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Friendly Costs Nothing, But Changes Everything

The Profitability of Treating People Like People

By Scott Ginsberg

When I started wearing a nametag everyday, I wasn't trying to make money – I was trying to make a point.

Friendly doesn't cost anything – but it changes everything.

That was the stand. That was the movement I was starting. And to my delight, people proved me right. Thousands of them. All around the world.

Two years later, I started my first company.
Three years later, I published my first book.
Five years later, I earned my first profit.

All from wearing a nametag.

Four thousand days, thirteen books and seven hundred speeches later, I still believe that friendly is the new professional.

And yet, millions of people on a daily basis are working overtime to prove me wrong. They're too focused on their own drama, their own company policies their own egos to see how easy it really is to be friendly.

Because they're too busy being professional.

Professional is just a word for brands that seek sanitize the soul out of business.

Professional is an excuse for delivering emotionless, forgettable non-service.

Professional is an altar on which personal connection is sacrificed.

We can't allow the feeling of formality keep us from communicating freely.

We need to speak with soul. To talk like people talk.

That's worth noticing.

This is a 150-day digital devotional about how, why and when friendly pays.

1. **Affirm, don't contract.** When you do what you love, the hatred will follow. That's not fair either. Next time someone lashes out at you because they know they're not doing what they love, say this: "I'm so glad you shared that with me. Feedback like yours inspires the hell out of me." *How are you laying a foundation of affirmation with people who are hard to thank?*

2. **Allow customers to write their own ticket.** My friend Marc runs weekend retreats for small business owners. At the end of his seminars, he literally passes around a hat and asks people to pay an amount commensurate with the value they received. It's a risky pricing model, but Marc has conducted over one hundred of these retreats, every year, for the past twenty years. Lesson learned: Risky pricing lead to regular profits. Your challenge is to enable your customers to take your price into their own hands. Yes, this practice requires tremendous self-trust and confidence in your own value. And it's not for everybody. But that's the cool part about vulnerability: It doesn't just enable profitability – but also builds long-term viability. Transfer control to the customer, transfer money to your bank account. Forever. *What if your customers wrote your price tags?*

- 3. Allow people to have their fingerprint on the solution.** Then, when it does, as opposed to responding reflexively with a rigid, canned fee, try using language like this: “With every engagement and every client, there are a number of variables that affect your final investment. Let’s look at what’s important to you and what’s important to me, and we can create a fee agreement that honors both of us.” In short: Grow bigger ears. Because if salespeople would simply ask smart questions and shut the hell up, customers would sell themselves the entire time. My suggestion: Instead of being exhaustingly argumentative, be strategically inquisitive. Then, oxygenate the conversation by allowing the silence to hold you a little while longer. Give yourself a moment to let your customer’s words wash over you. In so doing, long silence tells people that what they said is important. It communicates that their words have weight and deserve their own space before being banished by a reply. Do that, and they’ll close the sale before you even get around to it. *Are you listening to the sound of your own voice or the music of your customer’s voice?*

4. **Anchor belonging.** Every quarter, my mastermind group gathers for a full day strategy session. We give feedback to each other, laugh at each other, share with each other and confide in each other. *It's a beautiful thing.* And any time new members join us, we always make sure they feel like they're part of the group immediately. In fact, I recently received an email from one woman who said, "This was the first group meeting I attended where nobody squeezed my shoulder." That's a great reminder for anyone organization who has a membership base: *People don't want to have their head patted and told they're going to make it someday.* They just want to belong. They just want to have a home. They just want to feel like they're part of the club. Try this: Instead of waiting to warm up to people, skip the small talk. Stop inquiring about the goddamn traffic and just jump right in. And instead of asking people what their job title says – ask them what their emotional labor is dedicated to. They'll forget all about the fact that they're a first-timer. *What do you see when you see people?*

5. **Ante up when a commitment is needed.** I'm hopeless when it comes to organization, details and planning. The stuff makes my blood freeze. But, if there's someone I love who's counting on my ability to manage a situation, I'll be on top of it like a hungry bear on a slow running camper. That's the way I see it: You don't have to be good at something to care about it. And, just because you failed to focus on it in the past doesn't mean you're incapable of excelling at it in the future. Turns out, life is more interested in your willingness to commit than your capacity to win. That's the thing about caring: It isn't always about knowing how to do things. It's about knowing why it's important to do them, and then, allowing the how to find its way in through the side door. *Who is waiting for you to commit?*

6. **Ask your customers early.** Netflix recently increased their streaming service by sixty percent – without making any changes in the subscription model. According to an interview in *The New York Times*, the purpose behind the move was to make streaming films the core of its business – not physically mailed movies. Sadly, this price increase spurred tens of thousands of customer complaints, thousands of cancellations and hundreds of negative media stories. After reading several dozen comments on the company blog, here’s what I learned from their (now former) subscribers: If Netflix loved their customers, they would have increased the quality of the streaming movie selection with the increase of the price. Or, they would have offered bundled discounts for veteran members. Also, wouldn’t have made the pricing change when the economy was the worse since the Great Depression. And lastly, they would have realized they made a horrible pricing mistake, listened to their customers, apologized, and then returned to their original pricing model. By loving customers, you have automatically asked for their opinion on everything. *Have you?*

7. **Asking activates control.** First, ask people how they will be affected by the decision. Listen closely as they tell you how to serve them better. Second, ask people what they would like to see happen next. Odds are, their request will be reasonable. Third, ask permission for everything. It can't hurt. And it helps you avoid additional guesswork. Fourth, ask customers to do something to help facilitate the problem solving process. By putting them at the center of the decision, you not only preserve control but also enable new solutions to surface that you otherwise would have missed. Ultimately, these four examples of asking restore the balance. That's your goal: To give people enough control so they don't worry that their basic needs won't be met, but not so much control that they're wasting time and energy making unnecessary choices. *Are you asking the same questions as your competitors?*

8. **Back off when a lesson is needed.** Yes, it would be easier to tell your brother that his girlfriend is a manipulative wench. But sometimes the best way to care is to get the hell out of the way. Sometimes you have to give people enough space to learn things on their own. Otherwise the desire to fix blocks the ability to care. And it becomes very hard to breathe out the love people need. Next time you feel your eye twitching, practice a little emotional restraint. Stop adding value. Suspend the need to dominate the conversation. And respect the other person's speed of self-discovery. Eventually, he'll come to his senses and break up with her. *What happened to the last person you tried to fix?*

9. **Be a better mirror.** “Mirror, mirror, on the wall – who’s the fairest of them all?” Your customers, that’s who. If you want people to fall in love with you, help them fall in love with themselves first. Give them a front row seat to their own brilliance – and they’ll stick around forever. The problem is, most people can’t see how smart they really are. They’re just too close themselves. And maybe what they need is a better mirror. If you want to love louder, you need to be that mirror. You need to reflect people’s realities in an affirming, respectful manner. Maybe by taking notes on their ideas right in front of them to make them feel heard, or by linking to their website from your own to make them feel seen. It’s all about memorializing their impact on your world, then telling everyone about it. That’s the thing about recognition: Isn’t just an interactional gift – it’s an emotional release. If you want to create a world of delight, if you want to establish a memory that sticks in customer’s minds forever, be the mirror they keep coming back to. *How are you helping people love themselves more when doing business with you?*

10. **Be an expert in memory creation.** Love earns you the right to a continued relationship. Love earns you the right to have customers tell your story. And love earns you the right to whisper to those customers on a regular basis. Your challenge is to give regular and unsolicited tokens of love. And I'm not going to bore you with a bunch of examples – that's the easy. What matters is that your love implies three things: First, that you're willing to forego your own convenience. Second, that you're willing to invest your own time. And third, that you're willing risk your own security to promote someone else's satisfaction and development. Do that, and love will not be far behind. Do that, and profit will not be far behind either. *How are you rehearsing loving behavior daily?*

11. **Be open to all levels of intimacy.** I recently read the classic article in *Harvard Business Review* that first called customer intimacy a “key value discipline.” Their research proved that organizations that align their entire operating model to serve that discipline are the ones who become market leaders. Are you pushing yourself relentlessly to sustain it? If not, you’ll never touch your people in the way they need to be touched. After all, each of your relationships – from customers you’ve known since day one to prospects you’ve known since this morning – is an ongoing laboratory of learning how to love. And it’s more than memorizing a few pieces of personal information. Intimacy is about sharing vulnerability, showing feelings and showering acceptance. It’s about weathering storms together, experiencing meaningful connection and creating emotional closeness. *What would be different if that described the relationships you had with your customers?*

12. **Be sensitive to people's visibility needs.** In the movie *Shall We Dance*, Susan Sarandon says it best: "When you witness, you're promising to care about everything: The good things, the bad things, the terrible things and the mundane things – all of it, all the time, every day. You're saying to people that their life will not go unnoticed because you will notice it. Their life will not go unwitnessed because you will be their witness." Who in your life right now feels invisible? Who needs to feel seen? Be more promiscuous in your love with them. Respond with sensitivity in a time of tragedy. And give them the gift of visibility. Otherwise the utter exhaustion of feeling invisible might become too much for them to bear. *How many people did you go out of your way to ignore last week?*

13. **Be touchy feely.** If you want to reach the world. If you want to make a name for yourself. If you want to win with the people who matter most. You have to use your hand. That's exactly what people crave. *To feel like they've been touched.* I'm not suggesting you start hugging everyone you meet. Nor am I suggesting you formulate a touchpoint strategy for managing the customer experience that aligns with the brand promise. Excuse me while I vomit. Being touchy feely is much bigger – and better – than that. It's about leaving people feeling seen, heard and essential. Every day our world becomes less humane in our treatment of each other. I know touchy feely isn't easy. I know touchy feely isn't for everybody. But it sure beats avoidy ignory. *Who are you extending your hand to?*

14. **Be unfair with your love.** It's hard to love people who betray you. Or who disrespect you. Or who appear perfect. Or who try your patience. Or who tear at your hearts. Or who cause you suffering. Or who openly criticize you. Or who never say thank you. Or who repel you emotionally. Or who treat you with contempt. Or who live in a state of ugliness. Or who don't know how to receive. Or who always take and never give. That's not fair. But love isn't supposed to be fair. *If it was, it wouldn't be love – it would be math.* Silly rabbit. Fairness is for kids. That's why love wins: It finds the people who don't deserve it – then offers itself to them freely and fully when they least expect it. *Are you unfair enough?*

15. **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?*

16. **Bow, don't fight.** Love is the best comeback. The more successful you become, the more torpedoes will be shot at you. That's not fair. Next time someone rips your art to shreds, say this: "I respect your opinion of my work." Are you willing to idle your motor even when you feel like grinding your gears?

17. **Breathe, don't isolate.** Love means showing up when you're scared. And then leaving room for the other person to decide. That's not fair. Next time you find yourself on a bended knee, look love in the eye, succumb to its softness and take joy in the moment. *Are you caught up in your relationship or just dwelling in your love?*

18. **Bring people center stage.** I love hearing the word no. Not because it's an opening to sell, but because it's an opportunity to hear somebody's story. Because sometimes that's all people want – an audience. Someone to champion their humanity. Someone to gather with them and say, "I'm here. I'm with you. I'm part of this." The secret is: If you truly want to touch someone, it's not enough to *request* their story. You also have to *receive* it, *respect* it and *retell* it. Otherwise they may as well be winking in the dark. That's what I love about blogging: It provides a public forum where I can bring other people's story center stage. Often without their knowledge, but never without their acknowledgment. In my experience, this is the perfect way to use technology for getting touchy feely. As long as you treat people's truth accurately and respectfully, they'll never feel untouched. Remember: People can't live without a story to tell. *How often you handing them the microphone?*

19. **Broadcast, don't express.** What we love shapes us. And your life is measured by how you love. Next time you leave the house, love like it's a rare jewel that costs everything, but give it away freely like it's nothing. *Are you famous for the people who love you and the way that you love them?*

20. **Call a mistake meeting.** Once a month, gather your people for a working lunch. Starting with yourself, go around the room and require each person to share a mistake they recently made, one lesson they learned from that mistake and the practical application of that lessons to the other people in the room. Document everyone's contributions. Then, mail a hard copy to everyone with a twenty-dollar bill stapled to it and a sticky note with a personal message of gratitude. I promise you'll make company history. You'll demonstrate your humanity. And meeting attendance will be through the roof. *When was the last time you asked people what their mistakes taught them?*

21. **Calm comes from experience.** Getting audited sucks. Happened to me earlier this year. And because it was my company's first run with the Internal Revenue Service, my initial reaction was anything but calm. Fortunately, I had two mentors in my corner to keep me relaxed. First, my accountant: Lisa. Her exact words were, "This is the best thing the IRS could ever ask you to do." *Thank God.* Her silver-lining philosophy lowered my heartbeat immediately. Second, my father: Mark. His exact words were, "It's no big deal. We get audited all the time." *Whew.* As a fellow entrepreneur, his nonchalant reassurance lowered my blood pressure immediately. And if you want to do the same to the people who matter most, use whatever relevant experience you have. Don't over-identify. Don't bring it back to you. And don't pretend to be something you're not. Just make sure people undergoing times of turmoil can turn to you – someone who's been there before – and think to themselves, "I am not alone." Remember: There's nothing more calming than communicating your mutual humanity. *Are you positioned as someone who remains unreasonably peaceful in times of chaos?*

22. **Capture heartshare.** As a professional speaker, I've certainly fallen victim to the fantasy that I'm changing people's lives. And maybe I am. But sometimes all your audience just wants is to be validated. To feel like they're not alone. And to know that they're not the only people who feel a certain way. If you can bring that kind of sanity into a world of madness – your voice will never drop out of sight. Here's my suggestion: Instead of telling pointless, meandering stories; start positioning yourself as the mirror in which people can see a clearer picture of themselves. It makes it easy for your audience to transplant themselves into your message. Plus, it increases the memorability of your delivery. After all: Being memorable has less to do with you, and more to do with how people experience themselves in relation to you. The point is: If your message can simply remind people that they're not the only ones cluelessly staggering through this world, you won't have to change people's lives – because they do it for themselves. All you had to do was give them the tap. *Are you leaving your audience begging for more or begging for mercy?*

23. **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?*

24. **Caring isn't an algorithm.** Caring is not an emotion – it's an intersection. It's the loving collision between your attention and someone else's need. But caring can't be bastardized into a technique. The secret is to develop a keener eye for those moments in which care is needed. *How much do you provide?*

25. Charts are recorded, but experiences are remembered.

Because Bob Dylan started performing in the mid to late fifties, most of his early influences were jazz and blues greats like Miles Davis. And according to the book, Miles never actually made any hit records. But according to Dylan, his legendary performances brought people back, with their friends and with their money. If you want to do the same, consider these suggestions: First, show people a side of themselves they didn't know was there. They'll believe in possibilities they wouldn't have allowed before. Second, sustain visual, verbal and interactional diversity. When you perform, make sure people are participating – not just staring. Third, stop treating your audience like children. Come at people like they don't have a brain and they'll come at you like they don't have a wallet. Fourth, surrender control. Crowd source your performance. All the audience to become co-creators of the experience. Remember: As technology accelerates, and as people become more isolated from each other, there is a growing craving for live experience. Be someone who delivers that, and the room will be yours. *Are you trying to be number one or trying to be the only one?*

26. **Choose heart over handbook.** Love cannot be done from a script. If it were, it wouldn't be love – it would be calculus. Instead of being a passionless rule follower, give yourself permission to make every connection more human. Give your people permission to be more promiscuous with their love. If that means going off script and improvising to meet customers where they are, do it. If that means breaking a small rule to give the gift of deepened connection, do it. And if that means rewarding (not just forgiving, but *rewarding*) a customer for making a mistake, do it. Because once you've accumulated all of those moments of humanity, you've built an asset that nobody can take away. And it's worth much more than some sterile handbook employees never look at again after their third week on the job. Customers are desperate to be touched. Give them what they want. *Are your love letters coated in ink or blood?*

27. 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?*

28. **Communicate yourself to the world.** Branding is finished. Not as an idea, but as a word. I don't care what industry you work in. It's not about branding – it's about identity. The best and highest version of yourself. And it's not about company name – it's about constitutional knowledge. The non-negotiable values and decision-making mechanisms that drive your daily world. That's what customers want to know: Why you are, who you are and who you aren't. And if you're not communicating that to the world with consistency, intimacy, honesty and immediacy, your customers will pick someone else. Somebody cool. Somebody transparent. Somebody they feel like they already know. I'm reminded of my friend Harlan, who owns a production company. He once told me, "Video is the second best way for people to meet you." What about you? Other than in person, how else are you enabling people to meet you? From online profiles to multimedia introductions, the opportunities are endless. What's more, the tools to execute them are affordable and accessible. *What are you using to make your identity more knowable?*

29. **Compassionate intimacy matters.** Instead of plotting how customers fit into your nice little marketing plan; focus on how your product fits into their lives. And not just the conversation about their lives, but their actual lives. That's the distinction: Intimacy isn't starting with customer in mind – it's start with the customer. Intimacy isn't projecting onto the marketplace what you think they ought to want – it's asking people to tell you what matters to them, shutting up and taking notes. *What would happen if you treated customer intimacy as an entire business model, not just a marketing tool?*

30. **Consider your pre-sale position.** If you walk in the door as a salesperson, you're already at a deficit position. If you want customers to close you, make yourself a composite of the following power positions. First, be a peer of the buyer. Which means you have to build commonality. And you do so by leading with your person and following with your profession. Second, be a trusted resource to the buyer. Which means you have to build a value-forward platform online and offline. And you do so by thinking on paper, every single day. Third, be a problem solver with the buyer. Which means you have to figure out what you're the answer to. And you do so by using social media to gain insight into what drives your customers up the wall, then becoming that answer to those issues. Because of your pre-sale position, the easier it is to get to yes. *How would your closing ratio change if customers saw you as their trusted advisor – not their tricky salesperson?*

31. **Constantly reeducate your market.** Good brands evolve, upgrade and mature – but great brands actively share the highlights of that process with their customers. Otherwise people will have a limited understanding of the value you deliver. And it will become increasingly hard for them to be your advocates. Your challenge is to remind people of three things. First, what you do: That is, your current positioning to the marketplace. Second, what you're doing: That is, your current projects and clients in the marketplace. And third, what you've done: That is, your past work and successes thereof. This spectrum eliminates the question of, "Should we hire these guys?" and focuses on the solution, "How should we use these guys?" And that's a position of diversity and resourcefulness that makes you more buyable and more revisitable. Remember: Just because someone did business with you five years ago doesn't mean they know who, what, where and why you are today. *How many different ways can people say yes to you?*

32. **Contact is the new content.** People can get information anywhere, anytime, immediately, for free. But that's the thing. We don't need more access to information – we need more access to each other. Which doesn't make information irrelevant. But contact offers an unquantifiable humanness that content can't provide. And if your brand fails to deliver that interaction in addition to the information people need, customers will quickly switch to another brand that will. That's how you install a greater sense of approachability, both online and offline, in your daily life. If content is king, contact is queen. *Are you a content provider or contact enabler?*

33. Contact plus content equals conquest. As a writer and publisher, content will always be core to my enterprise. But what I'm starting to discover is that the speed of the response is the response. What I'm starting to learn is that when you're genuinely and assertively responsive, the medium is the message. Especially in a commoditized marketplace when service is the key differentiator, contact is the primary victory. Contact is the asset that paves the way for future interactions. Without it, you're just another content provider who takes forever to provide impatient customers with a human being who speaks in a human voice that solves human problems. Think of it as digital approachability. Keeping the virtual loop open. Because if you're not able to solve your people's problem right away, providing consistent assurance that you're on the case preserves their sense of control. *Do you get back to your customers faster than your competitors, or does information stand in the way of engaging with the people who matter?*

34. **Contact trumps content.** Loveless companies are notorious for only delivering select information. And that makes people feel out of control. For example, I recently called a local property management company to discuss leasing options. When I got their voicemail, here's what the recording said, "Thanks for calling, but everything you need can be found on our website." And I thought to myself, "Well, I need to talk to a human being right now. Got any of those on your website?" *Click.* Frustrated, I sought out one of their competitors. And to my delight, when I called their number, not only did a human being answer on the second ring; she even googled my name as we talked to learn more about my business. Which company would you pick? That's the amazing thing: Sometimes loving people is as simple as showing up and giving voice to their needs. *Are you offering access to information about your company or access to individuals who work there?*

35. **Create a cooler error page.** If someone types an incorrect address on your website, what happens? Are they confronted with a sterile, unrewarding image that makes them feel incompetent for mistyping? Or do you create a playful, disarming experience that rewards users with an exclusive message? Twitter accidentally popularized this same concept with their “Fail Whale,” which ended up becoming a powerful word of mouth marketing too. After all, people value things that are hard to find. And your challenge is to use your error page to create an act of human forgiveness in a moment of digital transgression. Doing so makes the mundane memorable, rewards people’s mistakes and instantly humanizes your brand. *Does your website make people feel good about messing up?*

36. Create a significant emotional event. If you bring nothing but logic, you'll never motivate customers to buy. Emotion is the only language that produces action. Which means: In your sales presentation, you have to create a multisensory experience. Here's how: According to the book *Resonate*, chronic bombardment means audiences are accustomed to quick action, rapid scene changes and soundtracks that make the heart race. As you deliver your stories, solutions and suggestions – not your sales pitch, information and instructions – leverage color, light and motion. That's what keeps humans engaged. After all, there is a high customer expectation for visual and visceral stimulation. The human attention span is six seconds. And if you don't pique their aesthetic perceptions and tickle their sensibilities, they'll wait forever for you to close them. Because the reality is: It's not what you say, it's not how you say it – it's how people feel when they hear it. Information isn't as essential as the emotional impact of the information. *Do your customers love your process as much as your product?*

37. Create an act of love in a moment of friction. The other day I was at a stoplight. Right before it turned green, an old man in a walker dropped his folder. Papers went flying all over the intersection. Two people hopped out of their cars, picked everything up and walked the guy to the curb. Not a single car moved – even when the light was green. That was act of love. And I wonder how many micromoments throughout the day your organization could create more of those. Take Southwest Airlines, for example. Most companies use employees as objects to leverage – they treat employees as people to love. And their customers have reached the point where it’s hard not to say I love you. Matter of fact, Southwest actually has love as their stock symbol. And isn’t it interesting that they’ve been the only profitable airline since the early seventies. Looks like loving louder works. *If your employees could give your company a hug, would they run across a field with open arms?*

38. **Creativity doesn't erase credibility.** Just because you work in a conservative industry doesn't mean you should be afraid of doing something offbeat. And just because your company serves sensitive customers doesn't mean you can't have a little fun. I once stumbled across a website for a urology clinic that specialized in vasectomies. Their practice leader was a surgeon named Doctor Richard Chop. His patients affectionately called him, "Dr. Dick Chop." Swear to god. That guy couldn't take himself too seriously if he tried. The point is: Nobody gets a free pass out of creativity. It's everybody's job. *Who is murdering your creative nature?*

39. **Cross the line by a mile.** On an average day, the speed of the response is the response. But when everybody's watching, magnifying your response is the response. Next time one of your customers makes a mistake, take one for the team. Don't just forgive them for messing up – thank them for being imperfect. Don't just respect them by accepting their blunder – reward them for giving you the opportunity to create a service moment. In the process, you'll demonstrate unreasonable compassion, unexpected empathy and unprecedented gratitude. Your magnification will set a precedent of approachability, deepen your reputation for loving people anyway, and make the people who aren't your customers, wish they were. Because if there's one thing people always remember, it's what you did for them when you didn't have to. *Who is trying to convert their friends to you?*

40. **Dare to live by a different script.** Never let people forget that you have your own way of seeing things. That's why you got into art in the first place: As a mechanism for defining the way you think about the world. And if you want to share it with the people who matter most, remember the advice of hockey legend Tony Twist, "Don't be afraid of hitting people too hard." You have to look the world straight in the eye, be blazingly honest and let your artistic spirit fill the room like a smoke machine. Because if all you do is mutter through locked teeth, your work won't stand a chance of meaning anything. If all you do is conveniently ride the coattails of someone else's truth, your voice will remain stale and colorless. Look: I've seen performances that made me want to drive my car over a cliff. But I'm thankful every time it happens, because it reminds me of what it truly takes to own the room: *Authentic stylistic identity*. Vowing to follow your own heart's love. Keeping your word with yourself, no matter what happens. And knowing that when you sing the true song of your soul, you speak in a language that people can't misunderstand. *Are you addicted to permission or indifferent to approval?*

41. **Deeper mindfulness plus deliberate effort.** In any relationship, there's a natural complacency that people gravitate toward. After a certain period of time, you just get comfortable with your rhythms. You let yourself go. And you figure it's just easier to order pizza and watch a movie instead of taking the time to cook dinner and have a real conversation about something that matters. The problem is, each of those micro moments of complacency add up. And before you know it, your relationship has degraded into a predictable, undersexed stalemate that fails to give itself the attention and care it so desperately needs. Look: I understand the chase can't last forever. But that doesn't give you permission to undercut each other's relational ambition. The good news is, you can still be a force in people's lives without forcing yourself in people's lives. As my parents like to remind me, "The secret to a long, healthy marriage is to never get lazy with each other." Try this: Next time you say to yourself, "I don't want to bother her with this minor issue," share it anyway. Share for no reason other than to remind people that they're worth sharing to. Be being radically honest when most people would say nothing, you create an act of caring in a moment of inconvenience. *Do you bother to bother?*

42. **Deliver an ongoing value message.** Absence doesn't make the heart grow fonder – absence makes people forget. That's why anonymity is bankruptcy. The key is to deliver a continuous flow of education in a variety of media. After all, it's not your job to tell customers how to consume you. Whether you publish a newsletter, blog, social media news feed – or even deliver public seminars – the goal is to leave no barriers for people to become involved with you in inexpensive and accessible ways. Personally, I use a combination of ezines, blogs, syndicated columns, video modules and social media. What's your recipe? The cool part is, when you start to serve people as if they were already paying clients, you make it easier for them to close you at their own convenience. And instead of taking a whiff of the stink of desperation, they savor the aroma of education. *Are you treating customers as people who pay your salary, or attending to them as pupils who enrolled in your class?*

43. **Disarm the immediate preoccupation.** Ideally, by embodying humor early. Notice I said, “embody,” not “use.” You can’t use humor like you use hair gel. But what you can do is discover your innate and inevitable funniness as a human being. All you have to do is figure out what you’re clearly too much of: Too old? Too young? Too expensive? Too slow? Answer that question, then lead with it. You’ll find that by magnifying the unhideable, you convert pigeonholes into goldmines. By acknowledging what causes the tension, it will exhale in the form of customer laughter. And as Jeffrey Gitomer explained in *The Little Teal Book of Trust*, “The funnier you are, the more engaging you are, the closer the customer will listen, and the more authentic you’re perceived to be. Getting people to laugh is tacit approval, and it’s your best change to deliver important facts. At the end of laughter is the height of listening.” *Are you ignoring the elephant in the room, talking about the elephant or jumping on its back and teaching it how to dance?*

44. **Ditch the script.** It's impossible for customers to feel heard, feel seen and feel essential when your service is delivered in a monotonous, empty tone. You gotta think of yourself as an improv actor, where your audience feels like they're hearing your words for the first time. And even if it's only one person – that's still an audience. Next time someone asks you a question that you've heard a thousand times, don't reach for ready-made replies. Instead of being rigidly scripted and annoyingly canned, dance in the moment. Respond to the unique needs of the individual, not from the mechanical instructions of your training handbook. You'll create a service memory that customers will store in their hearts forever. *How does your service preserve an air of freshness?*

45. **Don't give – pour.** Love is any interaction that reduces the distance, enhances the bond between people and gives the precious gift of a strengthened connection. And most of the time, it sneaks in the side door when you're busy doing something good. Here's what I do: Any time you encounter someone in a bad mood, just assume they feel unloved. Don't take over. Don't try to fix or solve. And don't try to dilute the distaste. Just pour in more love. Just dance in the moment and respond to the other person's immediate experience. Be brave enough to say nothing when speaking would be faster, and be bold enough to apologize when pride would be easier. Because there's always something left to love. You'll secure a spot in people's hearts forever. *Are you trying to fix the carburetor when you should be watering the flower?*

46. **Don't just forgive mistakes – reward them.** I recently booked a room at the Sofitel New York. When I arrived, their system showed no record of my reservation, nor did they have any open rooms for walk-ins. 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. Turns out, they documented reservation after all. The problem was, I mistakenly booked the room for the wrong date. And it was a non-refundable reservation. Woops. A bit embarrassed, I asked to speak to the manager. He was friendly, helpful and a great listener. And 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. To make a mistake is human; to reward one, divine. Next time one of your people messes up, love them anyway. *Are you forgiving mistakes or rewarding them?*

47. Educate yourself in the language of humility. First, publicly celebrate mistakes. Prove to people that you're willing to support and learn from failure. Second, engage young people by asking them to teach you. And actually listen to and take notes on what they shared. Third, flip through your daily planner from five years ago when the economy was thriving. Remember how good that felt. Fourth, create a daily gratitude wall at your office. Use sticky notes and never write the same thing twice. And lastly, start a daily blog. The commitment required for writing and maintaining it will shock the hell out of you. Ultimately, it's hard to take yourself too seriously when if you're busy knocking yourself off of your pedestal. *When was the last time you did something for the first time?*

48. **Embed your personality into your premises.** I once worked at a mom-and-pop furniture store in Portland. The owners leveraged self-disclosure to its fullest extent. You couldn't step five feet into their store without seeing pictures of their family, nostalgic newspaper articles and personal memorabilia from the early days of the business. These decorations engaged transient customers, contributed to the personality of the business and brought the store to life. What's more, there was no doubt in the customer's mind: You knew who these people were. You knew exactly whom you were buying from. It's no surprise they averaged fifty million a year. Lesson learned: Stop telling your customers how you are and start showing them who you are. Especially if you have an office, store, branch or location with high traffic. Take advantage of those eyeballs. Make sure they don't leave until they have an accurate picture of who you are and why you are. Make sure they're clear about what you say you're committed to caring about. Otherwise they won't tell their friends about you. *What makes your walls come alive?*

49. **Escort customers.** Every day our world becomes less humane in our treatment of each other. In fact, it's almost scary how many organizations suffer from a severely loveless mentality. Instead of treating people like people, companies treat customer like objects, integers, trophies, categories and commodities. Retail is the worst. Every time you buy something, you end up standing at the counter thinking: *I don't need a bag. I don't need a receipt. I don't need to fill out an online survey for the chance to win a thousand dollars. And I don't need to sign up for your crappy rewards program so you can spam my inbox with coupons that don't matter. Just hand me the latte and nobody gets hurt.* If you want to love louder, meet the now need. Instead of treating people's comments as inconvenient interruptions to the pre-scripted phrases you were forced to memorize in your employee empathy class, try speaking human. It's the only language that matters, and the only language guaranteed to be understood by all. *Are you famous for the widgets you sell or for the way you love?*

50. **Excavate people's crazy.** Everyone is a geek about something. But sometimes people need a little push, a little permission, to let the geek come out and play. Actor and comedian Patton Oswalt put it beautifully: "To geek out is to spot something that makes an emotional, irrational connection to your soul. *It's the extraordinary piece of something* just slightly different than what's considered to be standard fare." What's more, geeking out is an emotional and spiritual release. It's when people become the best versions of themselves. And if you can respond to that experience with respect, affirmation and gratitude, not only will people love you for creating a chance to geek out – you may even learn something too. After all, approachability is not about being the life of the party; it's about bringing other people to life at the party. *How many passion finding questions are you asking people?*

51. **Expand, don't whine.** You can't keep your door locked. Love means caring when it's inconvenient. No matter how unfair it feels. Next time you encounter someone most people view as a nuisance, love at a time when opening seems impossible. *Are you willing to accept that you don't need anyone to love you back?*

52. **Expose, don't conceal.** Love changes the architecture of the heart. And it's a response to your greatest values found in another person. Next time someone calls you crazy for wearing your heart on your sleeve, say this: "I can't help it – love does this to me." *Will your love help you discover yourself in others?*

53. **Express, don't imply.** Love is the great eraser. And it reminds you that every minor incident is not a supertragedy. Next time someone reflexively apologizes to you for a minor inconvenience, immediately respond by saying, "I forgive you." What types of people are you afraid to give the benefit of the doubt?

54. **Express, don't withhold.** The best way to change the world is to love it first. Next time you want to transform the spirit of people you're with, love them until they ask you why. Be indiscriminate and promiscuous. Break yourself open and pour yourself out. *Are you willing to love something to death to bring it to life?*

55. **Exquisite playfulness matters.** Wearing a nametag everyday never fails to generate spontaneous moments of playfulness. The cool part is, these are people I'm meeting for the first time. What about your customers? Is their very first interaction with your brand friendly, fun and relaxed? Or has your organization – in the name of professionalism – prohibited its employees from expressing any shred of playfulness? The point is: Not every customer craves an unforgettable service experience. Sometimes they just want to laugh. To play. To forget about life for ten seconds. Maybe if you focused on that, they'd come back. *How playful are you willing to be?*

56. **Fill the room with gratitude.** Gratitude is not a chore. It's not a corporate initiative. And it's not an annual act of forced kindness that makes you feel good about yourself. It's a way of life, a way treating people and a way of showing up. What's more, gratitude isn't an event – it's an ongoing process. A calendar of consistent action. The secret is, gratitude is more than just giving gifts. It's about letting people know that they matter to you – then demonstrating how they matter to you in front of an audience. Because while people love to hear how great they are, they long to hear how great you've become because of who they are. Making thankfulness a non-negotiable. *What gift could you give someone that would erase the memory of every other gift they've ever received?*

57. **Fill the room with laughter.** My girlfriend has a laugh that could end a war. A laugh so expressive, so energetic and so uninhibited that people look up from their plates just to see whose mouth it came from. And I'll never forget commenting on it during one of our first dates, to which Brittany replied, "I never laugh small." Can you imagine how different the room would feel if you practiced that philosophy? After all, laughter isn't just contagious – it's constructive. It fosters relaxation, enables listening and builds trust. Unfortunately, most of us never allow ourselves to laugh big enough. We check to see if anyone else is laughing first. We suppress our laughter for fear of drawing attention to ourselves. And we never exhale as powerfully as our spirit requires. As a result, the only thing we fill the room with is self-consciousness. Let your funny bone lose. Stop laughing small. People won't ask you to leave – they'll ask you sit next to them. *When you walk into a room, how does it change?*

58. **Fill the room with mirrors.** During a recent sermon, my mentor shared the following insight: “Most of what we do has no witness. But it is the sum of our witnesses that creates the picture of who we are.” Whom are you witnessing? Whom are you reflecting? Because without a witness, people’s lives go unnoticed. Without a witness, people’s value goes unaffirmed. Your goal is become a walking mirror. Someone who reflects people’s reality. Someone who gives people front row seats to their own brilliance. And someone who makes people’s own experience immediately available to them. After all, approachability isn’t about being the life of the party – it’s about bringing other people to life at the party. Forget about whom you know. Focus on whose life is better because you reflect it back to them. Because people never walk away from a mirror that makes them feel more beautiful. *How are you laying a foundation of affirmation?*

59. **Fill the room with possibility.** Every time I give a presentation, I give my audience permission not to listen to me. Not to ignore my words – but to listen to their own reactions to my words. That way, they can get lost and arrive at a destination of their own making. Yes, it’s an unorthodox approach to audience engagement. But in my experience, that’s where possibility lives, that’s when creativity flourishes and that’s how inspiration grows. *Ah, the beauty of crowdsourcing.* The challenge is: You have to surrender. You have to keep the loop open. Otherwise your room becomes a closed ecosystem locked in a daydream of the past. But if you’re willing to be vulnerable, if you’re willing to open the door and invite everybody in, the room will fill with more possibility than you ever could have done alone. *How are you creating an environment where people can think for themselves?*

60. **Fill the room with soul.** People want to feel. They want to emotionally vibrate. And they want to sense a palpable presence of something real and true. In short: They crave soul. And if you can deliver that everything you do, the room will never be the same. Here's how: First, soul comes from heartfelt individual expression. Are you speaking the language of the heart or the handbook? Second, soul comes from giving everything a recognizable human touch. Do you use technology when it would be more memorable to do it by hand? And third, soul comes from exhibiting naked personhood. Are you willing to take your private values into the public arena? The point is, how you talk to your customers, your unique way of interacting with people, is what makes your brand matter. *How could you turn every room you enter into a place where soul finds expression?*

61. **Fill the room.** Oscar Wilde once said, “Some people cause happiness wherever they go, while others cause happiness whenever they go.” Which type of person are you? When you walk into a room, what do you fill it with? Filling the room is about establishing an emotional identity. Filling the room is about choosing how you want to show up. Filling the room is about leaving the room better than you found it. *What’s your choice?*

62. **Flip the pitch.** Whenever a prospective client inquires about one of my seminars or corporate training programs, I always ask them, “Why is the idea of approachability important to your people?” Then they tell me. Then I listen. And then I allow them to sell me on the value of my own product. Bam! Another example is my friend Matt. Whenever he’s uncertain about whether or not to pursue a prospective client, he boldly makes the following request: “Thanks for your interest in my program! Please write me a letter explaining why I should come and I’d be happy to consider it.” The point is: Don’t be afraid to let your customers do the selling for you. Because if you say it, they’ll pay attention – but if they say it, they’ll pay money. Either way, just be sure your sales approach is underscored by the question, “How do you think I can help you?” Because it’s not your job to help them afford you – it’s your job to help them justify what they can afford. *How could you turn your sales pitch on its head?*

63. Get over your product and get behind your personhood. In a recent blog post, cartoonist Hugh McLeod wrote, “Nobody’s reading your blog because of your art. Or because they have an inherent love for purple dogs and green sofas. They’re reading your blog because the person you are inspires them. Not because they’re thinking of buying your paintings. But because the way you approach your work motivates them. It sets an example for them. It stands for something that resonates with them. It leads them to somewhere that they also want to go.” Lesson learned: Stop explaining who and what and start demonstrating how and why. That’s the ultimate instrument of your expression. *Your life. Your being. Your truth.* Try writing with that pen. Customers, readers and fans – that already enjoy your art – will go absolutely crazy when you reveal the unique process behind it. That’s how you get over your product and get behind your personhood. *Do you believe that you’re more than just a pretty picture?*

64. **Give everything a recognizable human touch.** Lately I've been receiving messages from readers, followers and customers asking if my responses are actually from me, or just some robot disguised as me. This trend is baffling. Not because people assume I've delegated my contact to a machine, but because there are people out there who actually do that. And customers are sick of it. The fact that people even wonder whether or not responses are automated should be enough of warning sign. Personally, I find this detachment from humanity to be embarrassing. In the great game of business, what matters is how you talk to your customers. What matters is your unique way of interacting with people. And that matters is how they experience themselves in relation to you. Don't outsource the human function. Make sure soul has a palpable presence in your contact efforts. *Does your brand give more credence to computers or humans?*

65. **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?*

66. Give people the experience of psychological visibility. You look with the eyes, but you see with the heart. And if you want to assure that you leave people feeling seen, try these ideas. First: Instead of going out of your way to make people feel invisible, make a conscious effort to love, honor and acknowledge them. When they get you, give them all of you. Second: While engaging with people, resist the urge to check your email. Stop looking over the shoulder to see if there's somebody more important to talk to you. Just be with the people you're with, right now. Third: When someone comes to you with their problems, understand that they're not looking for advice – they're looking for understanding. Don't dispense answers when they're looking for affirmation. Remember: Nothing touches people more than your willingness to be a mirror. *When was the last time you slowed down and noticed people?*

67. Give unexpected compliments. The first time I took hot yoga, I slipped on my mat and nearly fell on my ass. But instead of embarrassing me in front of the class, my instructor gently remarked, “Thank you for listening to your body.” I felt better immediately. She wasn’t critical, she was appraising. She wasn’t harsh; she was constructive. She wasn’t frustrated; she was fascinated. And she wasn’t judgmental; she was thankful. It was an act of spirit in a moment of struggle. *Is that the way you respond to your people when they fall out of posture?*

68. **Give your brand three dimensions.** Cooking websites are getting smarter. 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. And if you want people to join you, know this: Information is price of admission. Giving people a bunch of facts isn't enough. To out heart the competition, you have to offer people context, perspective and community. Public radio is another brand that does this beautifully: They speak straight to the heart of the human experience. They explore new angles most stations miss. And they create a safe place to learn that broadens the listener's cultural sensibilities. You can't get that from top forty stations. The point is: Customers want to listen to the whole song. And if all you're giving them is a few random notes, they're going to go somewhere else. *How many dimensions does your brand deliver?*

69. **Grandiosity isn't relatable.** If your commercial only shows the product at the very end and spends the rest of the time pontificating about its awesomeness, you're too serious. If your promo video is nothing but an overproduced, epic adventure that says nothing about what actually makes the product unique, you're too serious. The point is: It's not enough to get over yourself – you have to stay over yourself too. And part of that process is admitting that your marketing doesn't always have to solve the world's problems. Yes, people are buying more than just what you sell. But not every customer cares which organic farm your cocoa beans came from. Sometimes they just want the cookie. *Is your brand still riding the wave of elitist pretention?*

70. **Gush, don't thank.** Love is a brand that is built by hand. Next time you're debating how to show people how essential they are, write a love letter in the form of something else. Give it away freely and without expectation. And the more handmade, the better. *What unsolicited token of love could you give today?*

71. **Hang better mirrors.** Success never comes unassisted. And life's too short to surround yourself with people who don't challenge and inspire you. But if you never open yourself to be reflected by those people, you may as well be winking in the dark. Your mission is to find at least one person who will regularly sit you down, look you in the eye and say, "Oh my god, that is freaking brilliant." This form of affirmation is like oxygen to your soul. And it's the validation that will keep you going during hard times. Personally, I've been fortunate to have many amazing witnesses in my life. And as a result, I'm not successful because people said I would never make it – I'm successful because people told me I would make it, and I proved them right. That's what happens when you surround yourself with the right mirrors: They show us something we can't see for ourselves, and then we change forever. *If you killed someone tomorrow, who is the one person in your life that you could tell – that would still respond positively?*

72. **Help customers verbalize their hopes.** It's not about overcoming the objection – it's uncovering why that objection is important to the customer. Because if you know people's why – you don't just have a hot button – you have their entire motherboard. Not to control them, but to inspire them. Not to sell more stuff, but to make a difference. And not to deliberately fabricate fears that don't exist, but to raise awareness of potential dangers by illustrating the cost of inaction. In short: Beat the customer. Deliver their desire before they place it. Invest just as much time in anticipating than responding. That's how you build a path of trust, humanize the sales experience and diffuses customers' built in pushback mechanisms. Ultimately, if you want customers to close you, don't sell the service – just deliver it in every breath. *Are you trying to trick people into buying something, or trying to make something worth buying and spreading?*

73. **Hold a torch.** Author Ben Sweetland once remarked, “You cannot hold a torch to light another’s path without brightening your own.” That’s the thing: You can’t sit in a corner and perfect yourself. The only way you get better is by contributing to your fellow humans. *Whose path are you holding a torch to?*

74. **Hold up your homework.** When my friends Laszlo and Kelly got married, they wrote their own vows. Their words were beautiful, romantic and heartfelt. Not a dry eye in the house. But the collective heart of the entire room stopped beating when Laszlo made the following announcement right after they kissed: “Ladies and gentleman, we’re going to take a ten minute break before the reception starts because, frankly, those vows took everything we had.” And rightly so, too. Doing something that touching isn’t easy. But the lesson learned is: When something takes everything you have, tell people. Not to boast about how strong you are. But to offer validation that they are people worth caring about, showing up for and giving yourself away to. *When was the last time you went out of your way to tell someone that you went out of your way?*

75. **Indulge people's humanity.** In the seminal book, *Story*, Robert McKee makes a powerful point about our species: "The majority of the world suffers short, painful existences, ridden with disease and hunger, terrorized by tyranny and lawless violence, without hope and that life will ever be any different for their children." I don't share this passage be a downer. Rather, to suggest that what your customers need is reminder of how alive they truly are. Something that highlights their humanity. Consider the billion-dollar fitness industry: People invest countless hours practicing yoga, lifting weights and taking Zumba. But they don't enjoy doing it as much as they relish being done with it. What they buy is the experience of walking out of that studio two hours later, feeling more alive. *What do you sell?*

76. Information is not a replacement for interaction. Wearing a nametag everyday for a decade changes your behavior: It keeps you accountable, keeps you honest and keeps you true to who you are. That's why I no longer litter, rarely act like a jerk and never pretend to be someone I'm not. In the same vein, the greatest advantage of online technology is the ability to connect instantly – but the greatest danger is the option to do so anonymously. And that's the caveat to contact: Making sure you do without collapsing your identity. You have to keep your digital nametag on, or you're going to get yourself into trouble. Because when you retreat into depersonalization and namelessness, you take less responsibility for what you do and say. On the other hand, when you resist the temptation to engage from a place of anonymity, your actions are more accountable and more human. It all depends on how vulnerable you're willing to make yourself. *Will you stick yourself out there or surrender to the status of anonymous?*

77. **Intensity is highly overrated.** In times of crisis, people turn to people who are calm. Not emotionless. Not uncommunicative. Not borderline comatose. *Calm.* Calm is what builds trust, mitigates stress, remedies confusion and inspires followership. Because you can't really calm people down. All you can do is turn yourself into a force of calm, in the hopes that you'll infect people with the energy they need to do the same. The good news is, people who exhibit calm temperament in a troubled world are always in high demand. They get seen, get hired and get promoted. They get noticed, get remembered and get business. They make the cut, make the day and make the room better. And the best part is: You don't even have to *do* anything – you simply have to *be*. Be a paragon of stillness. Be balm to a troubled world. Be the calming force in times of turmoil. People will turn to you. *Are you too intense?*

78. **Interaction matters.** You're not in business to sell a product. You're not in business to provide a service. You're in business to become known for a unique way of interacting with the world. Interactions that get talked about. Interactions that give the gift of social elevation. Interactions that very well could change people forever. The goal is to interact with people in a way that nobody else can touch. Find your nametag. Stick yourself out there today. *What interaction style are you known for?*

79. **Intimacy can't be forced – but it can be accelerated.** I don't have to warm up to people. I don't have to get to know someone before we connect. And I don't have to wait until we've hung out six times before I start opening up. I just jump right in. I reveal myself quickly, openly, honestly and respectfully. And most of the time, others reciprocate. Sure, not everybody is used to that level of openness. But most people appreciate the willingness to cut the formalities and start connecting for real. As my dad likes to remind me, "When you treat people like family, it's hard to say no." That's the key to exhibiting loving intimacy: It's not about pretending you're everyone's best friend. It's about finding the common point of interest that makes people feel like you've been friends for years. *Do you treat customer intimacy as a feeling or a business model?*

80. **Jump in when a leader is needed.** You can't sit back and wait for people to build something that inspires you. Nor can you sit back and wait for people to rebuild something doesn't inspire you. The only hope is to nominate yourself. To instigate the change that you believe in. And to make the choice not to do nothing anymore. Otherwise it's going to eat away at your heart to watch a leaderless world go by. People are waiting for you to lead them. People are waiting for you to take them to the Promised Land. Stop waiting for a savior and sign up for the initiative path. *Are you still hiding from the fear of leading?*

81. **Know your customer.** Since day one, you've been beaten over the head with those three words. And while they're important, there's actually something bigger at stake: How well do your customers know you? Not enough. And if you think you don't have customers, look harder. Everyone has customers. And they need to know who you are, where you are and why you are. Otherwise your message fades into the echo chamber with the rest of the noise. Ultimately, it's a question of trust, which is a function of self-disclosure. And when trust is the only currency that counts – and it is – if your customers don't know you, you lose. It's not about nametags – it's about making yourself more knowable. Hiding the true picture of who you are is a form of reputational risk you can't afford to take. We live in a low-trust culture. And people will try to discredit you with anything they can find. But, if you tell them who you are first, you win. Branding nothing more than committing to and acting from the best, highest version of yourself. *How friendly is yours?*

82. **Learn how to receive.** Giving is easy because you know what to expect. Receiving, on the other hand, is hard. It means you're out of control. It means you're vulnerable. And it means you're letting go and letting people help you. But if you truly want to be witnessed, you have to be willing to see your own brilliance when people reflect back it to you. Otherwise you insult them by deflecting what they're trying to show you. The secret is saying thank you without justification. Extending gratitude without defending yourself. Next time someone pays you a compliment, try just saying two words: *Thank you*. It's harder than you think. In fact, this practice takes so much patience, self-control and self-confidence, that most people wouldn't dare try it. But the good news is, those who receive well earn the right to be witnessed over and over again. *When was the last time you held out your hand?*

83. **Learn to be indiscriminate.** Love is like creativity: The more you use it, the more you have. The hard part is finding the customers who don't deserve it and offering it to them freely and fully when they least expect it. That's love worth crossing the street for: When you welcome people into your home, even though you wish they stayed at theirs. Try writing a few of these questions on sticky notes and posting them around your office or by your phone: How many acts of love have you performed today? What do you are you choosing instead of love? What would love do in this situation? How can you help yourself choose love instead? How will you use this as another opportunity to be more loving? Over time, these questions will seep into your subconscious and infiltrate your work on a daily basis. People will notice. *Are willing to be unfair with your heart?*

84. **Learn where you suck.** A complaint is a gift. It enables you to deliver better, faster and smarter service. And while I'm not suggesting you screw up intentionally; the key is to install a system to document, evaluate and leverage customer complaints. In fact, you could offer twenty dollars to every employee who created three workable solutions for every complaint that came in. Then you could post them on the wall as a reminder of what not to do from that point on. *How do you make it easy for customers to complain?*

85. Look past when a bend is needed. Most policies are prepared excuses. And organizations use them to create insurance, stay in control, enable deniability, preserve the illusion of safety and cover their ass when things go wrong. So much for caring. But instead of deleting all your policies, create a litmus test to gauge the value of your policies. For example: If the policy prevents you from wowing a customer, it shouldn't exist. If the policy focuses on the person and not the behavior, it shouldn't exist. And the policy protects the president's ego at the cost of employee respect, it shouldn't exist. Every customer is an exception. Break rules, not hearts. Flexibility buys longevity. *Are the policies you're hiding behind offending and insulting customers?*

86. **Love louder.** At a recent White House tribute concert, Smokey Robinson shared the following insight: *“There are no new words. There are no new chords. And there are no new ideas. In my music, I just try to say, ‘I love you,’ as differently as I can.”* How does your brand say I love you? And are you asking your customers to sing that song with you? That’s the human reality: Service, schmervice – people want to be in love. You don’t need a focus group to figure that out. *And if that’s too touchy feely for you, too bad.* Companies who see love as a limited resource, as an endangered species, are never going to make it. But if you learn how to bring your heart to their ears, you’ll be around for a long time. Giving away love changes the kind of person you are as well as the kind of brand you represent. It’s time turn up the volume of your heart. *Is your brand worth singing about?*

87. Love people until they ask you why. Don't let them fade away quietly. Don't let them walk away silently. Be promiscuous with your heart. And do so without expecting payment. Don't wait for them to earn it. Don't wait for them to ask for it. Be indiscriminate with your spirit. And do so without demanding reciprocation. Don't obsess over fairness. Don't complain about the score. Be in the race to run, not to win. And do so without appraising value. Because it's not who loves you – it's whose life is better because you love them. *How long do you love people?*

88. Make communication a relaxing experience. During a recent outpatient procedure, my podiatrist administered three shots of local anesthetic to my foot. *Ouch*. But as much as it hurt, I'll never forget hearing the following words: "It's over Scott. I'm not going to hurt you anymore." Definitely one of the great calming remarks I've ever heard. That's what I love about Dr. Kauffman: He's a light and comfort to everyone he encounters. Nothing could be more relaxing. On the other hand, some medical professionals mere presence stresses patients out. *Yikes*. And if you want to avoid this label, the key is to ask yourself two key questions: *When you walk into a room, how does it change? And when you walk out of a room, how does it change?* And if you're not satisfied with the reactions you've been getting, don't criticize the room. Instead, look in the mirror. Because whatever change occurs to a room as you enter and exist in is a tangible representation of how your character, actions, words, reputation and personality have both preceded and affected the people around you. *What affect does your presence you have on the completion of the room?*

89. **Make loving you easy.** In the opening scene of the award-winning film, *The Social Network*, Mark Zuckerberg's girlfriend complains, "Dating you is like dating a Stairmaster!" Ever encountered a business like that? Sure you have. And odds are, you probably never went back. That's where companies blow it: They overlook the importance of making their brand a welcome oasis. A place of refuge, a place of belonging and a place of connection. My yoga studio, on the other hand, breathes out the love people need. It's a place where every student feels welcomed, affirmed and encouraged from the moment they strut in to the moment they stumble out. The best part is, by the end of class, you've completely forgotten about the fact that you just sweat off seven pounds of water weight doing the hardest possible physical exertion known to man. And you feel like you could take on the world. That's hard not to love. *Are you?*

90. **Make normal a possibility.** Secrecy is a lonely experience. People don't want to feel terminally unique – they want to feel like they're not alone. That's why it's so important to respond to their experience in a calm, even way. You have to meet them where they are. You have to be willing to go as deep – or as shallow – as they want to go. And you have to help them merge their checkered past into something that smacks of normality. My physician is an artist when it comes to this. He never fails to remind his patients that they're not the only ones having an experience. I remember the first time I came in with stomach problems. "Tell me about your typical day," he asked. So I did. And when I finished, he smiled and said, "Well, you certainly have a unique career path for someone your age. But your symptoms couldn't be more normal. Happens every day at this clinic. In fact, if you didn't have stomach problems, then I'd really be concerned." That was the love I needed to hear. Interestingly, I've only had to see him once in the past three years. Behold, the healing power of normality. *When was the last time one of your people trusted you with a secret?*

91. Make people's experience immediately available to them.

Lately, a lot of my speeches are being tweeted by audience members throughout the entire duration of the presentation. For marketing purposes, this rocks. Because people see people seeing value in my words. For feedback purposes, this rocks too. Because people tell me what worked best. But for witnessing purposes, this is essential. Especially when the presentation is over, the conference has ended and I'm sitting in the airport alone, waiting for my plane to board. All I have to do is check my tweet stream to see what my witnesses said. Done and done. Your challenge is to set up a similar system. Something gives people permission to reflect your experience back to you in real time. And whether you use a digital platform or a live feedback mechanism, I promise your work will never be the same. It's amazing how different art becomes when you know people are watching. *Who's testifying your value?*

92. **Make the mundane memorable.** Sam Walton was the first retailer to require all of his employees to wear nametags. The nametags helped the customers get to know the people they bought from, said Walton. What about you? How do your people get to know you? Here are a few ideas that might stick: What if you did video interviews with each of the company executives about their individual leadership visions? What if you removed everything from your purse, bag or wallet – spread it out on a table in an orderly fashion – then took a picture of it and posted it on your blog? What if, instead of your boring resume, bio or *curriculum vitae*, you published a downloadable and printable copy your Personal Constitution, Professional Philosophy, Theory of the Universe? Try one of these strategies to make mundane memorable and show your visitors who you really are. *What's your nametag?*

93. **Make them ask what's next.** All customers are control freaks. And they want to feel as if they're autonomous and in control of their environment and actions. Your challenge – whether it's over the phone, in person, via email or on a social networking site – is to preserve that sense. For example, you know your customers are ready to close you when they ask reverse closing questions like, “What's next?” or “What's the next step?” If you get to that point, well done. Because the goal is spend so much time listening and delivering value that price doesn't come up till the very end. Then, when it does – and they're ready – they'll ask you for the close. After all: Customers want to be pilots – not passengers. Now, this requires you to surrender your time, your information and your own desire for control. But it's worth it. Because customers who control their service experience with your company also control their spreading experience about your company. *How do you preserve customer control?*

94. **Master the wink.** Smart brands create a smile in the mind. They subtly tug our emotional heartstrings in a playful, respectful way. And instead of carefully architecting their image in every touchpoint, they steep themselves in casual panache. That's the secret to taking yourself less seriously: Adopting a more playful attitude in everything you do. Extracting the innate and inevitable funniness of your brand. Not through jokes. Not through cheap laughs. But through true humor. After all, humor is the only universal language. And it has the capacity to override people's native defenses. But, not if you use it as an additive. That's not humor – that's hair gel. And not if you use it at other people's expense, that's not humor – that's cruelty. *Are you aiming for stiff, formal and starched; or flexible, bouncy and sweet?*

95. **Mend, don't evade.** There's nothing that won't reveal itself if you love it enough. Next time you get a chance to answer the call to love, stop long enough for your heart to open. And believe that there's nothing love can't heal. *Have you committed to accepting love from everyone and everything?*

96. **Mindset rules the day.** Every customer touchpoint either adds to – or subtracts from – the overall brand of the organization. And your attitude affects how people experience you, and how people experience themselves in relation to you. Remember: The only thing customers can form an impression about is how interacting with you makes them feel. Having a bad day? Customers don't care. Didn't get your Starbucks Double Whipped Mochachino before work? Customers don't care. It's not about what you think – it's what they remember. *How many customers have you lost because of your attitude?*

97. **Mirrors don't hide the truth.** The word “witness” simply means, “to testify.” Which means the easiest way to become indispensable to people’s lives is to sit in the audience of their experience, then accurately tell the world what you saw. That’s how you acknowledge people, honor people, edify people and celebrate people: *By being a stand for their greatness.* What’s more, witnessing is the lifeblood longevity. Nobody in their right mind would walk away from a mirror that made them feel more beautiful. Your task is to be that mirror in people’s lives. To be that perpetual reflection they can’t function without. Focus on that and they’ll keep you around – even during the hard times. *When people look at you, what image do you reflect back to them?*

98. **Never get lazy with your audience.** Complacency is the merit badge you get for winning a marathon in your comfort zone. About ten years ago, U2 learned this lesson the hard way. Their album, *Pop*, sold fewer copies than any other record in their catalogue. As a result, the group made a public declaration: “Our band is reapplying for the job of the best band in the world.” But this wasn’t bravado or a publicity stunt – it was pure conviction. They sincerely wanted to squash the complacency they’d built around themselves. So they worked their tails off. And a year later, their tenth record, *All That You Can’t Leave Behind*, sold over thirty five million copies and won seven Grammys. All because they rooted out any sense of entitlement and got back to work. Of course, those guys can afford the setback – you can’t. Your challenge is to take action quicker than they did. After all, by the time you realize you’re trapped in the grasp of complacency – it’s already too late. You’re simply too close to yourself. *Are you standing on whale fishing for minnows?*

99. **Nonstop gratitude matters.** Gratitude is not a chore. It's not a corporate initiative. And it's not some annual act of forced kindness that makes you feel good about yourself. Gratitude is giving the gift of attention. Gratitude is to exist in a perpetual posture of thankfulness. Gratitude is a telling people how much better your life is because of them. Instead of reaching for another robotic, ready-made script about how important someone's call is, say something that invites customers to store memory in the heart. *How could you turn your words into a gift that erases the memory of every other gift customers have ever received?*

100. **Nothing is a smarter response.** Don't turn from silence – it's the gateway through which life's most profound insights enter. Next time someone comes to you, be careful not to talk just for the sake of talking. Sometimes the best thing you can say is nothing at all. Sometimes the best response is to hold someone's hand, look at her with compassionate eyes and remind her that she's not alone. In that moment, silence serves as a permission slip. It creates the space people need to slow down, process their thoughts and examine the nuances of the story they're telling. *Are you willing to accept silence as a normal, healthy part of your conversations?*

101. **Offer, don't require.** Love meets a closed heart with kindness. That's definitely not fair. Next time your ego attempts to turn love into a scorecard, try this: Focus on being a more loving person without worrying about what you're getting in return. *Are you afraid to extend your heart to people who disagree with you?*

102. **Out heart the competition.** There's no reason to be mean. Slinging hate, slashing tires, undercutting pricing and poaching customers is not the smartest way approach your competition. People buy from people, not from faceless conformist hierarchies. Follow the path of heart. Wear it on your sleeve. And let it bleed for the people who matter most. Love isn't something you feel – it's something you decide. If you haven't, people will find out. If you haven't, people will pick someone else. It's not a secret that love is what everybody secretly wants. Love looks good on everybody. It's the style that never goes out of style. *Do you wear it proudly?*

103. **Overflow, don't extract.** Bring forth your heart in every action. Instead of trying to dilute the distaste, just pour in more love. Next time you start a new relationship or partnership with someone, say this: "I want to learn all your little quirks, just so I can say I love you anyway." *Are you demanding that the people who love you change their essential nature so you feel more comfortable?*

104. **Own the small.** It's so easy to make customers happy. And like epoxy glue, all you need is a consistent flow of smalls drop to secure their loyalty to your organization. Here's my suggestion for your next staff meeting: Require each employee to make a list of the five small touches they do better than anybody. Then, use that list as an accountability measure to make sure your frontline staff are executing their expertise – even in those minor moments. It's not only fun – but it also empowers each employee to exert their distinctiveness in the service process. *What small touches are you an expert at?*

105. **Oxygenate the conversation.** People who incorporate deep, slow breathing into their daily actions never fail to become the calming force. Doing so is like taking your foot off the gas and engaging the conversational brakes. And according to a recent report from the National Institute of Mental Health, your breathing rhythm is a method to train the body's reaction to stressful situations and dampen the production of harmful stress hormones. Next time one of your coworkers starts freaking out, try this: Instead of telling them to take a deep breath – which runs the risk of sounding like their third grade teacher – try engaging your own lungs first. You'll find that actions of calm will inspire people to relax, whereas instructions for calm will incite people to react. Linda, my massage therapist, is a master of this. Whenever I come in for an appointment, she treats our sessions as meditations. She doesn't say a word – she just rubs and breathes. And after a few minutes, I am reduced to jelly. Lesson learned: When you own your breath, nobody can steal your peace; but when you inspire others to own their breath, nobody will want you to leave the room. Fast heart, slow lungs works every time. *How's your breathing?*

106. **Petition people's plunge.** The greatest gift you can give someone is to throw them over the wall. To compel their commitment. To challenge them to push their chips to the middle of the table and play for keeps. I remember the exact moment this happened to me: I was working full time as a furniture salesman, doing my writing and publishing on the side. After a nervous presentation at a Rotary Club, the president – a ninety year old retired surgeon – approached me with the following advice: “Stop selling couches. You need to become a speaker.” That was a gift. That was a shove moment. And was an interaction that made my path brighter. I took his advice and never looked back. *Who do you know that desperately needs to be disturbed into action?*

107. **Photography is priceless.** A picture doesn't just say a thousand words – it earns a thousand dollars. Literally. In my experience, a cool, interesting, unique and brand-consistent headshot has the power to book new business, secure media interviews and capture the eyes, hearts and wallets off the masses. But only if you do it right. Only if you pay a real photographer real money to capture the real you. Otherwise your headshot comes out as the same bland, fist-to-chin, Sears Portrait Studio tripe that every other amateur uses on the profile of her Facebook page. Blech. On the other hand, when your pictures rock, the world doesn't just pay attention – it pays dividends. For example, I'll never forget the time I gave a speech in Biloxi, Mississippi. While commuting from the hotel to the conference center, I unexpectedly drove past my own headshot on a highway billboard. I was so stunned that I nearly swerved off the road. Talk about surreal. But apparently my client loved the picture so much; she wanted to share it with the entire city. And I was happy to let her. *Is your headshot billboard worthy?*

108. **Playful is the new professional.** Professional is just a word for brands that seek to sanitize the soul out of business. Instead of delivering emotionless, forgettable non-service, bring your humanity to the moment. Don't let the feeling of formality keep you from communicating freely, either. Speak with soul. Ant up the emotional temperature. Delete every dehydrated, annoying, tired, vague, empty, overused eye-rolling piece of jargon in your marketing materials. Talk friendly. Talk like people talk. Because the goal of your brand is to make this moment, right now, a more humane, pleasant passing of time. *How much value are you sacrificing on the altar of professionalism?*

109. **Pour, don't give.** Love is a respiratory requirement. And when you breathe out the love people need, they gasp with joy. Next time you see an opportunity to keep quiet, tell the truth. Especially when there's no reason to be honest. Lavish and heap and overwhelm people with it. *How strong is your honesty asset?*

110. **Preserve people's sense of control.** Did you know that most close door buttons on elevators don't work? It's true – they're called placebo buttons. They've been around since the Americans with Disabilities Act passed about twenty years ago. And according to the act's homepage, the button is there for workers and emergency personnel to use, and it only works with a key. Also, according to the Otis Elevator Company, most door close buttons can't override the minimum required amount of time doors can stay open. Whether or not you press the buttons, the doors will eventually close. So buttons *do* work, just not for the elevators. Their *real* function is to preserve people's sense of control. And the minute you reinforce and preserve that control, your organization wins. *What's your elevator button?*

111. **Preserve people's story.** When my friend Stacey Wehe suffered major scarring on her voice box after oral surgery, she lost the ability to speak. After an unsuccessful string of doctors and speech therapists, there was no doubt: She needed an outlet to share her story. So she founded a storytelling non-profit called The St. Louis Ten. Over a year later, hundreds of people gather each month to share and listen to each other's stories. I've only attended a few times, but the event is nothing short of amazing. Bottom line: Human beings are lonely and want to be listened to. Each soul is laden with its own story to tell. And anytime you can give voice to people's experience, you add value to their lives – and to the world. Your mission is to build that platform, step back, watch people's legacy shine. After all, how your story lives on is the truest form of life after death. *What stage are you providing?*

112. **Provide a virtual steering wheel.** My friend Chris Johnson sells flat rate web jobs. One of the cool things about working with his company is the *very* moment your transaction is complete, you're prompted with a video. It doubles as a thank-you note and multimedia tutorial: "Thanks for your purchase," says an enthusiastic voice on the screen. "This brief video will explain exactly how to use the program you just paid for. That way you can get the most out of our services." This is a perfect tool for preserving customer control for several reasons. First, it's immediate. No waiting. No wondering. And no window between when you buy and when you start using. Second, the video closes the execution gap. Instead customers just paying money and then fading into the ether, Chris equips them with step-by-step instructions to optimize their purchase. Finally, the video assures that customers know exactly what they are buying. And that level of expectational clarity is priceless. *How are you guiding your customers along the uncertain path?*

113. **Provide clear, consistent contact points for managing progress.** As a lifelong control freak, I'm fortunate to have a web team whose amazing client service appeases my obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Check this out: Every time I put in a request for a programming modification, they email me with a copy of my Support Ticket. It includes my original request, a status report and the name of the tech involved with my project. Over the life of the project, I'm emailed with occasional, non-annoying updates that keep me posted on the ticket's progress. Eventually, when the ticket is done, I can offer feedback on the process. Lesson learned: The speed of the response is the response. Even if you're not able to solve your customer's problem right away, consistent assurance that you're on the case preserves their sense of control. *How are do you update your customers on their statuses?*

114. **Provide information plus interaction.** Content is great for deepening awareness, but only through contact do you deepen an emotional connection. Only through contact can you truly resonate with the soul of another human being. And whether it's in person, over the phone or online, here's the formula: Create simple, inclusive, accessible, relevant and human encounters that change the momentary experience of engaging with your brand. Here are a few examples to consider: Are you providing people with opportunities to participate, like making blog comments open to the public? Are you creating invitations to act and engage with your brand, like running contests on social media platforms? And are you creating acts of intimacy in moments of distance, like encouraging clients to upload picture of themselves joyfully using what you sell? I hope so. Because content without contact is conartistry. *What act will you deliver to draw people into the deeper meaning of what your brand does?*

115. **Question is a smarter response.** Some questions aren't questions – they're matches. And often times, that's what people really need: Someone to infect them with just enough fuel to uncover their own answers. Someone to pump up the volume of the voice they most want to be quiet. And someone to help them connect the dots, see beyond what is, and feel a greater sense of self-achievement. Just be sure not to ask too many questions. Otherwise you'll override people's mental motherboards and smoke will start coming out of their heads. Next time someone turns to you, don't overlook the value of asking one disturbing question – and shutting up. *Are you a question mark?*

116. **Reflection is a smarter response.** I once dated a woman who was undergoing a career transition. One afternoon while complaining about her idiot boss, I defaulted to coach mode and started dispensing answers. Huge mistake. She interrupted and exclaimed, “I don’t need you to help me – I need you to bitch with me.” So I did. We had a bitchfest. And admittedly, it was kind of fun. Almost like a game of improv. Point being, even if complaining isn’t your preferred method for dealing with problems, if it’s the response people need most, you have to honor that request. Otherwise your desire to fix, be right and look smart becomes a barrier to being helpful. *Are you a human mirror?*

117. **Refuse to take ownership of their emotions.** Let's say you work with someone who creates more drama than a high school prom. *Perfect.* Next time they start freaking out, don't waste your breath telling them to calm down. This does nothing but compound their frustration. Your job is to become a body of water. Instead of steeling yourself – still yourself. Keep your vocal pitch and volume low. Limit your physical movements. And avoid anything that might fuel already escalating emotions. This practice, while it takes significant self-control, will invite people to see the reflection of their own reactivity and enable the release of negative energy. And hopefully, as their emotional engine runs out of steam, your stillness will serve as a subtle bell of awareness to bring people back to center. Either that or they'll club you over the head with a stapler. Remember: You can't put people at ease if you're not at ease with yourself. *Is your silence a positive motivator?*

118. **Remember the customer of the customer.** As a public speaker, I travel a lot. Naturally, I experience my share of airline delays. Fortunately, when my ride picks me up at the airport, she's never uncertain about my flight status. Why? Because she parks in the Cell Phone Lot. It's a new feature offered at Lambert International that beautifully preserves customer control. Located a few blocks from the main terminal, it opens early and closes late. And with a giant screen indicating flight statuses, airline records and other relevant information, picker-uppers can relax in their cars without worrying about when (or if) their loved ones are going to arrive. The cool part is, this example doesn't just focus on the customer – but the people closest to the customer. Which, if you think about it, is a customer too. Your job is to figure out whom your customer needs to look good for. Whom they need to make happy. Whom they're coming home to. *Are you forgetting about the people who matter to the people who matter?*

119. **Respond with a foundation of affirmation.** Next time people share their mistakes, thank them for being vulnerable enough to be imperfect. Thank them for giving you the chance to love them unfairly. And thank them for the opportunity to create a service moment. In the process, you'll demonstrate unreasonable compassion, unexpected empathy and unprecedented gratitude. You'll set a precedent of approachability, deepen your reputation for loving people anyway and make people who aren't your customers, wish they were. That's an act of forgiveness in a moment of transgression. And people don't just remember it – they'll repeat it. *When was the last time you turned a mistake into a gift?*

120. **Responses, not answers.** Not everyone is looking for an answer. When people turn to you, sometimes all they want is a response. Here's the difference: When you give answers, you fix. When you give answers, you offer advice. When you give answers, you try to be right. When you give answers, you add unnecessary value. When you give answers, you dominate the discussion. When you give answers, you impose your own direction. When you give answers, you rob people of the learning experience. You speak from a place of information. However, when you offer responses, you dance in the moment. When you offer responses, you acknowledge their truth. When you offer responses, you leave people feeling heard. When you offer responses, you practice emotional restraint. When you offer responses, you let people learn things on their own. When you offer responses, you reflect people's immediate experience. When you offer responses, you get out of the way and give people space to process. You speak from a place of affirmation. *Which do you practice?*

121. **Schedule time for making mistakes.** The psychological and social pressure that prevents people from making mistakes is also preventing your company from getting better. I'm reminded of the book *What Would Google Do*, in which Jeff Jarvis makes a powerful point: "Google never makes you feel foolish for making mistakes. It graciously asks when you misspell or mistype if you meant something else. It doesn't waste your time trying to find what you want. It just gives you a blank box and puts the world behind it." That's the big secret: Rewarding mistakes doesn't just make your customers happy – it makes your company smarter. *How do you make screwing up okay?*

122. **Send love letters.** Companies that inject soul, win. Companies who are touchy feely, win. Companies willing to brand their humanity, win. That's not customer service – that's a love letter. Your brand is measured by how you love. But contrary to popular conditioning: Love is not a weakness. Love is not a combination lock. Love is not an instrument of control. Lead with your heart. Tell your customers you love them before somebody else does. Love is the bell that's always ringing. *Is your brand brave enough to hear it?*

123. Shock people with your love. According to a study by the Customer Contact Council, about ten percent of Comcast's service calls have nothing to do with their products. To leverage this asset, the company recently launched a help service for residential customers. And now, for a fee, customers can receive help with problematic wireless gaming consoles, personal computers, tablets, smartphones, and networking equipment – none of which are actually Comcast products. This is the kind of contact you can't put a price on. The kind of contact worth crossing the street for. And if your brand wants to deliver the same, think about what underleveraged assets you might be able to exploit. Think about what populations of readers, customers or subscribers you might be able to attend to in a delightfully shocking way. Escort them with your love and watch the fireworks begin. After all, content is a commodity – but contact is a communion. *How does your brand deliver unexpected value?*

124. **Show up for people.** Open your store ten minutes early. Keep your doors unlocked ten minutes late. Answer the phones after normal business hours. Talk to customers while you're still setting up the booth. Field a few questions on your lunch break. Leave comments on customer's digital platforms. Come in for an hour on Sunday. Follow up six months later just to see how everything is going. These are the love letters smart companies send. And that's your challenge: Not just to show up, but to show up when you're tired and scared. To show up when you're not asked, not ready and not prepared. To show up when you're not expected, not being paid and not in the mood. And to show up when it's not your place, not your job and not your responsibility. Truth is, love is the natural impulse of the heart. And it would be a shame to suppress it just to comply with some outdated, pointless rule that strokes the ego of a soulless executive in windowless boardroom. Show up for your customers. *When is it hardest for you to show up?*

125. **Slow down.** You can touch what you can't catch. And you can't feel what you can't follow. If you want others to have a warmer, richer experience when they're around you, learn to pump the brakes. Shift into neutral if you have to. Otherwise you'll continue borrowing from approachability to fund velocity. And whatever meager dividends remain will leave people feeling untouched. A helpful question to ask throughout your day is, "Why am I rushing?" Odds are, you won't come up with a good answer. You might not slow down right away. But this friendly mental disruption will create a newfound awareness. And before you know it, communicating with you will become a more relaxing experience. Remember: When people come into contact with you, it should be emotionally rewarding – not physically draining. Haste doesn't make waste – it makes people feel ignored. *What elements of your daily routine could be slower?*

126. **Speak out when a voice is needed.** Beth Brooke, Global Vice Chair of Ernst & Young once said, “Every one of us has a platform. It changes over time and looks different for every individual, but we all have one. Use it to make a difference.” The advantage is: There has never been a better time in history to reach the world. But the question is: *What is the world begging you to give voice to?* To find an answer, get online. Take advantage of every listening post you can find. After all, social media isn’t a sales tool – it’s a hearing aid. And it’s the single greatest way to pinpoint the issues your platform needs to give voice to. Remember: When a voice is needed, closed lips are an obscenity. *What did you publish this week?*

127. **Speak to the heart of human experience.** Here's why Starbucks rocks: They understand that "home" isn't just the house you live in – it's the space you return everyday. Sure, they don't know what's going on in your life when you walk in the door. But their store still provides you with an act of escape in a moment of chaos. It's a daily refuge for people. And that's ten times more addictive than the caffeine. Unfortunately, that's where most companies lose: *They fail to recognize and affirm our shared humanity.* But if you want to out heart the competition, you have to master that deeper humanity within your work. And then you have to embed it into your job function on a daily basis. Consider these examples: First, virus protection software. Their job is to preserve the inalienable right of digital freedom. Second, insurance companies. Their job is to help people live their lives free from fear every day. Third, trade associations: Their job is to create a network of human healing. *Has your brand anchored itself in the concrete foundation of compassion?*

128. **Spray, don't hoard.** Love doesn't discriminate. It should be shared with the people who cannot love you back. No matter how unfair that is. Next time you encounter a tormentor; love them with a constant heart. Even you know for sure that they're wrong. *Are you willing to fall in love with things most people are turned off by?*

129. **Squash complacency.** Relationships work when you work at them. Period. Otherwise they degrade into predictable, boring and complacent stalemates. And that's when people start to feel invisible. If you want to avoid getting lazy with your customers, ask one crucial question: *How do you recognize longtime partners in a unique, memorable and spreadable way?* And I'm not talking about thoughtless, uninspiring holiday cards that get trashed instantly. Or impersonal, emotionless autoresponders reminding people how important their business is to you. This is about creating an emotional connection that deepens over time. Gifting – not just giving – meaningful rewards that recognize outstanding contributions to your organization. That's why my company manufactures brandtags. These customized limited edition art pieces, or "identity collages," completely erase the memory of any other gift your clients have ever received. With a brandtag, you make people feel essential. With a brandtag, you make gratitude palpable and recurrent. And with a brandtag, you prove that recognition isn't some corporate initiative – it's a constitutional ingredient. Remember: Ingratitude is the gateway drug to complacency. And complacency the merit badge you get for winning a marathon in your comfort zone. *How do you thank people?*

130. **Stay close when a heart is needed.** I understand your hesitation. Opening up is terrifying. When you give someone your heart, there's always the chance that they'll give it back to you in pieces. That's the brand of vulnerability you invite when you dare to care. And I've been burned by it before. A couple of times. But life without risk, isn't. You can't outsmart getting hurt. And you can't stay one step ahead of the pain forever. Eventually, you have to lean into it. *Come on.* If there's a person who needs you – and you believe that staying close is a chance worth taking – take it. Show them that they're worth being strong for. People don't forget. *Who desperately needs access to your heart?*

131. **Stay hungry.** The word complacent derives from the Latin *complacentia*, which means, “satisfied.” Which means the opposite of complacency isn’t happiness – it’s hunger. That is, being proactive in the way you honor, recognize and thank the people whose relationships are essential to your existence. If you want to create an emotional connection that deepens over time, consider these ideas: First, treat gratitude as ongoing process. A calendar of consistent thankful action. Not just a trying chore or an isolated event. Second, give meaningful rewards that recognize outstanding contributions to your organization. Make gratitude palpable and recurrent by giving gifts people remember and keep forever. Third, give compliments that matter. Show people that they’re not just important, but essential. After all, people love to hear how great they are, but they long to hear how great you’ve become because of who they are. Remember: Success never comes unassisted. Live your life as a thank you in perpetuity to the people who matter most, and they’ll always remain by your side. *Are you trying to satisfy today’s hunger with yesterday’s meal?*

132. **Stop nickel and diming customers.** I used to work in guest services for a large hotel chain. And in the two years of my stint, the most consistent complaint from our guests was about minor charges. But that wasn't surprising: The bigger the hotel, the more small things you have to pay for. Drury Inn, on the other hand, positions their brand with the tagline, "Where the extras aren't extra." Free breakfast. Free beverages. Free copies. Free wireless. Free phone calls. Free cable. Free parking. Free coffee. Which probably costs them a nice chunk of change at the end of the year. But at least thousands of their guests don't check out pissed off. What about you? Please tell me you don't take yourself so seriously that you're sacrificing experience on the altar of expense. Not good for business. *How often are you nickel and diming your customers?*

133. **Stop superimposing customer needs.** Is it important to the customer, or does it just make you feel better? That's a hard pill to swallow. But it's easy to project onto a customer what you think they ought to want. The problem is, that's not always what they need. And too many customer service professionals are taking pride in things that don't actually matter. The key is to remember: You are not your customer. Consider your current service offerings. See how many useless processes and action items things you could delete and then replace them with direct feedback you solicit from your customers. *Are you really providing service, or just servicing yourself?*

134. **Swift responsiveness matters.** The medium is the message. The speed of the response is the response. And when you become known for returning calls, sending emails and replying to instant messages quicker than anyone else, people don't just pay attention – they pay money. Because speed is a form of currency. Speed is an asset that appreciates with every interaction in which it is exalted. And even if you don't have all the answers. Customers would rather you get back to them right away just to say you're on the case, than having to wait three days just to discover you still haven't solved it. *When was the last time one of your customers said, "Wow, that was fast?"*

135. **Tactical is rarely timeless.** If you want your performance to be wholly engrossing, give people ideas that will be relevant in fifty years. That's the stuff of real flesh and blood. Otherwise you're just dispensing tactics. And if people can get those online – for free – what do they need you for? Consider these ideas: First, avoid getting caught in the seductive undertow of trendy inconsequentialities. Strategies are nice, but eventually they will reach the end of their product lifecycle. Which means you'll have to start over. Second, design matters. Always. No matter what you do, how you do it, why you do it, and whom you do it for, beauty makes you timeless. Make friends with it. Third, speak with a transcending tongue. Go straight to the heart of the human experience. And allow the theme behind what you do to speak louder than the era in which you do it. Finally, peel away the superficiality of your message. Instead of firing off a bunch of depthless trivialities, coat your voice in blood. Personal becomes universal, and universal lasts forever. Look: There's nothing more frightening than the prospect of irrelevancy. It's always worth investing extra time in making your message more timeless. *What are you doing to keep from fading away?*

136. **Take yourself less seriously.** Think about the last time one of your customers made the following complaint: *“I like their product, but I just wish the company would take themselves more seriously.”* Exactly. They’ve never said that. Ever. We live in a litigious, hypersensitive and politically correct society. And instead of branding their humanity, organizations – in the name of “professionalism” – are prohibiting their employees from expressing any shred of soul in their work. Here’s why that’s dangerous: When you take yourself too seriously, you limit yourself. You lose perspective. You miss moments of joy. You stifle the growth process. You create unnecessary stress. You forget who you really are. And there are some things in life worth taking seriously: Health. Values. Relationships. Commitments. Honesty. The new season of *Glee*. But when it comes to your business, when it comes to your brand and most importantly, when it comes to your employees and customers – lighten up. Nobody ever got mad at their boss for being too much fun. *Are you a statue?*

137. **Terminate the average.** There's nothing wrong with firing customers. Happens all the time. The tricky part is saying no to the wrong people who will gladly give you money when your company really needs it. The secret is: Saying no to the good makes room to say yes to the best. Otherwise you'll never know. You'll never meet that perfect customer who would go to the ends of the Earth for you, because you were too busy focusing on the people who don't matter. That's the power of a positive no. *What standards do you maintain for rejecting customers?*

138. **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?*

139. **The show started a year ago.** If you're waiting until your performance starts, it's already too late. That's the big misconception about room ownership: It commences long before you walk in the door. It's not about leveraging power phrases, employing strategic hand gestures or yakking out a steady stream of rhetorical devices. It's about living your life in a way that creates an honorable, attractive and intriguing reputation that's waiting for you when you walk in the door. And it's about engaging your fans in a conversation that's honest, prompt and personal so they're waiting with baited breath when you walk on stage. That way, all you have to do is smile, set yourself on fire and let people watch you burn. Remember: If you just started preparing for it the night before the performance, you've lost your audience long before you walked in the door. *Are people waiting with baited breath to hear your very first words?*

140. **True care matters.** You don't need another soulless bureaucratic tactic that bastardizes caring into a technique. What you need is to create a sincere individual strategy that shows people you care about their experience when they're interacting with you. That's the beauty of care: It's found in the basic. It's when you bother to bother. It's when you show up, even when you're scared, and take five extra minutes to do something that people remember forever. The best part is, caring is like epoxy glue. It only takes a few drops to make it stick. You just have to listen to find out where people need the glue applied. *Do you have the courage to care?*

141. **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?*

142. **Understand room equity.** This is a term I coined a few years ago when I wrote *The Approachable Leader*. And it hinges upon two key questions: When you walk into a room, how does it change? When you walk out of a room, how does it change? That's the thing: Owning the room isn't about being larger than life – it's about making the room larger by injecting it with life. It's not about controlling people – it's about acting like the audience is your people. It's not about being the most important person in the room – it about embodying the most important idea in the room. And it's not about waiting for people to respond to your very presence – it's about enlarging people so much that they wonder who was responsible. That's the first challenge: To think about your current level of room equity. Because whatever change occurs to the room is a tangible representation of how your character, reputation and personality have been experienced by the people around you. Remember: It's not just how people experience you – it's how they experience themselves in relation to you. *What is the temperature of your presence?*

143. **Unexpected honesty matters.** Honestly is attractive because it always has been. It's a classical value. And few virtues have been around longer. What's changed is, technology makes dishonesty easier to spot, quicker to spread and harder to disguise. Which means that every interaction that leaves a customer skeptical about your truthfulness, makes your company suck a little bit more. If you want your interactions to matter, tell the truth when there's no reason to be honest. Tell the truth when most people would say nothing. *How are you branding your honesty?*

144. Use every available tool to nurture your relationships.

The advantage of technology is that it provides you with multiple points of contact. It allows you to meet people where they are and tune into their preferred frequency, instead of forcing them to conform to your communication style. For example: Some people prefer phone calls, some prefer email. Some prefer face-to-face meetings; some prefer text and instant messaging. And some people prefer Facebook, while others prefer Twitter. *Fine.* Whatever it takes. Use everything. You're in a position where you can respond to the idiosyncratic needs of each person efficiently and expeditiously. My suggestion is twofold: First, keep tabs on which medium people prefer. That way you can always reach them the way they want to be reached. Second, let people know how you preferred to be reached. That way you remain accessible without violating your own boundaries. Ultimately, and as long as you stay organized, stay updated and stay connected, you'll be able to nurture your relationships through a variety of tools. And the risk of complacency will drop dramatically. *What systems can you put in place to make sure everyone feels heard?*

145. **What can't be measured, matters.** There are three kinds of people in this world: 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. Which type of person are you? Which type of person would your customers say you are? That's what smart companies know: *Customers want you to matter to them.* It's time to give them what they want. It's time to selflessly promote the growth of others. And it's time to stop playing by a bunch of unspoken, oppressive company rules – and risk your face for someone. *Have you made the choice to matter?*

146. **When people panic, give them instructions.** Consider the recent emergency with Qantas Flight 32. According to the Associated Press article, a jet engine as big as a bus had disintegrated, blasting shrapnel holes in the super jumbo's wing. The odds of that many failures occurring simultaneously were one and a hundred million. But veteran pilot Richard de Crespigny handled the chaos exquisitely. I even listened to the announcement recorded on a passenger's cell phone several times, and The Captain was perfectly collected. Here's the transcript: "We have a technical issue with our engine. We have dealt with this situation. The aircraft is secure. And we're going to have to hold for a little while as we lighten our load and perform a number of checklists. Thanks for your patience and we promise to keep you posted." Thanks to his calming force, the aircraft averted what could have been a catastrophe. And whether you're flying a plane, leading a team, consoling a teammate or delivering a presentation to a frightened audience, the lesson is the same: People want to know what action you're going to take to fix their problem. This preserves their sense of control and realigns the balance of power. Explain every step of the process. Even the things that could possibly go wrong. Timelines reduce anxiety. *Will your calm influence infect the people around you?*

147. **Witness people's lives.** Nobody wants to look back and feel that their life was just a series of small incidents. They need proof. They need your eyes. Because without witness, their lives go unnoticed, unaffirmed and misunderstood. Sounds existentially agonizing to me. To be a better witness, start by being a better mirror. Affirm the value of people's accomplishments by constantly asking them, "How did you do that?" This allows you to become a stand for people's greatness. And it gives them a front row seat to their own brilliance. Plus you might learn something cool. Personally, I like to use the platform of writing to do so. Whether it's online via social media or in print in my columns, whenever I feature someone in my work, it's a form of witnessing. And I always send them a copy when it's published. *How are you being sensitive to people's visibility needs?*

148. **Wow is a smarter response.** Not saying the wrong thing at the wrong time is equally as important as saying the right thing at the right time. Especially in highly emotional situations, the last thing you want is to make the other person think, “You’re not helping.” Instead of dispensing bumper sticker platitudes, rote responses, disrespectful minimizers, empty promises or false empathy, just say, “Wow.” It’s the most versatile word in the English language. It acknowledges people’s emotions. And it buys you time to think of what to say next. *Are you short-circuiting people’s emotional realities?*

149. **You can't work incognito.** If facts worked, the gym would be crowded. But it's not. And here's why: Numbers don't inspire commitment – story does. And if you don't dress your truth in it, you'll never out heart the competition. Here are the two questions that matter: Are you telling a better, funnier, more spreadable and more emotional story than the competition? As is that story embedded into every nook and cranny of your brand's existence? If not, your product is just a commodity. Another annoying interruption that's going to be forgotten anyway. Look: You don't need public speaking lessons – you need to cut your soul open. And you need to express yourself from that place relentlessly and expressively. Even if it scares you. Even if it scares others. Because you intentionally set out to make the viewer blink, you incidentally end up making the viewer buy. Remember: Don't be afraid to chose a better story. Shout it from the rooftops or risk being ignored. *Does your work evoke an active resonance or a dull thud?*

150. **You can't automate authenticity.** If I see one more book, one more article or one more corporate training program on “authenticity,” I swear to god, I’m going to snap. Here’s the reality: Authenticity is not a strategy. It’s not a parlor trick. It’s not a corporate initiative. And it’s not a five-step system you learn at a conference. Authenticity is giving your values a heartbeat. Authenticity is standing on the foundation of your rarity. Authenticity is bringing your humanity to the moment. That’s the whole misconception: It’s not something you try to be – it’s something you allow yourself to share. It’s a gift, and it has the potential to change the recipient forever, but only if it’s done by hand – not by handbook. *What are you trading your authenticity for?*

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.