



Scott

Winking in the Dark

The End of Anonymity As We Know It

By Scott Ginsberg

In 1957, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an article that changed everything.

The headline said it all:

“Doing business without marketing is like winking in the dark.”

That sentence changed me forever.

Because no matter how smart you are, how valuable your product is, or how hard you work – if the people who matter can’t see you, you lose.

Visibility wins.

To compete in an attention economy, sticking yourself out there is the only option.

My name is Scott.

I wear a nametag twenty-four seven.

And for past decade, I’ve managed to make a successful career out of wearing a nametag as a writer, speaker, publisher, consultant and artist.

This book is a collection of lessons I’ve learned along the way:

I hope it turns on a few lights for you.

The Art of Before

When you put the cart before the horse, it's impossible to make progress.

People make this mistake.

Brands make this mistake

Companies make this mistake.

Governments make this mistake.

THE PROBLEM IS: They haven't mastered the art of before.

Today we're going to explore a collection of examples to make sure your horse stays in front:

1. **Ache comes before achievement.** Anxiety is a right of passage. It's a sign that you're on the right path. And it's a healthy form of discomfort that disturbs you into executing what matters. *What are you converting your anxiety into?*
2. **Commitment comes before compulsion.** Motivation is born out of commitment. It doesn't happen to you – it happens because of you. Only then will you take action on what truly matters. *How will your commitment fuel you?*
3. **Constitution comes before connection.** Love is a song that reminds people of what they most value. And if they can't hear it while talking to you, you're finished. *Do you have a written list of your personal non-negotiables?*

4. **Contribution comes before contentment.** Happiness isn't intentional – it's incidental. It's what happens when you're mattering. It's the byproduct of fulfilling your whole capacity for living. *What trail are you leaving behind?*
5. **Conversation comes before conversion.** Evangelism is a contact sport. No contact, no impact. Whomever you're trying to share your gospel with, recruit or enlist in your dream, talk to them with your mouth first. *Are you trying to force-feed truth?*
6. **Definition comes before domination.** You can't own the space until you know who you are, what you do, how you do it, why you do it – and – how people's lives are better because of it. *Are you committed to your personal reflection needs?*
7. **Disruption comes before distinction.** It all starts with an intentionally unreasonable statement. Like Bill Gates deciding to start Microsoft in a recession. And we all know how that story played out. *How are you refining your disruptive sensibility?*
8. **Initiative comes before innovation.** You can't do something that changes everything if you're still waiting for a map. Stop waiting to be picked. Just go. *Once you kick your addiction to permission, what will that make possible?*
9. **Intention comes before influence.** When I started wearing a nametag, I wasn't trying to make money – I was trying to make friends. And I ended up making history. All because the intention was pure. *Why do you do what you do?*
10. **Invocation comes before inspiration.** If you don't honor, respect and invite that which is truly at work – namely, not you – you'll never have any ideas that matter. *How are you ritualizing your creative practice?*
11. **Patience comes before profit.** When the fruit of your sustained artist effort tastes like crap, you start to wonder if all the effort is

worthwhile. And it is. In ten years. *How long are you willing to do the work before the right people notice?*

12. **Permission comes before promotion.** Instead of yelling at people, earn the right to whisper to them. Then you'll be speaking to them with a voice that's anticipated, personal and relevant. *Who is waiting for you to market to them?*

13. **Picking comes before plucking.** I never went to the career fair. I just hired myself and got to work. This approach was less stressful and more profitable than waiting to be plucked from obscurity. *Are you still operating out of a lotto mentality?*

14. **Playful comes before practical.** Tickle the eye. Wink at the heart. And create a smile in the mind. That way, people exist in a state where they are willing to receive your message. *Are you asking the viewer to take part in the communication of the idea?*

15. **Practice comes before principle.** People aren't listening to your mouth talk, they're listening to your life speak. And if there's too big a gap between your onstage performance and backstage reality, they'll bail. *Do you smoke what you sell?*

16. **Surrender comes before spontaneity.** You have to trust yourself, trust the process, trust the world and trust the people who populate it. Otherwise you'll never be vulnerable enough to welcome the beauty of impulse. *What do you need to let go of?*

REMEMBER: The horse loves being in front.

Let him lead. Master the art of before.

Otherwise you'll never make any progress.

The Art of Chance

The best part about playing Monopoly was drawing a chance card.

It was risky.

It was exciting.

It was the only way to beat my older brother.

MORE IMPORTANTLY: Chance Cards taught kids that life without risk, isn't.

What chances are you avoiding?

Consider this list of ten chances you would be stupid not to take:

1. **Every interaction is another chance to give.** Charisma is irrelevant when people walk away from you feeling more in love with themselves. That's the greatest gift you can give people: A mirror. To give them a front row seat to their own brilliance. For example, every time I interact with someone, I go out of my way to write down at least one thing they've said into my pocket jotter. And always right in front of them, too. It makes them feel heard, quotable and smart. *What gifts are known for giving?*
2. **Every mistake is another chance to evolve.** Winning is boring because you never learn as much. Personally, I'd rather screw up. It builds character and makes for a much better story. Besides, you can't win if you refuse to make failure a regular part of your experience. People who tell you failure isn't an option need to have their vision checked. The goal is to fail and fail and fail some more, learn and learn and learn some more, and then win

and win and win some more. *Are you ready to endure the failure that growth requires?*

3. **Every sentence is another chance to bleed.** As a writer, my job is to put my entire world into everything I write. That way, every sentence is a piece of my truth. Every sentence has a story behind it. Every sentence provides experiential value at the point of consumption. Every sentence deliberately sets out to make the reader blink. And every sentence holds up a mirror that demands people look at themselves. In my experience, when you approach writing in that way, your material connects with readers in a personal, relevant and emotional way. *How bloody is your art?*

4. **Every decision is another chance to matter.** When Alfred Nobel's brother died, several newspapers accidentally published his obituary instead. He was remembered as, "The merchant of death who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before." Devastated, Nobel spent the next seven years making sure he left a legacy that mattered. And then, one year before his death, he created the most prestigious award in human history. Looks like he made the right decision. That's the whole thing about mattering: The people who do so are the ones who choose so. *Who is thanking you for making that choice?*

5. **Every anxiety is another chance to inhale.** Yoga has doubled my pain tolerance. For serious. Thanks to my practice, when I experience moments of discomfort, waves of anxiety, even bonafide bouts of physical agony, I've trained myself to breathe through it. Which doesn't make the pain go away, it just changes your relationship to the experience of it. Turns out, when you greet the pain with a welcoming and thankful heart, you can use its momentum against itself to convert it into a meditation. *When was the last time you gave thanks for your discomfort?*

6. **Every customer is another chance to research.** Even if the customer is unprofitable. Even if the customer is a pain in the ass. Even if the customer is someone you hope takes a long walk

off a short pier. Every one of them is a walking case study. Every one of them has the potential to make you smarter. Listen to them. Loudly. Rejection is cheaper than silence. And don't forget to take notes, too. Because these people will happily tell you what to sell to them – and how to sell it. Probably not through words, but they'll still tell you. *Whose feedback are you listening to?*

7. **Every question is another chance to catapult.** My presentations overflow with disturbing questions. Not because I want people to answer them, but because I want to flip a mental switch inside their heads. That's the mark of a good question: Once you hear it, you're changed forever. Once you hear it, you can't get it out of your head. And once you hear it, you begin to answer it with your life. Next time you attend another pointless department meeting, see if you can ask the most disturbing question of the day. Because it only takes one moment of stunned silence to change everything. *What questions are you known for?*

8. **Every accident is another chance to leverage.** Leverage is the bridge between occurrence and opportunity. And since everything unfolds regardless of how we feel, it all depends on how you approach what happens to you. First, get good at recognizing when life is giving you a gift. Listen to your unintentional music. That way, you can convert accidents into advantages. Next, get good and calmly coping with inconvenience. Instead of fighting or fighting – try friending. It's much easier to respond to the crap the world hurls at you. And last, view accidents as adventures and not ordeals. Try making a list of every good thing that will come from change. *Do you welcome every opportunity to build resilience?*

9. **Every conversation is another chance to respect.** Being an asshole is not a scalable business model. If you want your people to gasp with delight, help them feel more respected every time they deal with you. Learn to see the world through their eyes. And participate in their lives – not just the conversation about their lives. I'm reminded of my mentors, Arthur and Bill. They're more than twice my age – and probably thrice my

intelligence – yet both of them ask for my advice almost every time we talk. Point is: Respect is the engine of communication. And we can always sense when it starts sputtering. *Who have you disrespected this week?*

10. **Every audience is another chance to shine.** Even if it's only one person – that's still an audience. We live in an experience economy. And if you're not willing to invest a little effort in the art of showmanship, customers will take their business elsewhere. To become a hard act to follow, consider these ideas: First, ask your audiences to take part in the communication of an idea. Instead of expecting passive recipients, demand an active participant. Second, take a moment to make a memory. Burn the service moment into people's brains. Third, creates a verbal incident. Add something to their lives and rewards them for spending time with it. *What's your sharing device?*

REMEMBER: Life without risk, isn't.

Draw a chance card.

It's the only way to win.

Especially if you're playing against my older brother.

The Art of Cheap

When the economy sucks, everyone is trying to save money.

And there's no shortage of ways to do so.

But what about saving time? Saving energy? Saving face? Saving emotional effort?

THE REALITY IS: Saving isn't just about spending less – it's about becoming more.

Today we're going to explore several areas where you can practice the art of cheap:

1. **Abstinence is cheaper than moderation.** I'd rather say no and be done with it than gamble on the pathetic odds of self-control. That's the thing about moderation: It doesn't work. If it did, you'd have to take moderation in moderation. *How many times are going to eat an entire bag of Oreos before you learn your lesson?*
2. **Character is cheaper than comfort.** I'd rather honor my personal constitution than placate people's insecurities. That's the reality of comfort: Rarely does anyone grow in that state of being. *What personal boundaries are you violating just to make other people happy?*
3. **Choose is cheaper than pick.** I'd rather grab something good enough and move on than suffer chronic indecision just to find the best option. That's the problem: You can't go through life

regretting every decision you make just because it's not the best possible choice. *Are you imprisoned by the tyranny of small, irrelevant decisions?*

4. **Conflict is cheaper than silence.** I'd rather say something and cause trouble than bury my feelings and create resentment. That's the thing about relationships: The only thing worse than saying that something's wrong is saying nothing at all. *Last time you sat down to dinner with your spouse, what did you omit?*
5. **Creation is cheaper than rejection.** I'd rather hire myself and get to work than wait for approval to become who I am. That's the difference maker: You can sit back and ask for permission, or you can step up act without restriction. *Should you be updating your resume or finishing your business plan?*
6. **Curiosity is cheaper than belief.** I'd rather make ruckus with my questions than make people happy by mindlessly accepting their dogma. That's what people don't realize: Passionately curious beats incredibly smart. *Do you believe because you actually believe, or because someone told you to believe and you mindless followed?*
7. **Delegation is cheaper than education.** I'd rather pay someone to make it beautiful than teach myself to make it mediocre. That's what smart entrepreneurs know: When you calculate how much you're worth per hour, everything changes. Everything. *Are you trapped in the pursuit of perpetual improvement?*
8. **Delete is cheaper than unsubscribe.** I'd rather press one button and get on with my life than wait for someone to win me back to a service I never asked for in the first place. That's the thing about email: Ninety percent of it is nothing but a digital fidget. *How many of your emails do you delete without opening?*
9. **Failure is cheaper than regret.** I'd rather take a risk, totally bomb and end up looking like an idiot than suffer the purgatory of inaction. That's a helpful philosophy for business and personal:

Don't be stopped by not knowing how. *What regrets do you regret?*

10. **Forgiveness is cheaper than permission.** I'd rather take action and risk being scolded than stand by for approval to do something great. That's what drives me crazy: People who put their dreams on hold until their creative passport gets stamped by people who don't matter. *Why are you waiting to get paid to do what you love?*
11. **Love is cheaper than anger.** I'd rather forgive people who don't deserve it than raise my voice at people who do. That's the fun part: If you're willing to be unfair with your heart, it's amazing what you can accomplish. *When was the last time you loved someone anyway?*
12. **Meditation is cheaper than worry.** I'd rather create a mental pause than waste my imagination sweating over something I don't even care about. Too bad more businesspeople haven't realized the secret: When you treat everything as a meditation, you're always relaxed. *Where do you go when you need to stop thinking?*
13. **Passion is cheaper than security.** I'd rather scrape by doing what I love than get a paycheck with one eye stuck on the clock. That's the misconception: When you make a living doing what makes your heart sing, you're not living the dream – you're living your dream. *What if you set up a life you didn't need to escape from?*
14. **Patience is cheaper than control.** I'd rather wait until the job simplifies itself than ruin my day with monumental overplanning. Fortunately, I've finally come to terms with the following reality: Planning is procrastination in disguise. *Are you still swatting a fly with a sledgehammer?*
15. **Permission is cheaper than advertising.** I'd rather deliver predictable value to my tribe than inject unwanted noise to the

masses. That's the big aha: You don't have to yell at people if they've given you permission to whisper. *What group of people is anticipating your marketing?*

16. **Trust is cheaper than control.** I'd rather give people permission to express their individuality than try to make everyone like me. That's what I tell my clients: When you petition people to embed their passion into the pavement that leads the way, they arrive faster, better and happier. *Who are you asking to edit themselves?*

17. **Truth is cheaper than consistency.** I'd rather admit that I've changed my mind than lie to myself just to save face. That's the affliction that crippling the corporate world: Good old-fashioned terminal certainty. *Are you eating when you're not hungry just so the food won't have to be thrown out?*

REMEMBER: Saving isn't just about cutting – it's about becoming.

Master the art of cheap.

The Art of Currency

Money can't buy everything.

Currency, on the other hand, can.

And if the struggling economy is making life difficult, you might consider seeking out alternative forms of exchange.

Today we're going to explore a collection of currencies to help you buy what you need:

1. **Respect buys loyalty.** If you want make employees stay, make customers buy, make suppliers sell and make competitors drool, respect them enough to be radically honest. Respect them enough to build expectational clarity in everything you do. Respect them enough to create a climate of joy. And respect them enough not to waste their precious time. That's the easiest, cheapest and smartest way to earn people's attention – respect. The irony is: While it costs nothing to give, it could cost everything to neglect. So just make sure you bother to bother. Make sure you dare to care. Because if you can help people feel more honored and more respected every time they deal with you, they'll stick around forever. *Who are you accidentally disrespecting?*
2. **Class buys referrals.** Customers are nice – but repeat customers are necessary. If you want to earn those second, third and fourth time buyers, here's a concept to consider: Build a bridge to your competitors. I know it sounds counterintuitive. But if it were just you, it would be hard to survive. If it were just you, there would be nobody to lean against. Competitors – when treated like

partners – can become your power source. What if you posted a handy list of your top ten major competitors and their offers on your website? Can you imagine the message that sends to your customers? Be willing to share in almost every direction. You'll learn quickly that class is the new quality. *How many referrals did you give this week?*

3. **Compassion buys forgiveness.** Next time your customers or employees screw up; respond with a foundation of affirmation. Thank them for being vulnerable enough to be imperfect. Thank them for giving you the chance to love them unfairly. That's what you call an act of spirit in a moment of struggle. And it doesn't just make your people happy – it makes them more likely to forgive you when you screw up too. Because you will screw up. Probably a few days after they do. As long as you're not managing forgiveness like some corporate scoreboard, the reciprocation of compassion will be worth it. *How are you creating an environment where people feel comfortable making mistakes?*

4. **Consistency buys credibility.** Do something once, and that's a treat. Do something twice, and that's a trend. But do something every single day for a decade, and that's a triumph. That's what your customers are trying to teach you: That they don't buy what you sell. They buy what you stand for; why you stand for it and the process you endured to make it. They buy the belief that you will deliver on your promise to solve their problem. And they buy the faith that if their problem isn't solved; you'll work tirelessly until it is. That's why consistency is far better than rare moments of greatness: Because anybody can be great for a month. *How many days off did you take last year?*

5. **Flexibility buys longevity.** Lack of flexibility isn't a fitness problem – it's a business problem. And unless you're willing to develop a predisposition to compromise, good luck staying relevant. The good news is, flexibility doesn't make you weak or small – it makes you human and malleable. It also makes you more likable and less of a pain in the ass to work with. There's

nothing worse than getting stuck with a company that suffers from terminal certainty. The point is, being flexible isn't about touching your toes – it's about touching people where they're at. Because if you want them to spend, you've got to bend. *Are you an expert at meeting people halfway?*

6. **Generosity buys heartshare.** First, it was all about marketshare. Next, it was mindshare. Now, it's all about heartshare. I define that as, "The level of emotional responsiveness your work commands." And if you want more of it, you have to become a gift giver. Not bottles of whiskey. Not boxes of brownies. A gift is anything that leaves people altered. For example, give the gift of art, or, solving a problem in a way it's never been solved before. Give the gift of initiative, or, being willing to go off script and work without a map. Lastly, give the gift of elevation, or, helping people walk away feeling more in love with themselves. Those are the types of gifts that change the recipient. Who knows? You could even document each of those heartshare moments in a blog. People would notice. *What gifts are you known for giving?*

7. **Visibility buys belief.** Woody Allen is famous for saying that eighty percent of life is showing up. I disagree – I think it's higher. More importantly, it's not just about showing up, it's about showing up when it's hard. For example: Showing up when you're tired, when you're scared, when you're not asked, when you're not prepared, when you're not expected, when you're not being paid, when you're not in the mood and especially when you're not on the clock. That's the kind of visibility that matters. Both online and off. And if you can build it with the people who count, they will believe in you. Because in their eyes, just showing is a synonym for going out on a limb. *Do you have a marketing plan or a visibility plan?*

REMEMBER: There are some things money can't buy.

But if you have the right currency, no price is too high.

The Art of Fashion

Last time I was in Florida, I passed a woman on the beach wearing a shirt that read:

“Pregnant is the new skinny.”

I was beside myself. Not just because of the shirt itself, but because of the overall ridiculousness of the fashion industry.

HERE’S THE REALITY: Fashion isn’t about your appearance – it’s about your approach to life.

Today we’re going to explore a collection of trends that aren’t going away:

1. **Inspire is the new motivate.** You can’t motivate anybody to do anything. All you can do is inspire them to motivate themselves. Find out what fuels people – then fill the tank. Like the Saturday Night Live character, Matt Foley. He convinced us that a boisterous man in a plaid blazer, hopped up on twelve cups of coffee – who lived in a van down by the river – could motivate another human being. Yeah no. *Who are you inviting to do something great?*
2. **Join is the new buy.** Este Lauder once said, “Women don’t buy brands, they join them.” When I first heard that quotation, my inner geography changed forever. And I eventually came to a conclusion that has yet to be disputed: Good brands are bought, great brands are joined. Otherwise, people are just giving you money. And I don’t know about you, but I’m not interested in

making money – I want to make history. If you want your brand to last, it has to connect on visceral level, engage on a human level and unite with it on a personal level. *How joinable are you?*

3. **Judgment is the new access.** When information is infinite, people don't need information, they need people who can explain the information they've already found. The point is: Curators aren't just for museums. In an increasingly commoditized marketplace, service is the key differentiator. And if you can make your customers smarter by explaining the world to them, you win. *Can you interpret and translate better than anyone?*

4. **Love is the new black.** As long as you're unfair about it. As long as you find the people who don't deserve and offer to them freely and fully when they least expect it. Like the Sofitel. When I arrived last month at their New York property, their system showed no record of my reservation. A bit annoyed, I ended up staying across the street at a competing hotel. No problem. But when I got my credit card statement, Sofitel still billed me. Later, after speaking with his reservations manager, he decided to refund the charge immediately. The Sofitel earned a fan for life from a guest who never even stayed there. They rewarded my mistake. *Are you loving people don't deserve it?*

5. **Naked is the new uniform.** Wearing a nametag twenty-four seven is a risk. But it's also good practice. Practice being vulnerable, that is. And as I continue to reflect on the past ten years of adhesive adventures, I'm slowly starting to realize the connection between vulnerability, approachability and profitability. But when you open yourself to the world, the world will open its wallet to you. But only if you're willing to strip away the superficialities and occupy your vulnerability. *Are you willing to lay it bare?*

6. **Offline is the new online.** Although Watson the Computer not only won Jeopardy – but, was the first to buzz in on twenty-five out of thirty answers – he *did* manage to answer one question

wrong: *The question about art.* Lesson learned: Having access to two hundred million pages of content still doesn't mean you know how to feel. The heartbeat of the human experience is a function of emotion – not information. Face to face is making a comeback. And we can't solely filter our lives through pixels. Not if we want those lives to matter. *Are you talking to people with your mouth or your thumbs?*

7. **Playful is the new professional.** Retaining childlikeness makes you more approachable, more relaxing to be around and more relatable to all ages. That's what my nametag does: *It makes this moment, right now, a more humane, pleasant passing of time.* From my handwritten nametag to my trademark philosophy card to my daily "fill in the blank" exercise, my goal is create simultaneous engagement and entertainment, both online and off. What does your brand do for people? And do those people care enough about your brand to take a moment, take a picture and make a memory? I hope so. Because you have to let people into the moment. Induce participation. And intuitively respond to the human thirst for connection. People won't just buy you – they'll join you. Forever. *Are you providing an opportunity for people to participate in a way that speaks to their individual needs?*

8. **Transience is the new permanence.** The Internet is forever. Every tiny moment now lasts for infinity. Better be careful what you publish. Dishonesty has a limited shelf life. According to a recent study from the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, eighty percent of divorce lawyers have reported a spike in the number of cases that use social media for evidence of cheating. Still, this problem isn't the computer – the problem is the character of the person using it. People don't get divorced because of Facebook – they get divorced because dishonesty is written all over their face. Employees don't get fired for blogging – they get fired for being stupid. And organizational leaders don't go to jail because some intern squealed – they go to jail because they're morally bankrupt cracker-honkeys. If you choose to live a dishonest life offline – there's going to be a huge echo online. And your digital footprint will slip on the technological banana

peel and destroy the things that matter most in your life. *Do you want to become known for what you're about to do?*

9. **Waiting is the new working.** I love waiting in lines. I've accepted the reality that: Life is the line. There's nowhere to get to. There's no future. All you have is right now. And I don't know about you, but if I'm waiting, I'm writing. Even if only for twenty seconds at a time. You'd be amazed how easily a year of lines turns into a box of books. Instead of looking at your watch, huffing and puffing and trying to enlist the other people in line to join your pity party, make love to the present moment. Then take notes. Because if you don't write it down, it never happened. But if you build portable creative environments for yourself; you can leverage every micromoment that presents itself. And I guarantee you'll triple your output. *Are trying to find time, make time or steal time?*

REMEMBER: The trends that have nothing to do with clothes are the ones that matter most.

Keep these new fashions in the front of your mind.

The Art of Fear

Fearless people scare me.

It's one thing to have confidence. It's one thing to believe in yourself.

But you're never scared of anything, there's something wrong.

Fear is a healthy, human reality. It's an essential part of the life experience. But if you're trying to scrub your world clean of it, you'll never reach your full potential.

HERE'S THE SECRET: Fear isn't meant to be ignored – it's meant to be invested.

As my therapist famously told me, “The healthiest way to handle your fear is to change your relationship to it.”

Here are six steps to a more fearful you:

1. **Instead of fighting with it – bow to it.** Accept the bid. Honor it. And greet fear with a welcoming heart. Respond with an expansion; don't react with a contraction. *How to do you extend namaste to that which scares you?*
2. **Instead of complaining about it – give thanks for it.** Be fundamentally affirmative. Extend gratitude for fear's arrival. It's here for good reason. *Are you grateful for that which scares you?*

3. **Instead of running from it – *make friends with it.*** Don't fight. Don't flight. Don't freeze. Befriend. That way it can't hurt you. *Are you willing to buddy up with that which scares you?*
4. **Instead of waging war against it – *put your arm around it.*** By approaching fear as an ally, you redirect its power into something useful. *Can you join forces with that which scares you?*
5. **Instead of putting a blanket over it – *learn an important lesson from it.*** Fear is the final compass for finding what matters. Please listen. *Can you grow from that which scares you?*
6. **Instead of being taken over by it – *decide what fuel can be made from it.*** Fear is a wave waiting to be surfed. Let it carry you to bright new shores. *Will you energize your efforts with that which scares you?*

REMEMBER: You have nothing to fear but the fear of fear itself.

Stop ignoring it and start investing it. The dividends are worth it.

The Art of Isn't

It only takes one missing ingredient to ruin the whole batch.

This goes for cookies, pancakes or any other baked goods you might enjoy.

But what about life? What about work? What about love?

These things have ingredients too.

But sometimes we forget to include certain essentials. For example:

1. **Art without risk, isn't.** Safe work is rarely celebrated. Let go of the fear that your work is too revealing of your inner world. Be bloody or be broke. *What system can you put in place to remove the restriction of your creative expression?*
2. **Courage without fear, isn't.** Self-doubt is highly underrated. Let go of need to hide the fact that you're completely terrified and have no idea what you're doing. Be scared or be screwed. *When was the last time you doubted yourself?*
3. **Creativity without community, isn't.** It's hard to be creative alone. Let go of the myth that self-expression is a solo act. Be surrounded by creative people or be suffocated by creative drought. *Are you still trying to play basketball without a backboard?*
4. **Friendship without forgiveness, isn't.** Love wasn't designed to be fair. Let go of the insistence on treating people equally. Be

unfair or be unpaired. *Whom do you need to give a lifetime pass to?*

5. **Happiness without circulation, isn't.** Some things shouldn't be kept to yourself. Let go of the misconception that you need to keep your joy bottled up. Be public about what you love or be pitied. *When something amazing happens to you, how many people do you tell?*
6. **Humor without humanity, isn't.** If people are laughing, people are listening. Let go of the lie that you have to make jokes to be funny. Be yourself or be faced with crickets. *Are you artificially injecting laughs or speaking the universal language of human absurdity?*
7. **Life without witness, isn't.** Everyone needs a good mirror. Let go of the belief that you don't need an audience to thrive. Be visible or be winking in the dark. *Who bears witness to your story?*
8. **Love without ache, isn't.** If everything's perfect, somebody isn't being honest. Let go of the fairytale that relationships should never have problems. Be struggling or be single. *When was the last time your lover annoyed the hell out of you?*
9. **Marketing without permission, isn't.** Interaction trumps interruption. Let go of the illusion that you can bother people into buying from you. Be respectful or be ignored. *Do you feel entitled to yell at people, or have you earned the right to whisper to them?*
10. **Opportunity without leverage isn't.** There's always time to kill two stones with one bird. Let go of the lie that luck is real. Be listening for the knock or be left behind. *Now that you have this, what else does this make possible?*
11. **Revolution without ridicule, isn't.** Brace yourself for the waves of antagonism. Let go of the assumption that everybody

has to love you. Be a little hated or be a lot forgotten. *Will you accept the bullets as the price of winning?*

12. **Selling without solving, isn't.** When you're the answer, you can name your price. Let go of the fantasy that your customers are stupid. Be the answer or be the adversary. *What pervasive, expensive, relevant and urgent problem do you solve?*

13. **Service without soul, isn't.** True power comes from personhood. Let go of the desire to outsource the human function. Be a real person or be picked last. *How does your brand bring its humanity to the moment?*

14. **Success without significance, isn't.** Contribution trumps currency. Let go of the dogma that making money is what matters most. Be contributing or be consigned to oblivion. *Are you making sales, making a point, making a mark, making a difference or making history?*

15. **Work without play, isn't.** It's nothing but drudgery. Let go of the delusion that there's a separation between professionalism and playfulness. Be a kid or be kicked to the curb. *Are you growing younger?*

REMEMBER: When you skip key ingredients, something is going to taste off.

In work, in life and in love, make sure you're not overlooking what matters most.

The Art of Knowing

Getting to know people isn't what it used to be.

Thanks to technology, it's hard to tell who your real friends are.

Maybe this will help:

I don't care how brave you are.

What I really want to know is how you greet your fear.

I don't care how strong you are.

What I really want to know is what lie you tell yourself so you won't have to feel the pain.

I don't care what you do.

What I really want to know is how you think, why you live and whom you love.

I don't care what you've done.

What I really want to know is where you've failed, how you've enlarged and where you've mattered.

I don't care what books you read.

What I really want to know is what ideas do you belong to.

I don't care what your job title says.

What I really want to know is what your life is dedicated to.

I don't care what your website is.

What I really want to know is what makes you forget who you are, and how you go about remembering whom that person is.

I don't care how early you wake up.

What I really want to know is what inner fire keeps you from pressing the snooze button.

I don't care what your background is.

What I really want to know is what it looks like when you follow your deepest desires.

I don't care how long you've been in business.

What I really want to know is a story that helped you see yourself clearly.

I don't care how tough it is.

What I really want to know is what will carry you to the other side of the wall.

I don't care what you have faith in.

What I really want to know is if you're willing to admit the truth of something you don't have the courage to believe.

I don't care where you came from.

What I really want to know is what path brought you here.

I don't care how talented you are.

What I really want to know is the sound it makes in your heart when you crash the wall of your own limitations.

I don't care what television shows you watch.

What I really want to know is what feeds your spirit, what ignites your soul and what melts your heart into a puddle of goo.

I don't care what charities you belong to.

What I really want to know is how, where, when and to whom you give yourself away.

I don't care what bar you go to after a hard day.

What I really want to know is a detailed description of the landscape that sustains you when your spirit is tired and sagging.

I don't care what clubs you belong to.

What I really want to know is what you're a messenger of and what you're a monument to.

I don't care if you're having a tough year.

What I really want to know is if the depth of your desire can outrun the height of your hardship.

I don't care how powerful your vocabulary is.

What I really want to know is if you're willing to let silence swallow you whole.

I don't care how much hate mail you get.

What I really want to know is how well you occupy your stillness when the world works overtime to make you tremble.

I don't care what you wanted to be when you grew up.

What I really want to know is if you're courageous enough to take the one, consistent thread that's been running through your life since childhood and spin that baby into something devastating.

I don't care where you're going in your life.

What I really want to know is who you're becoming as you get there.

Nice to meet you.

The Art of Less

Enough is enough.

We don't need more of most things.

IN FACT: More has the power to work against you.

And if you're not careful, the results could be disastrous for you, your business, your people, your brand and your life.

For example:

1. **The more you plan, the less you ship.** People are obsessed with planning for three reasons: First, it preserves their sense of control. Second, it underwrites the illusion that they know what they're doing. And third, it gives them a chance to make something perfect. Here's the reality: You're rarely in control, you don't need to know what you're doing and finished is the new perfect. Planning is nothing but procrastination in disguise. A distraction in a miniskirt. Failure doesn't come from poor planning – it comes from the timidity to proceed. *What are you waiting for?*
2. **The more you script, the less you engage.** I once had a client ask me if I would be giving my speech from a script or a teleprompter. I told her neither. She asked what I would be using instead, and I said my heart. Apparently none of their speakers had ever done that before. But I insisted. Three weeks later, I earned a standing ovation. Interesting. That's the reality about human interaction: People engage when you communicate from

a place of honesty, respect and in-the-moment awareness. *When was the last time you went off script?*

3. **The more you bitch, the less you inspire.** Complaining is not a leadership style. It's the opposite of ownership and the enemy of execution. If you want to breathe life into people, you've got to infect them with something that matters. For example, the vision of what they can contribute. For example, the mirror that reflects their brilliance right back to them. For example, the belief that they possess the resources to do something great. That's inspiration. Sucking people into a vortex of negativity because you're insecure about your own life situation isn't. *Do you complain about the wind, hope the wind will stop or adjust your sails?*

4. **The more you settle, the less you become.** There are three kinds of people: Those who make you less than you are, those who keep you where you are and those who push you to what you might become. If your personal and professional lives are populated with anything but the later, you're finished. Settling is a silent epidemic. Surround yourself with people who challenge and inspire you, and delete the rest. You'll have fewer friends, but they'll be better ones. *How many of your friends shouldn't be your friends?*

5. **The more you fix, the less you help.** Walt Whitman once said, "Not I, not anyone else, can travel that road for you. You must travel it for yourself." Next time someone you love comes to you, remember: They don't need advice. They don't want suggestions. They don't like answering questions. And they can't stand when you try to solve their problems in two minutes or less. Just give them a hug, say you love them and stop trying to explain the meaning of the universe. A little restraint goes a long way. Otherwise your desire to fix becomes a barrier to being helpful. *Are you responding like a screwdriver or puppy dog?*

6. **The more you spam, the less you love.** Flooding people's lives with interruptions they didn't ask for isn't marketing – it's insulting. Instead of bothering people into buying from you, learn to lead with respect and ask for permission. You'll earn the right to speak to people with a voice that's anticipated, personal and relevant. And the best part is, they'll actually listen to you. But it all begins with your daily gift to the world, the accumulation of which builds a huge surplus of goodwill. That's not marketing – that's love. *How will you create a trail of breadcrumbs that leads people back to the paid work?*

7. **The more you wait, the less you matter.** The only people who count are the ones who choose to. Mattering is the incidental consequence of the intentional commitment to fulfill your whole capacity for living. And it's something that can start happening today. All you need to do is decide. That you're going to matter. That you're going to make meaning. And that you're going to take responsibility for doing something significant. Otherwise the curse of inconsequentiality will feel like an earthquake to the heart. *Are you still waiting to matter?*

REMEMBER: Enough is enough.

More isn't always the answer.

The Art of Mattering

As I mentioned, mattering is a choice.

The choice to be consequential.

The choice to fulfill your whole capacity for living.

The choice to take responsibility for feeling insignificant.

At work, in life and in love.

Consider making these choices to assure your work matters:

1. **Art that mirrors, matters.** People need to see their own truth staring back at them. That's why artists are artists: They have an unmatched sensitivity to the human experience. *How does your work reflect people's reality back to them?*
2. **Work that dares, matters.** Safe is a very dangerous place to be. If you're not risking failure, risking your face and risking your future, you'll never get anywhere. *When was the last time you did something for the first time?*
3. **Innovation that simplifies, matters.** If your idea doesn't solve a real problem for the world, you're just doing something cool. Never underestimate the marketability of practicality. *Does usefulness have a palpable presence in your work?*
4. **Leadership that infects, matters.** Infection has nothing to do with being sick. It's about transferring emotion, putting something into people and influencing them through your state of being. *What are you breathing into people?*

5. **Love that sends, matters.** When you love someone, you should want to parade them around the room. Their existence should be a reflection of your own. And when you gush about them, you should glow like a gas lamp. *Who sends you?*
6. **Technology that humanizes, matters.** If you create a collaborative experience, you win. If you create acts of individuality in moments of conformity, you win. And if you encourage regular expressions of digital personality, you win. *Are you a robot?*
7. **Interaction that elevates, matters.** The point is to leave people better. To help them walk away from an encounter with a more colorful vision of what they can contribute to mankind. *How do people experience themselves in relation to you?*
8. **Experience that educates, matters.** We learn not from our experiences, but from intelligent reflection upon them. It all depends if you're willing to listen for lesson, then document and share it. *What did you write today?*
9. **Design that points, matters.** Information expects a passive recipient, but design demands an active participant. Pierce people's consciousness, create a smile in the mind and put your audience to work. *Do you make people blink and think?*
10. **Attention that accumulates, matters.** If people complain that you're only something for attention, good. Attention is a scarce resource. It's an endangered species. That's why anonymity is bankruptcy. *How are you turning your attention into permission?*
11. **Content that confronts, matters.** Writing is a contact sport. You have to reach through the page, grab your readers by the lapel and whisper sweet nothings into their hearts. *Are you a great date for your reader?*

REMEMBER: Mattering is a choice.

And if you commit to it, people will thank you for making it.

The Art of Measuring

Not everything can be comfortably quantified.

Yes, humans operate out of the need to control of their environment and actions.

Yes, humans have a native desire to label, organize and make sense of their world.

But some things can't be proved by objective standards.

Like the commonly used business phrase, “If you can't measure it, it doesn't matter.”

How silly. How corporate. How left-brain.

MY THEORY: What can't be measured, matters.

For example:

1. **Authenticity is not a strategy.** First of all, if you have to tell someone you're authentic, you're probably full of shit. Secondly, authentic isn't something you try to be – it's something you allow yourself to share. Third, authenticity comes from the Greek *authentikos*, which means “original.” Which means being authentic is about standing on the foundation of your rarity.
How's your balance?
2. **Caring is not an algorithm.** You can't bastardize caring into a technique. There's no formula. There's no handbook. There's no seven-step system. What matters is your willingness to care,

your awareness of caring, and consistency with which you do care. And, that you care for the right reasons. *Do you really care, or just care about looking like you care so you can meet your sales quota?*

3. **Creativity is not a department.** Everyone is creative. The difference is, not everyone knows how to explode the barriers set in place by a lifetime of conditioning to express that creativity. If you're one of those people, take Hugh Macleod's advice: Bring new light to what life might be. That's creativity. *What parts of your life are you not giving yourself permission to live creatively?*
4. **Happiness is not a goal.** It's a dividend. It's the incidental consequence of the intentional commitment to fulfill your whole capacity for living. And when you focus your energy on that first, it just shows up. Because happiness isn't the target – happiness is what you get for hitting the target. *What will make you happy that has nothing to do with ego or image or status?*
5. **Honesty is not a policy.** If you have to tell your people to tell the truth, you need new people. Here's the reality: If someone plans to live a dishonest life offline, there's going to be a huge echo online. And their digital footprint will slip on the technological banana peel to destroy their reputation forever. *Are you willing to live with the consequences of being honest?*
6. **Humanity is not a crime.** Being a real person is good for business. And companies that lack humanity leak profit. Naturally, I have no data to measure this. I have no research to prove this. I have no statistics to support this. *Nobody does.* But you don't need to look very far to find evidence of the profitability of approachability. *Is there enough evidence to convict your organization?*
7. **Humor is not an additive.** Humor is the only universal language. But it's not something you just decide to use. Humor isn't something you add – it's something you embody. Instead of

artificially injecting humor, just be funny. Discover your innate inevitable funniness as a human being, and people will laugh. *Can you report accurately and clearly on funny situations?*

8. **Integrity is not a buzzword.** It's a way of life, a way of being and a way of treating people. It's what happens when your onstage performance mirrors your backstage reality. It's what happens when the message you preach is the dominant reality of your life. And it's what happens when your life enshrines what your lips proclaim. *Are you smoking what you're selling?*

9. **Leadership is not a label.** It doesn't matter if you're a leader. It doesn't matter if you have a title. What matters is passion. What matters is expressing yourself freely, fully and relentlessly. What matters is how people experience you, and how they experience themselves in relation to you. Master that, and people will follow you. *Where does your leadership come from?*

10. **Love is not a combination lock.** There's no how-to book. There's no formula. If you want to make love stay, it's simple but not easy: Never get lazy with people. Make love the question you answer with your life, every day, until it's over. Because in the end, your life is measured by how well you love, not how far you get. *If it's your heart, do you really need to prove to people that you can't live without it?*

11. **Purpose is not a task.** It's the way you choose to live your life. It's the amalgamation of everything you do and say, each day, which validates your existence as a human being. And if you're not sure what your purpose is, no problem: Finding your purpose can become your purpose until you find your purpose. Get to work. *What three things are you doing regularly that don't serve or support your vision, calling or purpose?*

12. **Recognition is not an initiative.** The universal motivation of human engagement is the desire to have one's voice heard. As such, recognition is more than just praising people publicly – it's being a stand for people's greatness. It's about giving them

a front row seat to their own brilliance and while inviting the rest of the world to sit in the audience with them. *How are you making gratitude palpable and recurrent?*

13. **Soul is not an organ.** It's the art of owning your gift, deploying intense humanity and exhibiting naked personhood. It's about staying in touch with your own story, proudly showing people what's under your fingernails and delivering something nobody can touch. And it's about exposing the place where you really live, fearlessly opening the closed room and bring all of yourself to everything you do. *Sound like you?*

I'LL SAY IT AGAIN: What can't be measured, matters.

After all, when it's your heart, you don't have to convince people that you can't live without it.

The Art of More

When it comes to design, less is more.

When it comes to marketing, less is more.

When it comes to guitar solos, less is more.

HOWEVER: There are certain things in life that people will always need more of.

What brand of “more” do you deliver?

Consider these ideas to get started:

1. **Trust more than people think is wise.** I trust people in advance. It’s a great time saver and, most of the time, works to the advantage of both parties. What’s more, telling someone, “I trust you,” is another way of saying, “I feel comfortable being myself around you.” A message like that instantly lowers the threat level of the conversation and encourages reciprocation. And sure, it backfires sometimes. But I’d rather get burned on occasion than walk around with bars to my heart. *What empties your trust bank?*
2. **Thank more than people think is normal.** Gratitude is not an event. It’s not a chore. And it’s certainly not a corporate initiative. Gratitude is a fashion statement. And it looks good on every person during every season. However, thankfulness is more than just writing notes – it’s a calendar of consistent action. It’s engaging with the world on a perpetual search for something to give thanks for. And it’s living every day of your

life as a thank you in perpetuity to the forces that have shaped you. *Where did you first learn gratitude?*

3. **Communicate more than people think is needed.** No news is bad news. If you're not prolific in your communication with the people who matter most, you run the risk of being destroyed by silence. After all, the opposite of honesty isn't lying – it's omitting. And when you leave people in the dark, they engage in worse case thinking. The key is to create a ritual that keeps you prolific in your communication. A regular, repeatable act that layers meaning on top of a mundane activity. *What if you posted signup sheets for private lunches your office doors?*
4. **Care more than people think is expected.** Caring is not an emotion – it's an intersection. It's the loving collision between your attention and someone else's need. And the best part is, no act of caring is too small. Like epoxy glue, even a small drop is sticky as hell. But caring isn't easy. And it's not the same as being nice. Being nice is pouring someone a cup of tea. Caring is listening to that person's story while the tea steeps. The point is, if you're trying to outsource that function, if you're trying to bastardize caring into a technique, people are going to notice. And they're going to be pissed. *Does your organization punish people for caring?*
5. **Believe more than people think is necessary.** Listening is not enough. Taking an interest is not enough. *People need to be believed in.* That's the nourishment they require. The cool part is, when you tell someone you expect great things, they tend to rise to the moment to prove you right. All because you infected them with a vision of what they could contribute. At that point, all you have to do is sit back, tell them you're proud and remind them that you knew they could – and would – do it. *How will you help people taste the sweet liberation of what's possible?*
6. **Give more than people think is fair.** Not so you look good. Not so people feel indebted to you. And not so everyone can see what a generous person you are. Give because it's right –

not because it's recognized and reciprocated. Even if you're strapped for cash or pressed for time. You can always give your art, or, brining your humanity to the moment in a way that leaves the recipient altered. That's generosity at its best. *Will your relationships suffer death by scorecard?*

REMEMBER: Less is for amateurs.

Sometimes more is more.

Don't just give people what they want – give them what they remember.

The Art of Never

“Love is never having to say you’re sorry.”

This phrase originated in the movie *Love Story*, but has since been modified, satirized, patronized and reorganized through dozens of movies, songs, television shows and other popular art forms.

AND THAT GOT ME THINKING. I wonder if there are other things we never have to do?

In business, in life and in love, maybe there’s an entire line of thinking based on this idea.

I’ve developed a list of eight examples:

1. **Generosity is never having to keep score.** I recently dropped my laptop. Right on the asphalt. Completely dented the corner of the screen. But when I took it into the Apple store, they were unexpectedly generous. First, the guy at the genius bar told me he once dropped his laptop too, but down an escalator. Second, he agreed to send my computer to the repair center that day. Third, he let me back up my data in the store before I went home. Fourth, they returned my computer to me two days faster than they promised. And fifth, they didn’t charge me a dime. No questions asked. I was speechless. Just when I thought Apple was all style and no service, they delivered. Just when I thought Apple was all hype and no help, they delivered. That’s the thing about generosity: It’s not corporate scoreboard. It’s not something you can choreograph. You just dance in the moment and respond to the now need. *How are you giving yourself away?*

2. **Class is never having to apologize for transparency.** 37Signals uses their company blog as a direct conversation between developers and customers. Not to shameless promote the website, but to solicit feedback on their user interface. *That's class.* Not to bother people into buying from them, but to keep customers abreast on programming changes in real time. *That's class.* And not to hawk the new software programs, but to explain the motivation behind the changes to their existing ones. *That's class.* They also give virtual tours of their design process, display screen shots of the revised versions of new layouts, and even host streaming question-and-answer sessions between users and the actually founder of the company. *That's class.* No wonder their users are so fanatical about the company. *How much loyalty are you losing by being opaque?*

3. **Faith is never letting fear have the last word.** Fearless is just a word for people who are afraid to be human. Personally, I'm scared all the time. Not just of clowns, spiders and reality television – but scared that my art will be rejected. Scared that my business will fail. Scared that nobody will care what I have to say. Scared that my ideas will stop coming to me. And scared that I'll wake up once day and realize I don't matter anymore. The good news is, I've learned to be okay with that. I've accepted fear as a normal part of the life experience. And I've learned how to change my relationship to it. Now, instead of trying to ignore it – I bow to it. I make friends with it. Then, I overwhelm it with faith. Faith in myself, in my resources, in my abilities, in my support system and in humanity. Ultimately, scaring yourself for the right reasons is the gateway to personal growth. And even though being scared means being uncomfortable, uncomfortable people are the only ones who ever change the world. *Are you still trying to scrub your world clean of fear?*

4. **Commitment is never having to discipline yourself.** At a recent art fair, I had the chance to meet one of my favorite cartoonists: Paul Palnik. I shook his hand. I thanked him for his work. And I told him never to stop making art. His response was perfect, "I have no choice – it's who I am." Think Palnik has to discipline himself to draw every day? Not a chance. Because he

committed. With both feet. And that's exactly what happens when you decide to play for keeps: Commitment deletes distraction. No matter how slammed you are, there's always time for the non-negotiables. No matter how overextended you become, you still create space to execute what matters. The hard part is the prework. Taking the time to sit down and actually map out what matters. But it's worth it. Because you can slog through anything if you know why it's important to you. *What if you made a list of a hundred reasons why you do what you do and kept it in your wallet?*

5. **Freedom is never having to bury your desire.** I once worked for a client who blocked Internet use at their office. Completely. From everybody. And the saddest part was, they were a sales organization. And their two hundred employees – most of whom were under the age of thirty – had no online access. Which I certainly understand from the perspective of productivity and security. Nobody wants their employees wasting time when they should be making sales. *But these people are cold calling all day.* Without online access, they can't google their customers. Without online access, they can't conduct research on their competitors. Without online access, they can't leverage social media as a listening platform. And without online access, they can't take advantage of all the available tools to nurture their relationships with existing customers. If you want your people engage at work, don't let the feeling of formality keep them from communicating freely. *Is your office a prison or a playground?*

6. **Confidence is never having to say you're cool.** If you have to tell people you are, you probably aren't. And if you have to tell people you aren't, you probably are. That's what I don't understand about social media: People are so insecure about their own value that they need to embed a graphic that points to the button that asks strangers to like them. Yet another pointless online pissing contest I refuse to participate in. I'm sorry, but popularity is not a substitute for truth. If you have to interrupt me with an email that asks me to like you, we're done. On the other hand, if you're awesome, people will know it. Being amazing never goes out of style. Case and point: The Beatles never had

a fan page. The Beatles never had to tell people they were cool. They just worked tirelessly to rock people's faces off, and they changed the world forever. *Are you spending money trying to make people like you, or investing emotional labor trying to make the world better?*

7. **Love is never asking people edit themselves.** Several years ago, I conducted a workshop with the identity company, Brains on Fire. Since then, I have yet to come across another company who more epitomizes love. As their founder Robbin Phillips suggests, "Be famous for the people who love you and for the way you love them." In my experience, the best way to love people is to let them express themselves. Without restriction. Without resorting to code. And without having to look over their shoulder. After all, nothing disengages people quicker than interfering with the expression of their individuality. Leave people liberated. Let them live their brand and stay loyal to themselves. Create a safe place where individual creativity can shine. Petition people to inject their personality into everything they do. *What kind of love will you become famous for?*

8. **Creativity is never having to grow up.** Instead, it's about growing younger. It's about "escaping adulthood," according to artists Kim and Jason Kotecki. Here's how: First, dare to be dumb. Master the art of not knowing. And try getting lost once in a while. It's good for the soul. And if you don't know where you're going – nobody can stop you. Secondly, reengage your playful spirit. It's attractive, it's relaxing and it's more enjoyable to be around. Besides, there's nothing that can't be taken lighter. Even the serious issues. Third, build a reservoir of positivity. Say yes to life. Especially when it would be easier, cheaper and more convenient to say no. That's where creativity lives. And lastly, build enthusiasm into small moments. Your energy is your greatest asset. Speak with passion or risk being unheard. Just make sure your energy is supported with truthfulness. Otherwise you just passionately incompetent. *How creative do people remember you as?*

REMEMBER: The characters in *Love Story* were right.

There are some things you never have to do.

The Art of New

I'm no futurist.

But some trends are too pervasive to be denied.

THE COOL PART IS: You don't have to kill yourself doing more – you just have to challenge yourself to do different.

Consider these twenty trends, and how your organization might adapt to them:

1. **Beta is the new post.** You're never ready. Aiming is overrated. And fire burns people. Instead of "ready, aim, fire," try this formula: Try, listen, leverage. *Now that you have this, what else does this make possible?*
2. **Contact is the new content.** We don't need more access to information – we need more access to each other. Holster your thumbs and open your mouth. *Are you bragging about the content you have or the contact you enable?*
3. **Class is the new quality.** Competitors – when treated like partners – can become your power source. Be willing to share in almost every direction. Even with the people who hate you. *How many referrals did you give this week?*
4. **Crazy is the new sane.** Insanity is the lifeblood of innovation. What's more, crazy invites momentum, which produces velocity. And money is in love with speed. *Are you nurturing the nuts?*

5. **Curation is the new creation.** You don't always have to provide the good stuff – sometimes all you have to do is signal people where to find it. *If you can't produce, what if you just pointed?*
6. **Feeling is the new function.** The only thing people can form a judgment about is how interacting with you makes them feel. Create an emotional vibrate and win. *Are you delivering a palpable presence of something real and true?*
7. **Execution is the new innovation.** Woody Allen was wrong. There's more to life than just showing up – it's also about following through. *Have you developed a relentless bias toward taking action?*
8. **Gratitude is the new glamour.** Thankfulness looks good on every person during every season. As long as you don't bastardize it into a technique, the fashion police will tip their hats. *How do you thank the people who matter most?*
9. **Great is the new good.** Competence is assumed, enthusiasm is expected and passion is the price of admission. People expect to be blown away. Stop proving them wrong. *Is excellence your difference or your default?*
10. **Heartshare is the new marketshare.** Percentages are for math teachers. The level of emotional responsiveness your brand commands is what matters. *Are you selling to people who want what you sell or believe what you believe?*
11. **Honesty is the new marketing.** The truth is a powerful word of mouth motivator. As long as it's not a policy. Because if you have to tell your people to tell the truth, you need new people. *How many lies did you tell last month?*
12. **Imperfect is the new beautiful.** Don't be the one who never shows any real ugliness. Boldly flaunt your imperfection. Show them the snag in your rug. *What would happen if you were known as the biggest perfectionist in your company?*

REMEMBER: It's not about doing more – it's about doing different.

Explore the possibility of living differently in some way.

Otherwise you might get left behind.

The Art of Outsource

I get it.

Outsourcing reduces production costs, helps you stay focused, improves overall product quality, expands your knowledge base, accesses new talent, mitigates risk, has greater tax benefits, enables scalability, creates more leisure time and transfers liabilities to third parties.

What's not to like?

THE ONLY PROBLEM IS: People have become so in love with the idea of outsourcing, that they try to outsource things you shouldn't outsource.

1. **You can't outsource reputation.** If you don't make a name for yourself, someone will make one for you. *Do you want to become known for what you're about to do?*
2. **You can't outsource presence.** If you have to resort to gimmickry to let people know you're there, you're not. *Does your open door policy actually work?*
3. **You can't outsource revolution.** If want to change the world, you'd better be ready to lead when your followers show up. *Is your tribe waiting for you?*
4. **You can't outsource luck.** If you want to be in the right place at the right time, you have to be in a lot of places. *How could you exponentially increase activity level?*

5. **You can't outsource blood.** If you want your art to matter, you can't paint with another man's palette. *Are you trying to get into the hall of fame by playing covers?*
6. **You can't outsource responsibility.** If you're searching for someone else to take ownership of your misery, good luck. *Do you admit you're the result of yourself?*
7. **You can't outsource experience.** If your brand dies a virgin, you did something wrong. *If you can't find the time, what if you tried compressing it?*
8. **You can't outsource courage.** If your fire comes from anywhere other than within, the embers won't last. *Are you waiting for someone to turn your key of ignition?*
9. **You can't outsource friendship.** If you don't know how to talk to people with your mouth, you will be alone. *Are you filtering your life solely through pixels?*
10. **You can't outsource compassion.** If it's your heart, you don't have to prove to people that you can't live without it. *How do you make people feel seen and heard?*
11. **You can't outsource personality.** If you don't have time to do your own social media updates, you shouldn't be on it. *Are you paying strangers to tweet for you?*

REMEMBER: Beware of turning outsourcing into a fetish.

Stay human. Stay real.

And make sure you're not contracting out the human function.

Customers will notice.

The Art of Perspective

Any time you attend a meeting, make a sales call, give a presentation, write a blog or interview with a prospective employer, you have a choice:

You can vomit information.

You can deliver insight.

You can ask questions.

You can create silence.

OR: If you want to be invited back, you can deliver perspective.

Something that disturbs.

Something that moves eyebrows.

Something that flips the mental switch.

Something that creates a smile in the mind.

Something that takes people's hiding places away from them.

As a writer, speaker, consultant and mentor, perspective is my job. It's what people pay me to deliver. And I'd like to share an assortment of perspective to help you, your brand and your organization become better.

CAUTION: Each of the items on this list is worthy of its own discussion. Next time you have a meeting, conference or company retreat, I encourage you to use them as conversation starters, icebreakers and thought experiments for your team:

1. The first owner of the Marlboro Company died of lung cancer.
Are you smoking what you're selling?

2. Charles Goodyear invented the rubber tire when he accidentally spilled a pot of boiling rubber in his kitchen. *What are you turning your mistakes into?*
3. The creator of the Nike Swoosh was paid thirty-five dollars for the design. *Are you charging for time invested or value created?*
4. Bill Gates started Microsoft in a recession. *Are you waiting for perfect conditions to begin pursuing your dream?*
5. When Scott Paper Company first manufactured toilet tissue; they didn't put their name on the product because of embarrassment. *How do you sign your work?*
6. American Airlines once saved forty thousand dollars by eliminating one olive from each salad in first class. *What could you delete that nobody would miss?*
7. Jerusalem is the only destination people travel halfway around the world for, just to see something that isn't even there. *What is the mythology surrounding your product?*
8. When Leo Tolstoy wrote *War & Peace*, he had thirteen kids. *What distractions are you allowing to beat you?*
9. Miles Davis never made any hit records. *How are you selling the experience of seeing you in person?*
10. Van Gough was so lonely that he had to use his mailman as a model. *Who can you have lunch with this week?*
11. The founder of Google turned down a job at the White House. *What are you willing to give up in order to stay geeky?*
12. Getting a job at an Apple Store is more selective than getting into Harvard. *How badly do people want to work for you?*

13. Half of Japan's bestselling books are written via text message.
Now that you have this technology, what else does this make possible?

14. The Amazon jungle has nine hundred species of wasps. *Are you still assuming the world doesn't have room for your uniqueness?*

REMEMBER: When you walk in with perspective, you walk out with heartshare.

People don't need more information.

They need permission to see the world differently.

The Art of Price

Everything costs something.

Not always in the form of money, though.

Currency has many faces.

AND THE REALITY IS: If you're not careful, you may end up paying a higher price than you need to.

Today we're going to explore the art of price:

1. **Resentment is the price you pay for having no boundaries.**

I write books and give presentations about approachability. And on a weekly basis, somebody almost always asks me, "Can you be too approachable?" Yes, yes and yes. I know this because I used to lack boundaries. And I learned that if you don't set healthy boundaries for yourself, other people will set them for you. And then they will violate them. And then they will tell all their little friends to do the same. All because you never set the precedent. Your job is to figure out where you draw the line. How approachable you're willing to be. Otherwise you'll end up obligating yourself to death. *Why are you still having coffee with people you don't even like?*

2. **Anxiety is the price you pay for having no gratitude.** No, you can't outsmart getting hurt. And no, you can't scrub your life free of stress. But the more you give thanks for something, the less power it has over you. That was the best thing my therapist taught me: *When you notice anxiety in your life, greet it with a*

welcoming heart. Put your arm around it. Ask it questions. Find out what lesson it's come to teach you. And then be grateful for the opportunity to learn. When I changed my relationship to anxiety in this way, everything changed. Everything. Do you walk a perpetual posture of thankfulness?

3. **Panic is the price you pay for having no relevance.** I recently received a ridiculous email from my professional association. The incoming president reached out to a group of younger members, asking if we would be willing to participate in a panel to help older members stay relevant to younger generations. Excuse me, but that's absurd. First of all, the only people who matter are the ones who choose to. Secondly, relevance is not a synonym for knowing a lot about social media. It's a function of simplicity, beauty and humanity. Third, stop trying to relate to people. When you manufacture commonality, you end up insulting people's intelligence. If you want younger generations to take you seriously, you don't need hair dye, you don't need Botox and you don't need a new wardrobe. What you need is a mental makeover. Because the problem isn't old age – it's old thinking. *How will you keep from fading away?*

4. **Regret is the price you pay for having no balls.** I used to take the bus to work. Every morning, I would sit next to Kat, a funky yet fashionable hairdresser. One day, she asked me if I would be willing to be her hair model at an upcoming show. "Your style is exactly what we need to round out our spring lineup. What do you say?" I totally chickened out. And to this day, I still regret saying no. Because that would have been some fantastic experience. Fortunately, I've since learned how to say yes to life. I've learned how to instantly evaluate the perceived level of risk in those micromoments. And that sensibility has enabled me to make bolder choices in the larger moments that matter. *What risks do you regret not taking?*

5. **Insomnia is the price you pay for having no trust.** According to the National Sleep Foundation's annual report, it takes the average person about fifteen minutes to fall asleep once they're

in bed. To me, this is amazing. When my head hits the pillow, I'm out like a dead rock. Partly because I have excellent sleep hygiene, but also because I know how to trust. Both the tangible and intangible forces of my life. If you find yourself tossing, turning and glancing nervously at the advancing clock each night, you don't need a sleeping pill – you need to let go. That's the challenge with trust: It's the highest form of surrender. And it's such a terrifying proposition because human beings have an inherent need to preserve their sense of control. But if you're willing to trust, you'll be amazed how quickly your eyes start to close. *Do you believe in the dividends of your own emotional labor?*

- 6. Advertising is the price you pay for having no friends.** Marketing is like sex – if you have to pay for it, you're doing something wrong. Smart companies spend money earlier in the process. Smart companies build things worth noticing right into the product ahead of time. Take design, for example. It's not an extra, it's not an also and it's not an accident – it's everything. As Tom Peters once wrote, “The dumbest mistake is viewing design as something you do at the end of the process to tidy up the mess, as opposed to understanding it's a day one issue and part of everything.” Choose to champion the beautiful. Think about products you've bought, cherished and shared the most. How many of them had brilliant design? And how many of your own products have the same? Use that as a benchmark for your own remarkability, and your design will be the best advertisement of all. *How much energy are you investing in being a beautiful organism?*”

REMEMBER: Currency has many faces.

Make sure you're not paying the wrong price.

The Art of Problem

Your problem is never your problem.

There's always something bigger, deeper and more important.

THE CHALLENGE IS: If you never identify what that is, then you'll really have a problem.

Today we're going to explore a collection of these common problems, along with the bigger issues that accompany them:

1. **Age isn't the problem, attitude is.** It doesn't matter how old the dog is. If the new trick matters to your customers, you still have to learn it. Why are you so afraid to date yourself anyway? Age isn't a disability. Tell people how old you are and get on with your life. *Are you suffering from old age or old thinking?*
2. **Position isn't the problem, passion is.** You don't need a title on the outside – you need a burning fire on the inside. That's what makes you followable. That's what makes people come from miles to watch you burn. Because your passion infects them with a vision of the future. *Do you need a job title or more wood?*
3. **Discipline isn't the problem, dedication is.** Commitment deletes distraction. If you want to achieve your goal, try this: Write a list of a hundred reasons why you do what you do. Read it to yourself every morning. And I guarantee you'll never have another discipline problem again. *What values are your actions aligned with?*

4. **Proficiency isn't the problem, permission is.** Don't be stopped by not knowing how. How is overrated. How is a dream destroyer. Besides, failure doesn't come from poor planning, but from the timidity to proceed. Allow yourself to not know and just go. *Will you kick your addiction to permission?*

5. **Recession isn't the problem, resourcefulness is.** Accept what is. Leverage your downtime. Keep support flowing. Stir the pot. Befriend the current. Use every crisis. Foster a pervasive tone of gratitude. Double your dosage of daily inspiration. And keep pulling your triggers for joy. *Will you persevere through the low?*

6. **Productivity isn't the problem, priority is.** There's always enough time for what matters to you. Just ask anybody with kids. The secret is, you can't find the time. You can't even make the time. You have to steal it. From anywhere and everywhere. Like a time management ninja. *How can you turn waiting into working?*

7. **Capacity isn't the problem, complexity is.** When economy is on life support, the secret isn't necessarily pumping in new, different resources to your company. Instead, it's about new thinking and creative approaches to what you're already doing. *In which areas of your business can you create the most leverage?*

8. **Promotion isn't the problem, positioning is.** What you do to the product isn't as important as what happens in the mind of the prospect. The cool part is, every time somebody hears about you is one less time you have to spend money making people hear from you. *Whose headspace do you occupy?*

9. **Service isn't the problem, saturation is.** I don't want a bag. I don't want a receipt. I don't want to fill out an online survey for the chance to win a thousand dollars. And I don't want to sign up for your useless rewards program so you can spam me forever. Just give me the pumpkin latte and nobody gets hurt. *Are you serving or overserving?*

10. **Discovery isn't the problem, documentation is.** The best way to keep track of all the ideas in your head is to get them out of your head, onto paper and into a system that works for you. Otherwise your ideas will stay as ideas. Because if you don't write it down, it never happened. *Is everything you know written down somewhere?*
11. **Loyalty isn't the problem, love is.** When people fall out of love with your brand, you lose. To make loving you easy, you need to be a welcome oasis. A place of refuge, a place of belonging and a place of connection. Out heart the competition. *If your customers could give your company a hug, would they open their arms?*
12. **Innovation isn't the problem, invisibility is.** The upside to exposure is everything. And the greatest barrier to business success isn't stupidity – it's anonymity. That's what I tell my clients: No matter what product you sell, you don't need a marketing plan – they need a visibility plan. *How are you making people aware of you?*

REMEMBER: Most problems are other problems.

Keep your eye on the big picture.

The Art of Proof

I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri.

Affectionately known as, “The Show Me State.”

According to the state government homepage, the most widely known legend attributes the phrase to Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, who served in the United States House of Representatives from 1897 to 1903.

“I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have to show me.”

THAT’S THE REALITY: Even if you’re not from Missouri, you still need to show people the proof.

Customers, employees, bosses, fans, competitors – and of course, yourself.

Today we’re going to explore six ways to prove what matters:

1. **Criticism is proof of visibility.** I won’t pretend that negative feedback doesn’t hurt. It does. Every time. I’m not impervious to those feelings. When I get a message from a reader who thinks I’m spitting hot garbage, I take it personally. After all, I’m a person. And the persons who take things personally are the persons who make things better. Besides, if people aren’t reacting, you’re doing something wrong. May as well be winking in the dark. Personally, I’d rather be shot to the ground than not remarkable

enough to be a target. Sure beats being ignored. *When was the last time someone said you were out of your mind?*

2. **Doubt is proof of legitimacy.** Feeling like a fraud is a right of passage. It helps you get over yourself, helps you to stay over yourself and installs the proper humility required to win. Instead of trying to eradicate feelings of inadequacy, lean into the doubt. Override the disbelief by telling your face that you're enough. You'll discover that what you say to yourself when you have doubts about yourself determines how, when and if you make a name for yourself. Feeling like a fraud? Fantastic. That means you're doing something right. That means you're stretching. *When was the last time you questioned your own abilities?*

3. **Fear is proof of mattering.** In *The Courage To Write*, Ralph Keyes says, "If you're not scared, you're not writing." That's the cool part about fear: When you find the places that scare you, you find the work that needs to be done. In that respect, fear isn't a crisis – it's a compass. And if you have enough faith, you can use fear as a guide to where your heart belongs. It all hinges on your willingness to change your relationship to fear. To start greeting, bowing, hugging, investing and leveraging it – rather than hiding from it. *Are you brave enough to go after what you want?*

4. **Resistance is proof of rightness.** If the work is too easy, it might be the wrong work. As Steven Pressfield writes in *Do The Work*, "The more important an action is to our soul's evolution, the more resistance will feel toward pursuing it." The good news is, when you're willing to endure the period of difficulty that wipes out most of the competition, you don't just come out first – you come out focused. Because you picked the right work. Or maybe the right work picked you. Either way. *Are you willing to bleed for it?*

5. **Promiscuity is proof of life.** If you die a virgin, you did something wrong. And I'm not talking about sex. A virgin is simply someone who's untapped, uninitiated, uninformed and

underexposed. That's no way to live. As Henry Rollins wrote in *A Mad Dash*, "I want to make life run for its life. I want to be a pain in life's ass. I want life to celebrate the day I die. I want life to finally get a breather once I'm dead." That's the advantage of promiscuity: Your experiences turn into leveragable assets. *Will you end the innocence to begin the opportunity?*

6. **Struggle is proof of life.** A life of ups and ups is boring, uneducational and uninspiring. Besides, if nothing bad ever happens, you'll never know what good feels like. If nothing bad ever happens, you'll never learn how to cope. And if nothing bad ever happens, you'll never strengthen the muscle of resilience. Maybe it's time to paint yourself into a painful corner. To practice a little voluntary suffering. To put yourself in a position where you have no choice but to struggle. *Are you still trying to outsmart getting hurt?*

REMEMBER: If you want people to believe, you have to show them.

Practice proving what matters.

The Art of Radicalism

You've probably never heard of Gershon Legman.

He was the cultural critic who claimed to be the inventor of the famous phrase, "Make love, not war," at a lecture given at Ohio University in the early sixties.

And you've probably never heard of Penelope Rosemont, either.

She was the radical activist who popularized Gershon's phrase. Two years after his lecture, she printed thousands of buttons at the Solidarity Bookshop in Chicago, Illinois, and then distributed them at the Mother's Day Peace March.

THE POINT IS: I'm insanely jealous.

I should have grown up in the sixties, not the eighties.

But since I didn't have much choice in the matter, I've decided to reclaim my hippie roots and create a few radical slogans of my own:

1. **Break rules, not hearts.** When you break a rule for somebody, you create an act of flexibility in a moment of need. You demonstrate that at your company, every customer is the exception. And you prove that you're willing to lose something on the first interaction to guarantee a lifetime of loyalty. *When was the last time you went off script?*
2. **Conduct symphonies, not transactions.** Once on a weekend vacation, we stumbled into a charming art gallery. My girlfriend

ended up buying this fabulous beaded necklace at a great price. Later, while she was in the bathroom, the owner secretly asked me for her address so she could send Brittany a personalized, hand written thank you note. So I gave it to her. And by the time we returned home, the card had already arrived. That's not service – that's music. That's not a piece of jewelry – that's a story worth repeating. *Do your customers evangelize when you're gone?*

3. **Deliver inspiration, not packages.** During my cousin's wedding ceremony, there was a traditional blessing over the wine. But he and his bride also performed a new ritual: *Spilling a drop of wine*. According to Collin, this act recognizes those couples that are not given equal rights. Couples who aren't as fortunate as he and Robin. As such, it wasn't just a drop of wine – it was a drop of hope. And those of us lucky to witness that would never think about marital equality the same way again. That's when it occurred to me: Sometimes you have to make a mess to make a statement. I wonder whom you might inspire by getting your hands dirty. *What if you did that on camera?*
4. **Earn respect, not money.** Last month I designed a Brandtag Identity Collage for my client, Closeouts With Class. When I asked their chairman to share his thoughts on respect, here's what he said: "Respect buys loyalty. It makes your employees stay, makes your customers buy, makes your suppliers sell and makes your competitors drool." Respect is your baseline. And if you treat it as your intentional commitment, the incidental result (money) will eventually come. *Are you helping people feel more respected every time they deal with you?*
5. **Give gifts, not burdens.** If it doesn't change the recipient, it's not a gift. If you oblige people to reciprocate, it's not a gift. And if you make people work hard to get it, it's not a gift. What you give has to alter people. It has to fill their heart, not clutter their desk. Otherwise all you've done is add to the slush pile. Meanwhile, they end up with an office full of useless nouns. When it would have been smarter to give the gift of social

elevation, perhaps by giving them a front row seat to their own brilliance. That's what my friend Derek does. When any of his employees win – in any way – he goes out of his way to blog about it. *What gift are you famous for giving?*

6. **Inject soul, not machinery.** Customers need you to bring humanity to the moment. They need you show up, even when it's hard. Sadly, this is where smart companies blow it: They try to meet budget by outsourcing the human function. Instead of talking to human operators, customers get robots. Instead of interacting with desk agents, customers get kiosks. And instead of getting an actual email from real person, customers get autoresponders. Meanwhile, all their customers want is to be treated like people – by people. *Where are you sacrificing experiences for expenses?*

7. **Keep commitments, not secrets.** I give more than fifty presentations around the globe each year. And while I speak on a variety of topics to a wide range of industries, I never fail to spend the final few minutes of each talk on the topic commitment. Specifically, the use of a commitment device. That's a term I coined for something visual, tangible and palpable that reminds people that you're not going away. Personally, I use a nametag. And not just the sticker – the tattoo of that sticker on my body. Can't get more committed than that. I wonder what object you will employ to show people you're not going away. After all: When you commit with both feet, people don't just pay attention – they pay dividends. *What single act have you done every day for the past ten years?*

8. **Leave artifacts, not brochures.** An artifact is worth saving and sharing. It's a unique way to extend the influence of your work. And it's the souvenir you leave with people that has the potential to change and inspire them. At my favorite coffee spot, The Mud House, the owner makes latte art. When your cup of java is prepared, Casey carefully crafts a portrait, landscape or flower into the foam of your drink. It's a combination of foam, chocolate and cinnamon. And she even does custom orders, should there

be a particular image you'd prefer. That's an artifact: Done by hand, done with love. And your challenge is to figure out how to stop wasting paper and start leaving something behind that matters. *Does your fancy brochure actually influence customer decisions?*

9. **Send love letters, not pitches.** Love isn't a weakness – love is the bell that's always ringing. The question is: *Is your brand brave enough to hear it?* Simplifilm certainly is. They're a video production firm run by my friend Chris Johnson. When he finds a dream client, he doesn't assault them with an endless stream of marketing materials and sales literature. Instead, he sends them an email that reads: "We love you guys a ton. We wrote you a love letter. I know it's tacky, but we can't help ourselves. And although we have more than plenty of business, we want you. We believe what you do is vitally important." Once a prospect reads the love letter, it's pretty damn hard to resist. The point is: Your brand is measured by how you love. Lead with your heart. *Will you tell customers you love them before somebody else does?*

10. **Write books, not emails.** Many of the people in my mentoring program are fellow writers. And the most common complaint is, "I don't have enough time to finish my book." Interestingly, those same people have no problem spending two hours a day clearing their inbox. They have no time sitting around waiting for something meaningless to react to. If only they knew that emailing was nothing but a digital fidget. If only they knew that emailing, while a nice way to preserve the illusion of productivity, rarely changes the world. *Are you artfully creating constant distraction to prevent yourself from executing?*

11. **Build bridges, not barriers.** If it were just you, it would be hard to survive. If it were just you, there would be nobody to lean against. And if it were just you, there would be nobody to keep you on your toes. If you want to build a bridge to your competitors, treat them like partners. Take a hint from Progressive Insurance. Almost twenty years ago, they became

the first auto insurance company to provide its rates alongside the rates of other companies. That way, consumers could easily compare and decide – even if they didn't use Progressive. And today, they still lead the industry. Because they're willing to share in almost every direction. *How could you convert your competitors into a power source?*

REMEMBER: There's nothing wrong with being radical.

All that means is that you're true to your roots.

And maybe willing to make a few buttons.

The Art of Ritual

I'm obsessed with rituals.

Always have been.

And I attribute much of my ability to stay focused, grounded, sane, fueled, connected and on-purpose – both personally and professionally – to the rituals I practice on a regular basis.

That's just me. I'm the kind of person who can commit myself to something that matters, as long as there's a ritual involved.

HOWEVER: There's a key difference between ritual and routine.

Routine is the action.

Ritual is engaging in a conscious practice of mindfulness before taking the action.

Routine is the execution of ideas.

Ritual is the ceremonial acknowledgment of the importance of your ideas.

Routine is the activity.

Ritual is the intentional, purposeful and meaningful experience you layer on top of the activity to make it more worthwhile.

As Edward de Bono once said, "Ritual is a way of affirming that you belong. It's a definite act of defiance that most people are not prepared to make."

ASK YOURSELF: What rituals are you known for?

If you don't have an answer to that question yet, perhaps these thoughts will convince you to install a few new rituals into your life:

1. **Rituals dispel tediousness.** By introducing a purposeful moment of mindfulness, you amplify meaning. You excite yourself about entering into a process. And discipline becomes a victory unto itself. After all, it's not just about preparing yourself to do something, but feeling the experience the thing provides. That's how to create a sacred container around the action. It makes you feel more alive. And turns a mundane act into a memorable experience. For example, every day when I sit down to write – even if I'm not especially in the mood – I honor the creative process. The ritual is a combination of mindfulness breathing and spiritual invocation, something I learned from Eric Maisel's *Ten Zen Seconds*. The cool part is, no matter how tedious, unspectacular or monotonous my daily writing routine is, I can always count on my ritual to enhance that experience. *How will you prepare yourself to slog through what matters most?*
2. **Rituals preserve and release control.** Rituals create an act of control in a moment of chaos. They build the spiritual foundation needed to relieve anxiety. And they provide a sense of structure, even when the rest of your world crumbles – or is about to go to hell. For example, before walking on stage to give a presentation, I always disappear from the room for about fifteen minutes. Not because I'm nervous, but because I need time and space to get into the zone. Here's the ritual: I go into the bathroom and practice a combination deep breathing, mediation, affirmation and visualization, while listening to a selected playlist of inspiring music. It lowers my blood pressure, relaxes my pulse, oxygenates my blood, excites me about the upcoming performance and privately allows me to “get into character,” even though the role I'm playing is myself. Once that ritual is complete, I own the stage and the room is mine. *How does ritual positively affect your control tendencies?*

3. **Rituals reinforce the why.** The more you remind yourself of why you're committed to something, the less likely you are to back out. The more you introduce yourself to the meaning of what's happening, the less likely you are to lose motivation. And the more you infuse your process with a sense of deep purpose, the less likely you are to begrudgingly go about the activity. As Joseph Campbell reminds us, "Ritual prevents people from wondering, 'Why the hell am I doing this?'" That's why I take time each morning to revisit a few of my lists: Affirmations, goals, personal constitutions and the like. They fuel my why. They reinforce mattering. And they put my mind in touch with what I'm about to do. Your challenge is to craft a ritual that helps you dive deep into the motivation behind the path you're taking. *How will you focus your intentions?*

4. **Rituals build awareness.** I'm not big on measuring. In fact, I think what can't be measured, matters. However, there will always be certain things worth quantifying. For example, a ritual I began last year was to weigh myself on the same scale every Sunday morning – then to write down my weight on a yearly graph. Not because I wanted to lose weight, necessarily. It was more about controlling my portions, curbing my addictions, maintaining a healthier lifestyle, keeping myself accountable and confronting my bodily truth – and having quantifiable proof thereof. Now, depending on my diet each week, this ritual can be exciting or depressing, surprising or consistent. But it's always confrontational. And that's why I love it: There's no place to hide. Interestingly, after practicing this ritual for the last eighteen months, I've stayed in my target weight range, fit in my clothes better and even become more comfortable when I'm wearing no clothes at all. *What measuring rituals do you practice?*

5. **Rituals are tools of communication.** First, they communicate with yourself. That you're worth giving this moment to. Second, they communicate with the divine. That you're willing to honor the beauty of the present moment. Third, they communicate with other people. That they're worth pausing for. And fourth, you communicate with the world. That it's worth slowing down and paying attention to. That's what first attracted me to yoga:

The practice of *namaste*, or, “the spirit in me honors the spirit in you.” That’s exactly what you communicate when you ritualize your life: Honor, spirit and respect. And even if nobody notices but you, the accumulation of those daily rituals will slowly begin to unravel a deeper significance in your daily life. *What do people think when they hear your life speak?*

REMEMBER: Routines are nice, but rituals are necessary.

They turn duty into celebration.

They turn tedium into meaning.

They turn disconnected events into an ongoing story.

They preserve the sanctity of your being.

Life without ritual, isn’t.

The Art of Scale

Not everything was built to be bigger.

Some things are best left unscaled.

Otherwise you end up with a bloated, unapproachable brand that people ignore.

BUT THAT'S THE PROBLEM: Organizations are treating scaling like panacea.

Computer networks, I understand. You have to expand to cope with increased use.

But when it comes to the human side of business, when it comes to treating people like people, keeping things small is more profitable in the long wrong.

Today we're going to explore a lit of things you can't scale:

1. **You can't scale interaction.** Engage with swift responsiveness, nonstop gratitude, unexpected honesty, exquisite playfulness and loving unfairness. Those aren't just interactions – they're social gifts. And they change the recipient. *Are you in business to sell a product or to become known for a unique way of interacting with the world?*
2. **You can't scale art.** As soon as you bastardize something into a system, a process or a factory, it stops being art and starts becoming a commodity. Not everything can be comfortably

quantified. And what can't be measured, matters. *Are you trying to compartmentalize something just to preserve your sense of control?*

3. **You can't scale yourself.** Why would want to? Small means nimble. Small means you can engage with customers directly and personally. Small means you can respond to changing needs immediately. And you can take risks without the pressure to remain tragically predictable. *Are you aiming for bigness or greatness?*
4. **You can't scale unity.** Forcing employees from ten different countries to wake up in the middle of the night and attend a webinar just to meet budget is an insult. And it's not the same, either. Outsourcing the human function fails. *Do you need to conduct another sterile, boring and impersonal meeting with the people who matter most?*
5. **You can't scale connection.** If you want your interactions to reduce the distance between people, to enhance the personal bond you have with them, go analog. At least some of the time. Look people in the eye and talk to them with your mouth. Face to face is making a comeback. *Will you hop on the bandwagon?*
6. **You can't scale intimacy.** Love is not something we do to each other; love is what is present when there are not two. If you want touch everything around you, if you want secure a spot in people's head, lead with your heart. Be touchy feely. It never goes out of style. *What do you usually choose instead of love?*
7. **You can't scale soul.** Bringing intense humanity to the moment requires a deployment of naked personhood. It's risky. It's vulnerable. It's scary. But that's the only experience people will use to form an impression of you: How they feel about themselves when they're around you. *How much soul equity do you own?*

8. **You can't scale contact.** Sending mass emails makes people feel small, unseen and nonessential. Plus the obsession with open rates will drive you crazy. Instead of spamming the world, start a blog. Post daily as if you were having a conversation with to one person. The people who matter will find you. *What did you write today?*

9. **You can't scale charm.** Magnetism pivots on the fulcrum point of better. It all depends on how you leave people: Alive? Believing? Breathless? Confident? Elevated? Faithful? Honored? Infected? Refreshed? Relieved? The choice is yours. *When you walk out of a room, how does it change?*

REMEMBER: If size mattered, the dinosaurs would still be around.

Scalability is highly overrated.

Stay small and win big.

The Art of Substitute

When you substitute, you rob the customer.

When you substitute, you shoot yourself in the foot.

When you substitute, you demonstrate a lack of commitment.

Today we're going to explore five substitutions that don't work, along with what you can execute instead:

1. **Copy is not a substitute for care.** Just because your marketing department whipped up a clever statement about security and smeared it all over your collateral materials doesn't mean customers feel seen, safe and heard. Caring is a way of thinking, a way of speaking and a way of being that reminds people that you bother to bother, every single day. Like my financial planner. When the stock market tanked, she sent me a personal letter explaining three things: A simple summary of current market conditions, reassurance that no matter what happened, she would handle my assets ethically, professionally and wisely; and finally, an invitation for a personal meeting at her office to explain anything further. Wow. *Does the brainless disclaimer at the end of your emails make customers feel safe or executives feel protected?*
2. **Passion is not a substitute for reality.** That's great if you love your product more than life itself. But if you want to make money, there has to be an intersection between your obsession and the marketplace need. If you want to make history, you have to solve a problem that's real, urgent, pervasive and expensive. Otherwise you'll be passionately irrelevant. For example, people use the Internet to solve a problem. That's the number one thing

typed into Google: A question. How do you hunt elk? How do you write a book? How do you start your own membership website? How do you successfully stalk your ex-girlfriend on Facebook with her finding out? That's why it works. *Are you making something useful or just making something?*

3. **Information is not a substitute for interaction.** Access to knowledge is nice, but access to each other is necessary. That's what customers crave, come back for and tell their friends about: How interacting with you makes them feel. This is the core value that your brand delivers. And if you're not making a conscious effort to deliver meaningful interactions in *addition* to helpful information, customers will view you as a commodity. I'm reminded of the website, www.discussingcooking.com. They know that their users don't just want recipes. They also want to learn what others thought about the recipe, what ingredients they added, what spices they used, what side they paired it with, what wine goes with it and what their families thought about it. In short: They want to become better cooks, not just better at following directions. *How does your brand enable connection?*

4. **Celebrity is not a substitute for credibility.** Just because people recognize your name doesn't mean they see any promise attached to it. And just because your hilarious video went viral doesn't mean you're going to get hired. Credibility comes from creating an unquestionable knowledge base. Credibility comes from establishing a zone of trust around you. And credibility comes from building a consistent timeline of execution. Crystal Pepsi, for example, was remarkable, but irrelevant. It was nice, but not necessary. That's the trap many organizations fall victim to: Being remarkable for the sake of being remarkable. *Do you truly offer meaningful uniqueness?*

5. **Strategy is not a substitute for execution.** Instead of holding a meeting before the meeting to prepare for the deployment of your plan so you can formulate a strategy to start the initial stages of brainstorming for your pre-launch initiative, just go. Just start something. Stop planning. Stop talking. Take some

initiative and ship something that matters. Even if you're not ready. Even if the final product isn't perfect. Forget about "ready, aim, fire!" and consider, "try, listen, leverage!" Personally, I am geographically impotent. Which isn't always a bad thing. Sometimes you have to lose your way to find your home. But personally, I can't imagine living in a world where you can't get lost. Sometimes you have to stop planning and start doing. *What are you waiting for?*

REMEMBER: Substitution is the shortcut that actually takes longer.

Don't buy into the lie that you can cut corners to save a few bucks or a few minutes.

The Art of Therefore

Few ideas in history have been more widely repeated, debated and dissected than the following three words:

“Cogito ergo sum.”

This was the philosophy of Rene Descartes. *I think therefore I am.*

THE GOOD NEWS IS: I am not going to attempt to debate this philosophy.

Instead, I've adopted Rene Descartes' formula and developed a few rationalist philosophies of my own:

1. **I write therefore I know.** Until you write it out, you don't know what you know. Until you write it out, you don't know how you feel. And until you write it out, you don't know what you believe. That's the true power of the pen: *Clarification*. The blank page is nothing but an electronic mirror. If you're not standing naked before it on a regular basis, you'll never know who you are. And if you're still clutching onto the excuse that you're not a writer, wake up and smell the ink. Writing is an extension of thinking. We're all writers. Every last one of us. Some just have more practice than others. *What did you write today?*
2. **I deliver therefore I earn.** The person who hires you put their ass on the line. They don't want to look stupid. They don't want to lose their job. They just want you to come through. Here's how: First, establish expectational clarity. Leave no room for doubt what is going to happen. Second, build in multiple points

of overdelivery. Blow people away with your consistency. And third, telegraph your reliability. In the moments when you do deliver, remind people that you did exactly as – or better than – promised. *How do you ensure your capacity to deliver?*

3. **I polarize therefore I monetize.** Anything worth doing is worth being attacked for. But if everybody loves your brand, you're doing something wrong. If everybody loves your brand, you're not risking enough. And if everybody loves your brand, you're not doing the work that matters. Volume trumps popularity. It doesn't matter if everybody likes you – it matters if everybody remembers you. Try creating something worth being criticized. Grind the gears a little. Just make sure you're not doing so solely for the sake of being criticized. Impure motive stains artistic dividends. *Are your monkey wrenches well intentioned?*
4. **I reflect therefore I grow.** Not everybody reflects. Some people don't value reflection. Some prefer not to dwell on the past. And some people simply aren't as introspective as others. What's more, school never teaches us to reflect – only to solve the next problem, take the test, accept the grade and move on. The problem with this is, without analyzing the past we can never design the way forward. And without an understanding who we've become, we'll never learn who we need to be. *Are you willing to introduce a ritual of reflection into your regular schedule?*
5. **I commit therefore I attract.** Jumping is life's most terrifying verb. Especially when you have no idea what the hell you're doing. The advantage is, when you choose to play for keeps, you show to the world that your work is more than just an expensive hobby. And for some strange cosmic reason, that world doesn't just pay attention – it pays dividends. Sometimes in the form of money. Sometimes in the form of opportunity. But always in the currency of prosperity. But you have to jump. *How much longer can you afford to be an amateur?*

6. **I thank therefore I am.** Tax your heart as it will, life is still pretty damn impressive. And you survive because of the energy you devote to being grateful for it. That's what my parents taught me: *Thanking is not a chore*. If you're still breathing, you have no right to take a break from being grateful. And why would you, anyway? You are never more alive than when you are thanking. To give thanks is to touch the center of joy. To give thanks is to make love to the present moment. And to give thanks is to revel in life as it is. As Jean Baptiste Massieu once said, "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." *Who have you thanked today?*

7. **I breathe therefore I overcome.** When you spend a week in the hospital breathing through a chest tube, your relationship with your breath changes. You start to learn that every anxiety is another chance to inhale. And you start to learn that there are few things in life you can't breathe your way through. But it's not about making the pain go away – it's about changing your relationship to the experience of it. Because when you own your breath, nobody can steal your peace. Fast heart, slow lungs. *How do you activate the force of calm in a time of turmoil?*

8. **I laugh therefore I conquer.** It's impossible to be at the mercy of something you're willing to laugh at. And it's easy to get over things once you figure out what's funny about them. Not that humor trivializes your tribulations. You can't outsmart getting hurt. But when you laugh your way through the struggle, every step is a spark that defies the darkness. That's one of the coping skills they don't teach in school. And it's too bad, because humor is the great diffuser and the ultimate overcomer. *What is your diversion from despair?*

9. **I persist therefore I prosper.** I started my company the day I graduated college. A year later, I wanted to quit. I wanted to bag the biz and get a real job. I even toyed with the idea of applying to grad school. But I also reassured myself that even when a dusting of despair settled in, not every part of me wanted to give up. So I persisted. And now I'm prospering. That's how you sustain your gaze to the top of the hill: By not abandoning yourself during

trying times. Besides, if wasn't hard – it wouldn't be worth it. Persistence is hope with legs. *Are you all laced up?*

10. **I teach therefore I sell.** Teaching means introducing your customers to new things. Helping them feel more connected to the front edge of culture. Teaching means sending a continuous flow of education. Expanding the customer's thinking, growing their knowledge base and stretching their brains. Where's your classroom? Stop giving sales pitches and start delivering lesson plans. Treat customers as students who attend your class, not as people who pay your commission. *How are you positioning yourself as a teacher?*

11. **I embody therefore I lead.** There are four ways to influence people: Through what you think, what you say, what you do or who you are. If you truly want to lead, aim for the latter. Turn your life into a walking translation of the vision you hope to create, and people will follow. Close the gap between your onstage performance and backstage reality, and people will follow. Make the message you preach the dominant reality of your life, and people will follow. *What do people hear when they listen to your life speak?*

12. **I mirror therefore I elevate.** Most of we do has no witness. And our lives go unnoticed if nobody takes the time to notice, reflect and affirm our truth. That's why it's so essential to be a mirror, to be a stand for people's greatness. When you give them a front row seat to their own brilliance, you give the priceless gift of visibility. You give them something they can't see for themselves. And if you're lucky, they change forever. That's how you elevate someone. *What's your strategy for leaving people better?*

13. **I focus therefore I respect.** Multitasking removes you to another place. It annihilates the present moment and it always disrespects somebody. Plus, it's clinically been proven to lower productivity. The problem is, it's become the new normal. We've plunged into an ecosystem of interruption, and there's no turning

back. But here's what you can do: Become a living statement of focus. Stop searching for something better to interact with. When you're with people – really be with people. Give them all of you. Nothing could be more respectful. *Who are you accidentally disrespecting with this action?*

14. **I publish therefore I resonate.** In addition to being a writer, you're also a publisher. Not because you work in a skyscraper. Not because you wear fancy suits. And not because you have big meetings with important people. You're a publisher because you make things public. And if you're smart enough to build a platform rooted in respect, permission and value, you will never again have to worry about winking in the dark. Your voice will always be heard. But only if you have the will to ship. Only if you make the commitment to pressing the publish button, every single day. *How many bylines has your name accumulated?*

15. **I shove therefore I love.** To shove is to applaud someone's risk, elevate someone's hope, disrupt someone's inertia and provoke someone's decision. To shove is to give someone a permission slip, kindle someone's awesomeness and deliver someone's encouragement. To shove is to help someone fall in love with himself, show someone what he can't see for himself and believe in someone more than he believes in himself. And to shove is to disturb someone into taking action on what matters, to adamantly refuse to let someone stay where he is and to call someone on the carpet when mediocrity descends. In short: To shove people is to love people. You push them to be brave. Others did it for me. And I pay forward the favor all the time. I bet someone in your life could use a good shove. *How many shove moments have you overlook?*

16. **I disrupt therefore I inspire.** A great leader evokes emotion. She interrupts the quiet, unsettles the peace and upsets the mental landscape. A great leader makes a ruckus by asking disturbing questions instead of placating the masses by mindlessly accepting answers. The hard part is, all of these things are unreasonable. But that's the whole point. Nobody ever changed the world by

keeping their head down. Success requires crazy. Heaps of it. Put your teaspoons away. If you really want to change the world – break out the shovels and start stockpiling insanity. *When was the last time you went looking for trouble?*

17. **I contribute therefore I matter.** Insignificance is a terrifying proposition because the human need to feel valuable to the world runs deeper than anything. Fortunately, you don't have to do something gargantuan to matter. Maybe your contribution is being a consistent source of possibility for your family. Maybe your contribution is being an anchor of hope for your employees. Maybe your contribution is being an unconditional servant of truth for your readers. Nothing against ending world hunger. But never overlook the value of mattering in your own backyard first. *Whose world are you necessary to?*

18. **I burn therefore I beguile.** Influence is easy to overcomplicate. Changing hearts and minds isn't about power persuasion and body language manipulation. It's simple: People need to see that you are possessed. They need to feel the flame every time they interact with you. And they need to walk away better, infected with something that wasn't there before. Instead of attending another seminar on the power of nonverbal behavior, take a page from Richard Pryor's playbook: Set yourself on fire. People will come from miles just to watch you burn. *Do you interact with flaming intensity?*

REMEMBER: You don't have to live in 17th Century France to be a philosopher.

Consider writing your own rationalist list.

Make Descartes proud.

The Art of Word

There is a language crisis going on.

Buzzwords are so abundant in our professional vocabularies, I'm pretty sure they're getting their own channel on Oprah Network.

HERE'S THE REALITY: Language that limits, loses.

Today we're going to explore a collection of dangerous words, their real definitions and a few suggestions for what you can focus on instead:

1. **Advertising is just a word for people who don't have enough friends.** Instead of interrupting customers with annoying, tree-killing drivel that's going to be ignored and forgotten, create an act. A moment that deepens the emotional connection over time. Otherwise prospects will take their attention elsewhere. *Do your interactions matter?*
2. **Aspiring is just a word for people who don't want to commit with both feet.** Instead of shirking the responsibility to go full time and go pro, stop waiting to be who you are. Life doesn't have a preheat setting – you're either on or you're off. Otherwise you'll never become what you need to become. *Are you still amateur?*
3. **Compliance is just a word for people who want you to edit yourself.** Instead of putting a ban on individual expression, give people permission to let their personal brand shine. Petition them to inject personality everywhere. Otherwise employees

will take their loyalties elsewhere. *Who are you trying to make just like you?*

4. **Fearless is just a word for people who are afraid to be human.** Instead of ignoring reality and pretending like nothing scares you, accept fear as a regular part of the life experience. Instead of fighting with it – bow to it. Otherwise you'll never reach your full potential. *Are you ignoring your fears or investing them?*
5. **Feedback is just a word for people who don't trust their voice.** Instead of subjecting yourself to unsolicited discouragement from people who don't matter, stick your fingers in your ears. Ignore everybody. Otherwise one piece of information will fill your entire identity screen. *How will you stay on the path of your own heart?*
6. **Hopefully is just a word for people who lack faith.** Instead of using negative, acquiescent language that cripples your ability to win, speak in a way that leaves people no option but to believe you. Otherwise the things you hope for will never turn into the things you actually experience. *Are you wishing your life away?*
7. **Impossible is just a word for people who choose not to believe.** Instead of assuming that every obstacle is insurmountable, dive deep into the reservoir of human potential. Trust your abilities. Otherwise you'll never tap into the resources available. *Are you willing to greet the resistance with a welcoming heart?*
8. **Interesting is just a word for people who are afraid to say how they really feel.** Instead of being so damn diplomatic, give the truth a shot. Be completely honest where most people would say nothing. Otherwise the world will start to expect sugarcoating with every message you deliver. *How are you branding your honesty?*
9. **Professional is just a word for people who seek sanitize the soul out of business.** Instead of delivering emotionless, forgettable non-service, bring your humanity to the moment. Put heart first.

Otherwise customers will take their business elsewhere. *When does the feeling formality keep you from communicating freely?*

10. Recession is just a word for people who sleep too much.

Instead of crossing your fingers and praying that the winds of opportunity will fill your sails, get up one hour earlier and take daily massive action toward what you want. Otherwise your dreams will stay dreams forever. *What consumes your time but isn't making you any money?*

11. Ready is just a word for people who are afraid to jump.

Instead of waiting for the perfect moment when your strategic plan is in total alignment with your personal vision statement, just go. Take the plunge. Otherwise you'll trap yourself on the treadmill of preparation forever. *What is waiting getting in the way of?*

REMEMBER: When you limit your language, you limit your life.

Don't get sucked into the buzzword vortex.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Ginsberg is an author, speaker, consultant, mentor, publisher, award-winning blogger & one smoking hot piece of brain candy. He also wears a nametag 24-7. Even to bed.