

The Nametag Manifesto

By Scott Ginsberg

“Everyone should wear nametags, all the time, everywhere, forever.”

That’s my thesis, philosophy, dangerous idea and theory of the universe.

My name is Scott, and I’ve been wearing a nametag for past four thousand days.

And after traveling to hundreds of cities, a dozen countries, four continents, meeting tens of thousands of people, constant experimentation and observation, building a enterprise and writing a dozen books in the process, I believe, with all my heart, that the societal implications of wearing nametags could change everything.

This is my manifesto:

1. The End of Strangers

If everybody wears nametags, there is a higher overall intimacy level.

People no longer resort to using impersonal name substitutes like buddy, ace, boss, sport, dude, chief or hey you. Instead, through the basic unit of self-disclosure, we reduce the social distance between each other. We don't have to snap our fingers to get someone's attention. We just say their name and start engaging.

The nametag is a conversational entry point. It's an interactional accelerator. Permission is granted, socialization ensue and the lines of communication are sparked open.

Now, we're not just amicable strangers – we're sharing our humanity with each other. We don't have to wait to warm up to each other. We can just cut the crap and connect.

Nametags humanize us. They enable a tightly knit social fabric. They make it easier to treat each other with dignity, respect and compassion. And they give us permission to reveal ourselves to each other quickly, openly and honestly.

As a result, they reinforce the understanding that we're all one, and that hurting another individual is no different than hurting ourselves. So we stop. Instead of a call to arms, it's a call to connect.

If everybody wears nametags, no more fighting, no more intolerance and no more disrespect.

2. The End of Exclusion

If everybody wears nametags, there is an overarching sense of social belonging.

Now, everyone belongs everywhere. Now, everyone fits in everywhere. And now, everyone is welcomed and nobody is alienated. People are citizens of the world instead of outsiders to each other's worlds.

We're united through a common humanity. We're positioned to receive the gift of each other. Instead of merely recognizing and accepting each other's differences, now we can actually celebrate them. We can respect everybody's right to be.

And as we proudly wear our truth on our chest, we can view each other's self-assurance as an inspiration – not a liability.

If everybody wears nametags, no more segregation, no more loneliness and no more outsidersness.

3. The End of Anonymity

If everybody wears nametags, nobody is winking in the dark.

Namelessness ceases to exist. Everyone feels seen. Everyone feels witnessed. Nobody is given the chance to be forgotten. We are promiscuous with the deliverance of psychological visibility. And we elevate each other by assuring that nobody's life goes unnoticed, unaffirmed or misunderstood.

This is especially helpful for Alzheimer's sufferers, memory loss patients and people battling dementia or multiple personality disorder. Nametags are reminders, visual cues and memory triggers. They work because our brains store words and images easier than a string of seemingly unconnected numbers.

Point being, most what we do has no witness. But it is the sum of our witnesses that creates the complete picture of who we are. By wearing nametags, we now treat everyone we encounter with a spirit of acknowledgement. We give the gift of namaste.

If everybody wears nametags, no more invisibility, no more insignificance and no more nameless faces in the crowd.

4. The End of Human Commoditization

If everybody wears nametags, it's impossible to put each other into boxes.

We no longer have to address each other by a label, job, condition, color, ethnicity or role. We simply say the name and honor the truth instead of degenerating into depersonalization. We unite through personhood, not position or preference.

Nametags enable a greater sense of comfort, connection and humanity in our relationships. They remind us to treat people like people. They enable us to make a name for ourselves before anyone else gets a chance to.

Our answer to the question, “What do you see when you see people?” has changed forever. Now, we see humanity before statistics, personality before position and individuality before industry. We stop viewing certain people as a separate category of people, and start seeing everybody as a member of the same family.

They're humans, just like us. In fact, they are us. And we are them.

If everybody wears nametags, no more judgmentalism, no more hierarchy and no more robbing people of their humanity.

5. The End of Social Conflict

If everybody wears nametag, the awkwardness goes away.

The cost of interaction approaches zero. We feel more comfortable engaging because we have nothing to lose. Never again do we have to work down the hall or live down the street from people – for years at a time – without knowing their name.

It's simple: Conflict leads to uncertainty, which leads to anxiety, which leads to avoidance.

But with nametags, the ice is never not broken. Guesswork is a thing of the past.

Now, all first impressions are good impressions. We've sidestepped the entire spectrum of social awkwardness that stems from not knowing people's names. And this frees us to focus on the conversation at hand – instead of the silent dialogue of self-consciousness.

We never have to wonder who anybody is. We can connect faster, better and truer.

If everybody wears nametags, no more shyness, no more avoidance behavior and no more social blunders.

6. The End of Dishonesty

If everybody wears nametags, untruthfulness becomes extremely difficult.

We're all lie detectors. Instead of manipulating the way other people see us, now, what we see is what we get, despite our best efforts to obscure the truth.

We've returned to a world without a backstage. We're always going to be known for what we're about to do. And as such, we start choosing smarter.

Now we can stop racking our brains trying to remember what we told and to whom. Now we can use our brains for more creative and valuable functions. Like listening and sharing and connecting and feeling.

If everybody wears nametags, no more dishonorable action, no more lying and no more aliases.

7. The End of Hesitation

If everybody wears nametags, we lower the threat level.

People are skeptical and looking for a reason not to trust us. And in world driven by fear, anything we can do to verify ourselves immediately is always worthwhile.

But with nametags, we don't have to start with a negative balance when meeting people. There's no deficit position. With every nametag, we take another brick out of the wall. We just give ourselves away and watch the world relax.

We've disqualified ourselves from people's fear. As an act of generosity, nametags relax already overloaded brains, pamper people's memories and free up our heads to focus on what matters.

Nametags change the interaction with homeless people, beggars and other marginalized members of society. Now, people have an easy opening. A chance to engage. A reciprocal and instant connection that increases the chance of getting helped, donations and care.

Nametags are the invitation for personalization. They're the ultimate human shortcut.

If everybody wears nametags, no more mistrust, no more skepticism and no more terror alerts.

8. The End of Disengagement

If everybody wears nametags, we build social capital.

Nametags contribute to our reserve of personal bonds and fellowship. They nurture connectedness and increase the supply of social opportunities. And because social capital is built through the hundreds of little actions we take every day, every encounter we have builds trust just a little more.

That's how reciprocity forms. We build a sense of community. Life is richer because we share it with each other. And the casual interactions – upon which thriving communities and neighborhoods used to be based – are back in full swing.

By reducing neighborly distance, we nurture connectedness and make people our primary source of entertainment and support. And in those moments when we need to fight, battle through illness or recover from loss, we can withdraw from the social capital account we've been building through each of these interaction.

If everybody wears nametags, no more isolation, no more back fences and no more separateness.

9. The End of Incivility

If everybody wears nametags, we are instantly and consistently accountable.

With nametags, we lack constant invitations for selfish behavior. There's less incentive to get away with bad behavior, because there are always people watching to positively modify our behavior through healthy doses of social pressure.

With nametags, we give others the priceless gift of security by letting them know who they're dealing with. That's why we get better service from employees and better customers for those employees. Because there's nothing to hide behind. Our identity is always verified. There's a social construct that forces us to sign our work and take a stand for our identity.

Now, there's no temptation to act from a position of anonymity. Nametags paint us into more accountable corners. They're microstructures we put into place to limit ourselves to only practicing honorable action. Nametags take away all our choices. They permanently position us in situations where acting in accordance with our values is the only plausible course of action. The structure installed bankrupts bad behavior.

It's social contract. We resign it every day. And we wear it on our chest for all to see, public, so we can't run away from it. When you sign your name to it, you own it.

It's accountability through attribution. By directly tying our actions to our real identity, by connecting the individual to what they do – and making that connection explicit to the rest of the community – we make better decisions. We think before acting. We consider the potential repercussions that arise from direct accountability.

If everybody wears nametags, no more inconsistency, no more road rage and no more social coarseness.

10. The End of Cultural Barriers

If everybody wears nametags, we all speak the same language.

It's a passport. A guest pass that makes us welcomed everywhere. With a nametag, we're friends with everybody everywhere, all the time, forever. Especially when you realize that everybody is the same everywhere, all the time, forever.

This enables a positive, personal and memorable experience with people of different cultures, thus crushing stereotypes and assumptions thereof.

Ultimately, nametags build bridges to people who don't speak your language. It's a symbol of peace, gesture of hospitality and a translator in the global language of humanity.

It proves that we all one, we're all in this together and we're all the same.

If everybody wears nametags, no more unnecessary wars, no more immigration laws and no more animosity.

11. The End of Disconnectedness

If everybody wears nametags, we're all plugged into the social network.

A nametag is an act of humanity in a moment of distance. And these acts allow us to feel a little more connected. Now, we have a constant spark for human contact. We are plugged in without a cord or a signal. We've found a way to mitigate loneliness and interact with people face to face in a way that actually resonates with their soul, not just their homepage.

This is the real social network. No matter where you go, you never have to feel alone for more than a moment. Because there are always people who know your name; there are always people whose names you know. It's a constant reminder that nobody is the odd one out.

We don't need friend requests because we're all in this together, always, forever.

If everybody wears nametags, no more fear of missing out, no more eating alone and no more cliques.

12. The End of Selfishness

If everybody wears nametags, we experience mass generosity.

It's all about bringing our humanity to the moment. Giving ourselves away. Wearing a nametag is a micropractice in the art of sacrificing. It's an act of vulnerability. We open ourselves and become available and accessible to people. If they need help, they call your name. If not, at least they're comforted by the idea that you're there.

Nametags change our posture. Especially when we're present at an event or aware of someone's actions: It's easier for victims to get help in emergency situations, since bystanders would usually not offer assistance and intervene with strangers.

But that's the thing: Now we're not strangers anymore. We can't be. And our connection to each other fosters a greater sense of connection and community, which makes it harder to stand mute while someone we know is suffering. Now we can solve problems for each other and with each other. We've shifted from an apathetic population of isolated meat sacks into one big transcontinental cheerleading squad.

If everybody wears nametags, no more bystander behavior, no more diffusion of involvement and no more suffering.

13. The End of Neglect

If everybody wears nametags, we practice deeper mindfulness.

We stay focused on the present moment. We find our center of gravity quicker and easier. The bell of awareness always rings, and the nametag helps us hear it. Instead of trudging along in a diminished state of awareness, we keep our eyes open to the magic of life.

We have to. People are using our names everywhere. Nobody can look at their phone for more than a few minutes before being joyfully greeted by a friend nearby.

The nametag is an alarm clock without a snooze button. While wearing it, we're more likely to pay attention to our surroundings, which prevents us from making minor errors that have major consequences. Instead of frail, empty interactions when we're hungry, hurried and frustrated, now we're more conscious of our behavior around others.

If everybody wears nametags, no more absentmindedness, anticipation or scatterbraining.

14. The End of Mass Formality

If everybody wears nametags, personal is the new professional.

Instead of allowing the feeling of formality to keep us from communicating fully and freely, now we can address each other personally. As people.

Not as objects, integers, trophies, machines, categories, dollar signs, commodities, abstract entities, means to an end, bloodless statistical entities or impersonal facets of production. *People.*

We talk friendly. We talk how people talk. We ante up the emotional temperature instead of sacrificing interpersonal value on the altar of professionalism. Nametags make this moment, right now, a more humane, pleasant passing of time. And it helps us forget about the fact that eventually, we are all going to die.

If everybody wears nametags, no more impersonalness, no more outdated formalities and no more robotic communication.

15. The End of Hierarchy

If everybody wears nametags, greater equality ensues.

When only employees wore nametags, we treated them in a patronizing way. We viewed them as servants to do our beer battered bidding, not as fellow human beings stumbling through this world trying to figure out who the hell they are.

But now we're all on equal footing. Everybody is tagged. And nobody can act condescending to each other because we're all the same. There are no more feelings of you serving me, I'm the customer you're the employee – we're just here, together, as two human beings.

Nobody is indebted to each other. We communicate citizen-to-citizen, peer-to-peer – as opposed to expert to follower or ruler to servant. Communication is horizontal, not vertical, and thus, more reciprocal. It's not about access to information, but access to each other.

If everybody wears nametags, no more inequality, no more bureaucratic layers and no more patronizing.

16. The End of Entitlement

If everybody wears nametags, deeper humility results.

Instead of arrogantly assuming everybody already knows us – or that we're too important, too busy and too entitled to be approachable – nametags ground us.

Now, they level the playing field so nobody is too good to reveal themselves.

Nametags engender a greater sense of social warmth, as opposed to separating people by whether or not their job function or role requires them to publicly identify themselves.

If everybody wears nametags, no more us versus them, no more power struggles and no more unfairness.

17. The End of Insecurity

If everybody wears nametags, worldwide confidence increases.

We're all valuable enough to have a name, have an identity and have a voice. And we don't feel silly, because everyone else wears a nametag too.

Instead of being left out of the club, now we all feel like we matter. There is an overall increase in self-esteem and self-worth.

Ultimately, the more we practice being okay with ourselves, feeling at home in our own skin – and the more we have an audience to watch us – the more we know and like who we are. Life without witness, isn't.

If everybody wears nametags, no more insignificance, no more complexes about mattering and no more embarrassment.

18. The End of Discrimination

If everybody wears nametags, cultural understanding spreads.

As humans, we tend to avoid what we don't understand. But knowing the name of someone – especially from another ethnicity, race or culture – not only brings us closer to them, but also makes us more understanding of who they are as a person and what brought them where we find them.

It's an unmasking.

And because diversity is respecting people's right to be, while honoring that same right in ourselves, nametags bridge connections across different cultures. They break silence and break walls, because knowing each other's names overrules the silent, lazy judgments we would otherwise make about them in the absence of knowing their real identity.

Now, it's harder to treat people with disrespect. We're reminded that they're a person with a name. And only through knowing a human's name can you learn about the heart beating behind it.

No longer do we avoid contact with people who aren't like us for fear of social contamination. No longer do we hold ourselves hostage by our own intolerance.

If everybody wears nametags, no more hatred, no more judgments and no more bigotry.

That's my theory of the universe.

My name is Scott.

I wear a nametag every day.

And here's what it says:

I am a human being. I am a citizen of the world. And I belong everywhere. I believe consistency pays, commitment counts and that anonymity is bankruptcy. But I also believe that mattering is a choice, that friendly costs nothing, but changes everything. And that ideas are free, but only execution is priceless.

Thanks for being my friend.

Tag, you're it!

@nametagscott