dreaming about a paycheck or promotion at the end of the year will not bring you joy on the other 364 days of the year.

A is for Aim High but Appreciate Now: of course, you want to set your sights high: as A. A. Milne put it, 'you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think' and there is NO LIMIT to what you can achieve when you set your mind to it. But never forget to appreciate the here and now and to do your current job with gusto and with grace.

N is for Network with Purpose: help others out whenever you can and build a tribe of peers as you progress in your career. Nothing beats peer-to-peer learning. Invest time and energy in growing your own personal/professional brand but always be asking who you can take along with you. Great individuals don't build great companies - great teams do!

4. Your book Stepping Up is focused on accelerating one's leadership potential. What inspired you to write this book and what are the challenges you solve with it?
Ironically, I wrote the book when I realized it was time for me to step down from leading Unruly. Together, this amazing team of 300+ people had achieved so much and transformed the face and the future of digital advertising. I had a deep conviction that our inclusive, creative, and curious culture was a key part of our competitive advantage and I wanted to bring together and distill what we'd learned in one place to help other entrepreneurs and aspiring digital leaders accelerate their own journey. It was a cathartic experience: once the book was published, I was ready to let go of the business that had been my baby for over a decade.

As well as being a very personal book, Stepping Up also addresses an urgent need for a change in leadership style and business culture. Without a doubt, leadership needs to evolve if we are to effectively address the sweeping economic and societal changes we face today. With the complexities of digital, global business comes the need for greater specialization and collaboration; with the realities of mass migration, climate change, and income inequality hitting home, we need a culture where everyone - regardless of background or seniority - feels encouraged and empowered to discover and scale solutions. In short, we have to replace the old-school 'cult of the leader' with a more open, inclusive approach, a collective 'culture of leadership,' where everyone across an organization leans into their strengths and leads where they can. In my book Stepping Up, I've developed the 5 Vs Framework - Vision, Values, Velocity, Votes, and Victories - which set out 5 steps to help people at all stages of their careers to accelerate, fulfill and exceed their leadership potential.

5. In the book you discuss the practical framework on how to step up and fulfill your ambitions. What are the 5 points to follow?

VISION: This step underscores the importance of looking up and around you, taking the time to understand the fundamental changes taking place in your industry, your society, and your world; doing this on a regular basis will soon give you a sense of how and where embracing change could bring an opportunity to step up in your career. Whether it's a new social platform, competitor innovation, or productivity tool, being the first to spot - and share - a trend can bring a competitive advantage to your organization and help you shape its future.

VALUES: Leading anything meaningful, whether it's a critical project for your team, a new business, or a growing family, demands enormous reserves of energy and time. So grounding your leadership in a mission that really matters to you and reminding yourself WHY you've chosen this path will help to sustain you through difficult moments of self-doubt, failures, and sheer exhaustion. Ultimately, being driven by a deeply-held purpose is all about playing the long game, creating long-term, sustainable impact with the potential to define your life and legacy.

VELOCITY: The world of work is changing at such a fast pace that anyone determined to make an impact will want to make the time to learn new skills, tools, and platforms in order to maintain momentum and spot new opportunities. As a business leader, creating a learning culture and nurturing a love of sharing new ideas and tools is one of the most effective ways you can increase employee engagement, maintain energy levels and deepen job satisfaction across your team.

VOTES: I can't overestimate the importance that building teams and networks will play in accelerating your leadership potential and feeling a sense of belonging in your professional life. Finding, building, and inspiring a brilliant team to make the dream a reality can exponentially increase your impact within your business. Networking with purpose, growing a personal brand, and building a 'personal board' of champions, truth-tellers, and trusted peers outside the walls of your workplace can help to propel you to new heights -and places- you may not have even thought of, offering a vote of confidence in your leadership that inspires trust and builds your own sense of self-belief.

VICTORIES: You can't just talk the talk as a leader; never forget you will be judged on what you actually achieve and this chapter is full of practical tips for a leader wanting to deliver outsized impact and impressive results in a rapidly changing, highly uncertain environment. As a leader, there's so much that's out of your control, so don't waste time looking anxiously in the rear-view mirror; keep your eye on the future and focus on what you can control. Ensuring clarity of goals and responsibilities, investing in team alignment, deploying cross-functional squads on key projects, offering equity in the company, and recognizing the unseen contribution of everyone involved are some of the many ways that leaders can create a culture that enables and rewards high-performance teams.

6. This book is all about going from dreaming to doing. What is your best piece of advice to readers out there?
Don't wait for the "perfect time" to get started; the perfect time will never come. If now feels like a hard time to start then start small, start slow, and start with what you really enjoy. Set yourself some clear, super realistic milestones so you can celebrate what you've achieved and focus on what really matters - enjoying the journey! As Doctor Seuss says,

"You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting so get on your way!"

7. You are a tech investor. What typically makes you invest in a company?

I've been lucky enough to invest in some fantastic tech start-ups; there's never been a greater need for high-impact innovation to help us solve society's biggest problems and having been an entrepreneur myself I find it a real privilege and pleasure to be a part of the start-up and scaling journey. The selection process is a combination of left and right brain, the rational and the emotional. I always look for driven, passionate, and proven founders with the ability to attract and hire a stellar team. Market size, timing, and evidence of PMF (product market fit) are all important but the product needs to speak to me too: does it spark joy? Do I want to buy it, use it, and talk about it? That's the acid test.

Thank you for reading!

We hope that the book and all of the amazing contributions have inspired you to launch, lead, market, and scale your company to impact the world.

Without your actions, innovation is just an idea with a promise. Without you, visions remain useless words on a piece of paper. The world needs DREAMERS who DO.

BEST WISHES
Jonathan Løw & Viktoria Stoyanova

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THE WORLD NEEDS DREAMERS AND THE WORLD NEEDS DOERS. BUT ABOVE ALL, THE WORLD NEEDS DREAMERS WHO DO.

Doers & Dreamers is for the doers. The book features interviews & articles with founders of inspiring companies and organizations such as Airbnb, Asana, Toms Shoes, Nvidia, Pleo, Craigslist, Techstars, Wordpress, Basecamp and many others.
These founders, leaders, innovators and marketers have all turned their ideas into reality and impact. They have contributed to a future, which should be moving from:

LESS committees to MORE commitment
LESS talking to MORE tackling
LESS later to MORE now.

Doers & Dreamers is a non-profit project created by the startup JumpStory. The book is available for free as an eBook to inspire the world.