

A person with curly hair is seen from behind, sitting on a white park bench. They are looking out over a vast, open field under a clear sky at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The field is covered in dry, brown grass, and there are some trees in the distance. The bench has a white lattice backrest.

Left on a Park Bench

The Art of Transforming Professional Life

by David P. Diana

INTRODUCTION

“Left on a Park Bench” is a digital book experience about possibility and opportunity. It contains a unique set of stories, video clips, professional development strategies, and resources that evolved over the past two years, each piece born out of timely inspiration and direct experience.

At its most basic level, it is a book dedicated to the exploration of personal success and professional development. It offers the reader an opportunity to reflect, explore, and find the possibilities that arise when you see your story in a different light and context.

“Left on a Park Bench” receives its inspiration from a real life story about a boy who was quite literally...left on a park bench. His world spiraled out of control because the systems and people who were supposed to support him could not hold up their end of the bargain. His story taught me that commitment to our ideas, and to our personal success, brings forth untold opportunity for others to succeed.

The story, as you'll soon discover in the upcoming pages, asks you to remember those moments when you felt adrift or disillusioned, when you saw with the very same eyes as that abandoned child. It challenges you to move forward for yourself and others with determination.

You have a choice to find and share your unique gifts, to make a difference, and to see “work” differently. In the process of doing this, I hope the stories that make up this book inspire you to action and greater heights.

Here's to your journey.

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Part 1: Professional Transformation



Left on a Park Bench

Why Your Success Matters

(Note: All names, ages, places, and some facts have been changed to protect the parties involved. While I have changed the story, its "true essence" remains intact and is a fair representation of my experiences as a mental health professional.)

His name was Michael, and at 14 years of age he already lived longer than you and me combined. The first day I opened his case file it read like a Stephen King novel. Michael's story began years earlier and unfolded like a bad movie that should never have been made. At the age of six, he lived alone with his drug-addicted mother, drowning in a sea of chaos.

And then...a glimmer of hope.

It was cruel really. The kind of hope that makes you let your guard down, and tells you to believe again. Loving foster parents took in Michael, and his new foster dad offered love and compassion that spilled over in buckets. He loved Michael dearly, but their time together would not last long. Michael's only source of affection would die violently of a heart attack. His foster dad's life, was a mere flash of light and hope that quickly disappeared. Days later, his foster mother would decide she could not care for him on her own, repeating a pattern of abandonment that would haunt him forever.

Michael's biological father, a lifelong criminal and sociopath, suddenly entered his life. He took Michael away without warning and plunged him into even more chaos using the boy to pillage stores, buy drugs, and engage in sexual escapades and prostitution.

For several years they traveled across the country, running wild, until they arrived at a mid-sized city deep in the heartland of America. Michael's father liked the location and spoke of finding work and settling down. One bright morning, he surprised Michael with a visit to the local petting zoo. They laughed, ate stale popcorn, and connected like never before. And for once, his father seemed happy.

I can only imagine what took place next.

"Wait here on this bench a bit son and enjoy your ice cream. I have a job interview that might really turn things around for you and me. I'll be back as soon as it's over. Wish me luck!"

Hours passed while Michael, all of 9 years old, sat on that bench. The sun settled and rose, and Michael remained on the bench as if it were a raft drifting along a vast expanse of ocean. It took two days before someone realized he was lost and alone.

Michael never told me what he thought or felt when his father abandoned him forever on that park bench. He had little time to process what happened as he was quickly launched into a dysfunctional and underfunded system with good intentions but poor outcomes. He went through a series of abusive foster homes and sub-par treatment. Not surprisingly, Michael began acting out.

He started demonstrating “odd” behavior according to various reports, the kind that brought him to me, by now a 14-year old frightened and disconnected child.

He seemed unreachable.

Until one day, when Michael met in my office after he'd been involved in a fighting incident. He looked up at me with sunken wet eyes, paused to wipe away tears, and asked in a soft, broken voice that would melt the most hardened of souls...

“Will you help me Mr. David?”

I didn't know if I could. I didn't even know if I had the desire.

Success begets Success

You must come to know that the work you strive for matters. Michael's story touches on the belief that our success connects to a greater story.

What if those of us in the helping professions felt empowered by opportunity as opposed to feeling defeated by broken systems? Perhaps Michael would have fared better.

It's an annoying cliché to call for change, but I'm doing it anyway. I'm doing it for Michael.

Change, as you very well know, is hard. So when we speak of “finding new opportunity” for ourselves, we quickly realize there are significant obstacles to overcome. We exist in a work culture so monolithic that entertaining a new business

solution or considering a career path even slightly “outside the box” is met with suspicion. People are taught to stay within a tiny range of possibilities, and when this occurs, everyone suffers. I was on this very path when Michael asked for my help. I found it nearly impossible to identify solutions for him. Even worse, I was beaten down, deflated, and numb to the idea of helping people altogether.

Keep this in mind as you read further. It's essential that you turn to your interests without compromise, and find that place of possibility. This book looks closely at ideas, approaches, and resources to help you find your own personal success.

When you strive for personal success in a way that is genuine, you touch the lives of those who feel themselves drifting.

You break the cycle and step off the bench.

The Intellectual Integrity of Commitment

Drinking coffee with friends, I loved myself dearly. We all did really. We would talk for hours about the meaning of life, referencing Kierkegaard, Camus, Dostoevsky, or any number of courageous thinkers we admired. And I remember looking upon issue after issue with cool detachment as if I were a scientist observing what I saw from a microscope. We'd examine different schools of thought and discuss their positive points and subsequent weaknesses for hours on end. And while this experience was an important part of my personal development I must confess that today, I see it as an impediment to true knowing.

Part of the problem was my unwillingness to act or take a stand. I viewed commitment as the antithesis of intellectual maturity. Consider this fantastic statement from theologian, Karl Rahner.

"Thus it is that a person is not free if he maintains his freedom through skepticism, if he does not get involved, if, through a dreadful fear of falling into error, he will not respond to an insight in absolute terms; he ends up having struck the worse bargain. He lives, lives once, and sets up something that cannot be called back.... Moreover, it is quite impossible to function in a dimension this side of commitment. In fact, the attempt to remain neutral is nothing other than refusal to respond thoughtfully to decisions that arise in the actual carrying out of one's life. For at least one commitment is inevitable, and that is the decision to see life as an absurdity or as the expression of an unutterably mysterious meaning. In short, intellectual integrity requires that one summon the courage necessary to spiritual decision, even when this decision is burdened with all the uncertainty, darkness, and fear of a mind bound to history and the finite, a mind conscious of its limitations but nevertheless resolved to commit itself."

We must be mindful of the seduction that is "sitting on the sidelines". In Rahner's case, he was looking at the broader scope of "meaning" in life. However, his message is equally powerful and pointed when we speak of growth in other areas.

Consider professional development as one such area. We are taught to critically analyze the work being done in our profession so we can form our own hypotheses. This is a fine first step, but eventually, we need to stand for something. We need to find that "something" where we say...ALL IN! That kind of commitment will not come about through absolute knowing. Each of us must step into the great unknown if we are to achieve success at that level.

Understand that your commitment is not a weakness.

Your courage to take a step forward in the work you do is, in the end, the highest form of intellectual integrity.

Boxing or Ballet

It is simply part of the human condition. We twist ourselves around a discursive thinking process where logic and reason prevail. Our minds ramble on and on trying to make sense of an idea, conflict or challenge.

- *Should I play it safe or be frivolous?*
- *Is the idea I have good or bad?*
- *I want to do this, but maybe I'm not good enough.*
- *Should I sign up for boxing or ballet?*

Several weeks ago I attended a writing workshop by best selling author and teacher, Natalie Goldberg. She made the argument that 90% of writing is listening and receiving. I thought the statement was worth sharing because it can be applied to just about anything you and I do!

Breaking Through Polarity

In an attempt to free our minds from the trap of polarity, Natalie walked us through various exercises. One of which required each person to list conflicts they struggle with on a consistent basis. She asked us to map them out in a typical “this or that” manner.

The group began taking turns sharing what they had written. And that is when I heard one woman in particular. She stood up and deadpanned, “Boxing or Ballet”. It was rich in symbolism, and I found it to be a fantastic metaphor about identity formation and the struggle to break free from the boxes we are placed in.

Sometimes, in order to find an answer, or to simply find your footing, you must go beyond the obvious options. “Boxing or Ballet?” Perhaps there's a third or fourth choice somewhere along the continuum.

Breaking through the noise of labeling, judging and analyzing is of great benefit to aspiring writers. It frees a person so they are able to speak from someplace else. I'm wondering if you and I can take that same challenge? Step out of our comfort zone and find new insight.

Maybe it starts by taking a small risk.

I don't know what exactly...breakfast for dinner? Allowing yourself a few moments each day to sit and relax? It could be any number of things.

Crack open your everyday structure, break through the obvious choices, and give yourself permission to view something from an entirely different angle. Boxing or Ballet? Why must that even be the question?

The Boy Who Swallowed a Leopard

Seven years, swimming in visions of children at play. It's a deafening preoccupation resulting from two boys, ages three and seven, who bound through our home with reckless abandon.

Remember those moments when you were trapped within yourself? Filled with anxiety or rage, only to be shaken by the openness of a three-year old boy. You can see the universe within his eyes, as if you're looking up at stars in the night sky. Whenever I see those big, soft eyes, I'm reminded of a passage from Rilke:

"...But it feels its life as boundless, unfathomable, and without regard to its own condition: pure, like its outward gaze. And where we see the future, it sees all time and itself within all time, forever healed..."

And so...as I look for motivation and strength in my day to day, I hope to reconnect with that "outward gaze" if only for fleeting moments.

These gifts from childhood often pave the way to renewed openness and inspiration. They're important lessons acted out by children everywhere. Somewhere, at this very moment, a child is sharing this energy with the world.

A young girl is courageously dismissing self-doubt like a lion in hunger.

A boy is dreaming of riding dragons, only to mount them moments later.

A young girl is hosting a fabulous tea party, unaware of endings and beginnings.

Somewhere in the world, a child is touching the hearts of others.

A young girl is beginning her day without a mask, transparent to the light.

A girl, faced with tragedy and unfortunate circumstance, lights up a room with her sense of being and connectedness.

Somewhere in the world, a young boy is seeking council from a wise old man who lives in his daydreams and whispers of possibility.

And somewhere...everywhere, there is a boy who swallows a leopard. His body is dripping in golden light, limitless, expanded, and free. I look upon that child longingly unaware as yet, that it is I.

Find him panting on your doorstep, and absorb the flame.

New Moments

Everyday, in my line of work, I wake up and judge myself by a number. When that number is elevated, I get this feeling of safety, control, and permanence. It washes over me like a warm bath. But then a new day comes, and who knows what it brings.

On the surface these moments happen once a day, when in reality, they're occurring all the time. They serve as a constant reminder of change.

One day you're on top of the world – maybe your book of business is full, or you land a new job, or hit your own “number”. And you feel fantastic.

Problem is...you can't stay there.

This very fact can free you or keep you broken. And in all honesty, I'm still fighting the battle. But like it or not, each moment is a new moment.

My seven-year old son recently worked on a painting project in school. While painting, he looked at the other students work and decided his painting didn't cut it. His conclusion – *“I hate art and I'm not doing it any longer.”* My wife and I have had to literally intervene so he would participate in art class.

It's easy to be thrown off course by your successes and failures no matter what your age. If you end up strongly attached to one thing, it throws you for a loop when change comes flying through. But you must continue. You must avoid the temptation to close yourself off, give up, or go comfortably numb.

Time and again I see people with great skill and interesting ideas begin with an ocean of excitement. They work hard at turning their ideas into reality, but then the tide begins to pull back, they meet unexpected obstacles, and find themselves at a crossroads. They're frozen...deflated.

When this happens, remember, a new moment has arrived. You begin anew.

Knowing this, I suggest you do yourself a favor and heed the advice I'm currently giving my son in heavy doses.

“Don't give up on your art!”

Finding Freedom from Your Principles

"Forget your so-called principles, Diana! Are you done complaining? Can we all move on with our lives now?"

Ah...sweet adolescence. I was exposed to some form of the message above on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis. It was my reward for being both a high school senior and team captain.

"Diana! Your stubbornness makes you dumber by the minute."

"What is it, pride? Why do that? Why not let it go?"

"I don't care what you think, Diana! Close your mouth, open your eyes, and wake up."

I despised my coach. I burned hatred for him, and it made me small and weak. I thought the adrenaline rush made me stronger, but in reality, it was a complete waste of time. Time I could have used elsewhere. Decades later, my coach's statements offer more wisdom than I realized. They are a lesson in thinking big by letting go. A plea to see the forest from the trees. They are a lesson in smart business.

"The way is light and fluid for the man with no preferences." - Lao Tzu

Never in a million years would I have thought I'd be comparing my old ball coach with Lao Tzu. But the reality is this:

Clinging steadfastly to your principles is not all it's cracked up to be.

I can argue the other side of the coin. *"We have nothing without our principles!"* But I'm not talking about compromising morals or giving up on what's important. I'm talking about letting go of what has you stuck, removing resentment from the equation so you can see clearly, and opening yourself up to the bigger picture. I'm talking about freedom. Freedom to nurture your creativity and to make ideas happen.

Lost in Translation

Consider this fascinating dialogue between a Western man and the Indian sage, Sri Maharaj.

Q: *"When an ordinary man dies, what happens to him?"*

Maharaj: *"According to his belief it happens. As life before death is but imagination, so is life after. The dream continues."*

Q: *"Yet, you must believe in having lived before."*

Maharaj: *"Only those who think themselves born can think themselves re-born. You are accusing me of having been born – I plead not guilty!"*

Q: *"I am asking a simple question: there are about four billion people in the world and they are all bound to die. What will be their condition after death – not physically, but psychologically?... Do not tell me that I am not asking the right question, or that you do not know the answer, or that in your world my question is meaningless; the moment you start talking about your world and my world as different and incompatible, you build a wall between us. Either we live in one world or your experience is of no use to us."*

Maharaj: *"Of course we live in one world. Only I see it as it is, while you don't. You see yourself in the world, while I see the world in myself. To you, you get born and die, while to me, the world appears and disappears. Our world is real, but your view of it is not. There is no wall between us, except the one built by you."*

I had a good hard laugh when I read this for the first time.

This is exactly how I would have behaved and reacted had I met with a man so very different from myself. It is also exactly how I behaved with my high school coach many years ago. I would hold onto my beliefs and pride without question. My "principles" were unwavering in spite of the fact I had no idea what I was defending. And when I didn't agree with or understand my coaches' answers or actions, I would get frustrated, and push my agenda further, regardless of the consequences.

There are times when you must simply let go in order to move on. You don't have to be a martyr to prove a point, you don't have to over-analyze the situation, nor do you need to strengthen your convictions by holding onto anger and resentment.

Sometimes you need to get on with your life. Sometimes you really do need to "forget your so-called principles".

What Happened To The Experience?

I miss the experience.

This is the umpteenth time I've browsed the shelves of my local Barnes & Noble Bookseller, and I could be anywhere. It feels like I'm shopping in Wal-Mart – lot's of stuff here and there, but not much substance. No matter which section I browse I feel nothing.

Several years ago, when I was living in Washington, DC, I walked down Connecticut Avenue and stumbled upon a little hole in the wall bookstore called Politics & Prose. It was brimming with excitement and filled with books that seemed to matter. The business grew quickly, yet its owners worked hard to stay true to their vision.

You never knew what to expect when you entered the store, but you always knew you would experience something worthwhile. One night, I walked in and found Jean Houston giving a wild and passionate talk about myth in front of 30 people. On another evening, while browsing through the psychology section, I literally bumped into Irvin Yalom. He was passing the time prior to giving a talk about his latest book. It was that kind of place.

There are places like Politics & Prose sprinkled here and there, and when they're discovered people recognize the difference. They feel the energy even when they can't tell you why it's special to them. I believe these people and places hold a level of significance that will continue to grow in the years to come.

I've experienced it from time to time in my profession. I used to feel it when I visited a Jungian Analyst named Phyllis Blakemore in downtown Washington, DC. Phyllis lived what she shared. It was not uncommon to see a glow shining all around her. It was almost as if you could see right through her.

I feel it today when traveling down to Beaufort, SC to visit Dr. Royce Malphrus. You experience it as he sits and talks about the work he is doing, his eyes ablaze with excitement, biofeedback computers and electronic gadgets blinking like fireworks in the background. I experience it when visiting Ellen White of Coastal Empire Mental Health. The feeling

is undeniable when she shares her experiences and offers insights from 30 years of service to the chronically mentally ill. Her compassion and determination fills the room and you leave re-energized, hoping the next patient in that lobby is fortunate enough to cross her path. And you most certainly feel it when you enter The Art of Core Consciousness, an indefinable art gallery and yoga studio in the heart of historic Charleston, SC. It defies tradition, launches you into a seemingly timeless space, and offers a unique experience you will not find anywhere else in town.

There are too many examples, too many of you out there, and too many to keep hidden in a world where people are searching for something more honest, real, and pure.

These people and places offer experiences worth seeking out and paying for. So I must say "no thanks", I'll pass on the Starbucks Venti Mocha Latte and 20% off the latest bestseller. I'm waiting for a cup of Joe made with purpose, and a book that's worth the read. Trust me, others are waiting right there with me.

Can they find you?



Why Not “Flop”?

“REALITY IS MERELY AN ILLUSION, ALBEIT A VERY PERSISTENT ONE.” — ALBERT EINSTEIN

In the mid 1960's, a lanky teenager named Dick Fosbury was working on his high jump technique with limited results. At that time, the “correct” method for high jumping was known as the straddle method. It's an obvious technique whereby the jumper approaches the bar head on, kicks one foot up over the bar and then rolls over the bar face down. Fosbury tried and tried to perfect this technique but in the eyes of the high jumping world, he was a below average performer.

That is until Fosbury began wondering if there were other alternatives. He questioned the validity of the straddle jump, and started experimenting with a new approach he thought might be better. *“Why not use the laws of physics to one's advantage and approach the bar backwards, twisting the hips in the process so that gravity would do the work for him?”* His new technique looked ridiculous to most but produced immediate results. Was it against the rules? Most people never even entertained the idea of a different technique simply because they assumed it must be. But Fosbury never assumed.

His performances caught the attention of college recruiters, and in 1965 the head coach for Oregon State decided to offer Fosbury a scholarship with a caveat. Although he jumped a personal best 6'7" to win the national juniors using his new method, the coach informed Fosbury he would need to stop experimenting with his new technique if he was to earn a spot on the roster. Maintaining the status quo was and still is a powerful force. Oregon State's track and field coach wanted to end the nonsense and transform Fosbury into a “real high jumper – a straddler”.

Fosbury agreed to follow Oregon State rules and his performance suffered. After numerous failed attempts at doing it the “right” way, his coach finally relented and allowed him to perfect his now famous Fosbury Flop.

Three years later, Fosbury, a virtual unknown, won the 1968 Olympic gold medal in Mexico City, and his style sparked a revolution that changed the art of high jumping forever.

In the years since, 18 of 24 Olympic medalists have used the “Fosbury Flop” and not since 1972 has a non-Flopper even

placed in the men's competition. At present, the men and women world records have approached the eight-foot and seven-foot barriers, respectively, thanks to the Fosbury Flop.

All of this took place because an awkward teenager saw things differently and chose to test assumptions that were previously viewed as universal truth.

“THE REASONABLE MAN ADAPTS HIMSELF TO THE WORLD; THE UNREASONABLE ONE PERSISTS IN TRYING TO ADAPT THE WORLD TO HIMSELF. THEREFORE, ALL PROGRESS DEPENDS ON THE UNREASONABLE MAN.”
- GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Things Evolve

On some level, we are all well aware that challenging basic assumptions can lead to immeasurable progress. But that path is filled with second-guessing and blind spots. It's often difficult to see growth and opportunity if you find yourself stuck in an environment that abhors change. To this day, I am pleasantly surprised when someone comes up with a seemingly obvious solution to a difficult business problem. What I find so amusing about these experiences is that the ideas presented are so obvious I am amazed the idea never even crossed my mind. Why didn't it? In many cases it's because I assumed certain things could not be changed. They were “right” in my mind, and as a result, I was unable or unwilling to question their validity.

So what if you find yourself working in your chosen field and the business systems, funding sources, and opportunities aren't working for you? What if they have you feeling disillusioned and you cannot see a way out? Sometimes you need to take the path of the “unreasonable man”.

You may be operating under a particular business model, but what if that model were turned upside down? Might you find something new and interesting to explore further?

What if you chose to entertain new ideas for building your business? Ideas you would have thought impossible, unreachable or not worth your time in years prior.

Sometimes the answers come from testing basic assumptions and choosing to walk a different path. It's not necessarily an easy path. As Fosbury experienced, change is often met with resistance even in the face of overwhelming evidence.

But one thing seems certain to me...if you don't “flop” you won't know, will you?

Part 2: Making “Positive Change” Happen



THE 10,000-HOUR RULE

In 1999, I was just about done with my chosen profession. I was an eight-year mental health professional, licensed, and managing several clinical programs in Boston, MA. I was newly married and wondering how in the world I was going to grow in a profession I loved while living in one of the most expensive cities in America.

That was the end of it – too much frustration and not enough opportunity. Until one day, a former colleague and friend of mine shared an amazing story about how he made some changes in his life, which ultimately led to his dream job in the field. I gained a significant amount of insight from his story, not the least of which included the concepts of hard work and dedication to becoming the very best I could become.

Rather than expecting things to come to me, rather than passing up on opportunities or going through the motions, I decided to be the initiator. Rather than being average at a lot of things, I chose to become very good at a few things. I set new goals in this direction and have spent the past several years learning, growing, and taking advantage of new opportunities that have come my way. It has made all the difference in terms of my personal enjoyment and the general satisfaction I get from doing my work.

So needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised when I decided to pick up Malcolm Gladwell's book, *"Outliers"*. One of the compelling arguments he makes in his analysis of success is, in fact, the very argument I began to make and test years ago. In his book, he states that psychologists who study performance and expertise, in general, believe there is an existing magic number for true mastery to be present. That number is 10,000 hours of practice. My excitement about this phenomenon, however, has very little to do with the amount of time required. My interest centers around the idea that shifting your time and energy in new and more productive ways can have a powerful impact.

Things get even more intriguing when Gladwell chooses to look more closely at groups of people who are gifted and successful in their fields. When you analyze these groups you begin to see that innate talent plays a smaller and smaller role in distinguishing one person from another. At that level, the factor that plays the biggest role is in fact preparation. He goes on to argue that at some point, innate ability has a cut off point, meaning you need to possess enough ability to be "good enough", and after that, most of success comes from the opportunities you are given, and more importantly, what you choose to do with those opportunities.

So for fun, let's assume that a large-majority of people who enter the mental health field and successfully complete graduate school do, in fact, possess some level of talent and innate ability as helping professionals. If this were the case, determinants of success would appear to center around one's approach to skill development along with one's ability and willingness to take advantage of available opportunities.

Gladwell continues his discussion in this area when he examines the work of a psychologist named K. Anders Ericsson at Berlin's Elite Academy of Music. In the 1990's Dr. Ericsson, and his colleagues, looked at a group of extremely talented violinists and analyzed these musicians in three groups. Group one were those students with the potential to become world-class violinists. Group two represented those students judged to be "very good", and group three were students who were good but unlikely to ever play professionally.

As they studied the progression of their careers, from early age to present day, they found that none of the students were simply "naturals", meaning none were musicians who could simply play without any work or effort. They also did not find any students in the three groups who lacked innate ability and simply overcame that deficit through hard work. Their research suggested that once a musician is "good enough" to be admitted to the Berlin academy the only thing that distinguished the three groups was how hard each of them worked. By the age of twenty, the students who were the best in their class, the true masters, were practicing significantly more than everyone else.

By this age, group three had totaled 4,000 hours of practice time while group two totaled 8,000 hours. And how many practice hours did group one have by age twenty?

You guessed it, 10,000 hours.

In study after study, Malcolm Gladwell finds this pattern, and he offers some rather interesting examples as proof, from Mozart, to the Beatles, to Bill Gates.

One of the things I preach to people who are willing to listen is the idea of changing your routine. I call it, **"Creating an Exercise Program for Your Career"**, and in many respects it is based on the principles Gladwell defines through the 10,000 hour rule.

The idea is simple. Once you have thoroughly examined your interests, passions and goals take some time to do an inventory of how you spend your days. Then, make an effort to redefine those days by dedicating more time to things within the field that you are passionate about. Instead of spending two hours a night watching baseball or reality TV, use that time to engage in activities that are directly related to your goals. Learn something new by volunteering your time, spend two hours researching a topic of interest to you, or read a book on a special area within mental health. It can be any number of things. If you choose to take this step and are committed to this effort for six months, I promise you will see an incredible difference. At the end of that time period you will be more knowledgeable, more experienced, more motivated and better positioned in the marketplace than you were six months prior.

Chasing Cars on Horseback

“IF I'D HAVE ASKED CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY WANTED,
THEY WOULD HAVE TOLD ME, 'A FASTER HORSE!' ”
-HENRY FORD

In the 1920's and 30's, the standard form of mental health treatment was psychoanalytic in nature, consisting of four to five sessions per week for years at a time. Psychological problems were seen as the result of intra-psychic conflicts and unconscious motivations with an unwavering emphasis on the past.

Let's think about this for a moment.

What insights would people have been able to provide in 1930 if a modern day therapist asked them what they wanted from psychotherapy? What would that therapist be able to offer her community?

My guess is she would not be entertaining thoughts of family therapy, ADHD treatment, or short-term cognitive therapy. Online Psychotherapy? The mere mention of it would be unintelligible and viewed as completely absurd. Yet all these have come to pass and are in various stages of growth.

It's difficult to see beyond the surface. We look to grow our businesses and expand our careers, but we may only be able to see a few feet in front. We only see the “faster horse”. The context of our lives provides a backdrop that rewards the obvious.

Public opinion is an even trickier and more dangerous factor to consider. It makes perfect sense to seek out those we respect most, and it is considered wise to listen to what the community is saying they want and need. But do they really know? Consider the lesson offered by Henry Ford. Progress and innovation rarely come from a place of knowing. At some point we must look beyond the feedback, opinions, and daunting criticisms.

Avoid the temptation to accept things at face value. Use the advice and input you receive as inspiration to change, but don't let it define your direction. In the end, you must look inward and do the work you believe is worth doing.

If you choose not to, your “possibilities” will only reach out to the realm of what already exists. And as others begin to stretch the boundaries, linear progressions will be broken. A sudden “leap” in progress and innovation will occur.

That's when you'll find yourself chasing cars on horseback.

Making Something Happen

“INSPIRATION SHOWS UP AFTER YOU MAKE SOME SORT OF GESTURE.”

— BINDU WILES, CREATIVITY COACH.

Isn't it interesting once you've followed that rabbit down the hole? Bill Moyers refers to the phenomena of living your truth as being helped “by hidden hands”. Joseph Campbell tells us when you follow your “bliss” you are put on a path that has been there all along. This is the key to good marketing.

The problem is that self-promotion gets a very bad rap. In many cases it is misunderstood completely. It's no wonder most standard marketing efforts and methods produce such horrible results. Good marketing is not about who promotes the most, or who has the catchiest tagline. It's not about advertising, mailers, and press releases. Good marketing is about authenticity and finding inspiration from that very place of being.

If you are struggling with the idea of self-promotion for your business or career I suggest starting from a more honest place. Find a passion you wholeheartedly believe in, and speak with that voice. You will find yourself anchored in integrity with a renewed sense of purpose and meaning. When you come from that position of strength, your marketing efforts will look different, they'll have a different rhythm, and they'll be far more effective.

And when you find that place and that voice you'll know. Your actions will no longer feel like self-promotion. You won't call it marketing because, at that moment, it will no longer be marketing.

It will simply be you.

“It goes to 11...it’s one louder.”

Experience and attachment always influence perceptions. I’ve fallen victim to shortsightedness on numerous occasions in both my personal and professional life, and you might venture a guess that it rarely produced positive outcomes.

As synchronicity would have it, I was reminded of my current level of frustration and subsequent closed mindedness when I sat down one Saturday afternoon to view a favorite movie of mine. Here’s the clip that had me laughing and helped me to break free.



I’ve worked for several large organizations in leadership roles. My perspective has often been influenced by what I hear in the community and by my own pressing needs, most notably the need to keep each organization busy! If I’m not careful, my view of the problem areas, the areas I believe demand improvement, become the ONLY problems.

The same cautionary tale applies to all of us no matter what role we play in our chosen profession. It makes it hard to uncover new possibilities, hard to find new ways to grow within the profession.

In the past, when I’ve been willing to set aside my views and talk to others I’ve been amazed at the differences in perspective and the new insights I gain. When I am open to the experience, new options and opportunities reveal themselves.

As I’m challenged with how to grow my business, I could get stuck on the issues that relate to my personal agenda. And if I ruminate on those issues, if I become attached to them alone, then when someone challenges me – when someone without blinders on asks a perfectly relevant question, I’ll find myself arguing that “*these go to eleven*”.

And that will most certainly lead to disaster.

Going Further

Charleston happened slowly, like a trip to the DMV. Nearly 14 hours in and my family is defeated by traffic, fried apple pies (*they used to be less painful on the stomach when I was younger*), beef jerky, and an exciting vacation that had run its course.

At the stroke of midnight I decide to pass the time with a good ole fashion game of "I think I can". No need to pull in for the night. I knew I could make it, and so I marched onward while my family slept. We arrived home at 3:00 am. I awoke in the late morning with a migraine and a series of aches and pains my 92-year old grandfather would curse in Italian slang.

Today I feel I have nothing to give, no energy to expend. But here I am, in front of my computer – empty and open. I've learned week in and week out to sit in this space regardless of the circumstances. I've learned to push further and see what lies beyond. Each week I begin in ignorance and darkness not knowing where my writing will lead. But I try with all my might to avoid the temptation to "control" or comfort my fears.

Sometimes, when you think you've reached an end point, a closed door, or the limits of your abilities you find it is, quite simply, the very edge of the beginning.

It reminds me of something I read recently from the fine folks at [Samba Blog](#):

*"The first time you ship something, the world will probably ignore you.
The second time you ship, the world will still ignore you.
By the third or fourth time you ship, you start to learn about
the world in a way that only the act of shipping teaches.
The more you ship, the harder it gets for you to ignore the world.
The more you ship, the harder it gets for the world to ignore you."*

When you feel the chips are down, or you are facing what appear to be insurmountable fears and self-doubt, make an effort to engage. And when you feel you've pushed yourself to the limit – push further.

Go through to the other side and come out singing. It's a fine marketing lesson, and an even better life lesson.

The Problem with Planning

Questioner: *"Is not gradualness the law of life?"*

Maharaj: *"Oh, no. The preparation alone is gradual, the change itself is sudden and complete. Gradual change does not take you to a new level... You need courage to let go."*

Questioner: *"But I need time to collect my courage...to ripen for action."*

Maharaj: *"The entire approach is wrong. Action delayed is action abandoned. There may be other chances for other actions, but the present moment is lost – irretrievably lost. All preparation is for the future – you cannot prepare for the present."*

Preparation and planning are intoxicating.

We write plans to feel in control and make the 'right' decisions. And yet, we focus our energies on past and future – on things outside our control. We create and follow a plan that is akin to one big spin of the Roulette Wheel. We'll refute this notion, but it's the truth.

I've always been a big planner. When business would go sour I'd start crunching numbers, review best practices, and spend days creating a detailed plan of action. Planning paralyzed me. As fate would have it, I decided to change my approach. I wanted to see what life would be like if I decided to act in the moment, to ride the energy of inspiration and conviction.

I still have plans. It's just that their scope and purpose have shifted. I'm now free from second-guessing and fear, free from an untold number of things. Today, my 'plans' are designed to keep me focused on the present while being mindful of the future. It's a dynamic process that keeps me in action mode. I learn and see by doing.

People will tell you a well thought out plan is a must. I disagree. Courageously following your convictions may be scary, but following a plan that has no connection with reality is even scarier.

Let action follow your conviction.

If inspiration hits you, give it the attention it deserves at that very moment. Don't be lulled to sleep by your preparations. Follow the energy. It will lead you to the knowing you thought planning would open. And remember: *"Action delayed is action abandoned."*

Triumph

A pale green lizard is cooked by mistake, and worms become crust along the pavement. And you? You walk out into the heat of summer sapped of energy, hoping to fall off into a daydream.

And what's stopping you? Your colleagues and clients are in far off places. There's no one home. Where do you find the motivation? How do you push yourself to find new ideas and opportunity?

It's hard. Well...not the idea generation process. That's not really hard. Giving yourself permission to have them – that's hard.

Ideas are often dulled by tough critics, unreasonable benchmarks, and the almighty dollar. Most ideas are thrown away before they ever have time to grow into something deliciously unexpected.

But we can still triumph. In the midst of a sun-baked summer, we can get closer to opportunity by boldly pursuing our genuine interests.

We can be unafraid of our ideas and desires.



Part 3: Growing Your Career



Transparency & The Human Connection

The Human Connection in Action

The school year had just begun and Linda was already Not the regular “overwhelmed”, but the kind that occurs when a she has a particularly challenging class. So Linda turned to her good therapist, for help and guidance.

Beth thought about her friend's struggles, took pen to paper, and and practical reference guide focusing on developmental disorders. On the front page she listed facts and common misconceptions. On the back she identified a series of basic “do's and don'ts” for the classroom.

Linda was touched by her friend's generosity, and amazed at how helpful the guide was in the classroom. It would not be long before she shared it with other teachers and guidance counselors in her school. As the weeks passed, Beth became a frequent topic of conversation, a critical piece of the puzzle for this elementary school community. And just like that, her small gesture created a whirlwind of activity. Her reference guide spread across the County, and her private practice burst at the seams with referrals from teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. People in her community had come to recognize her as the leading authority on developmental disorders.



Changing the Game

There are countless stories like Beth's, and they are powerful examples of the importance of connecting with others in a way that is open, honest and giving. It is this level of openness that offers someone like Beth the opportunity to connect with people on the ground floor.

Wouldn't it be refreshing if more of us decided to change the rules a bit within our profession? Scratch the outdated and ordinary in lieu of a more engaging, honest, candid, and even curious approach to business. One that reveals its beauty and blemishes on equal footing.

Would anyone care then?

*"THE SINGLE
BIGGEST PROBLEM IN
COMMUNICATION
IS THE ILLUSION THAT IT HAS
TAKEN PLACE."
- GEORGE BERNARD SHAW*

The Pop Rocks Principle

At nine years old I received my first marketing lesson and experienced the power of a deliciously outrageous story.

“Can you believe Mikey’s dead?” A concerned young girl shouted to a group of friends. *“It was Pop Rocks! He ate Pop Rocks, drank a soda and his stomach exploded.”*

Mikey, of course, was the infamous young child from the Life Cereal commercials. And in a blink of an eye it seemed the entire world now knew his tragic end. In the weeks that followed I could not pass a child or teenager without hearing that our beloved Pop Rocks candy, when combined with a carbonated beverage, created a deadly reaction that would cause a person’s stomach to explode.

The story blanketed the country in a matter of days with little to no effort. There were no dollars invested in spreading the message. There was no Madison Avenue advertising campaign behind its success. And yet, this complete and utter myth was a runaway train.

My first marketing lesson taught me that not all messages are created equal. There are very real and dramatic differences.

For fun, let’s compare the Pop Rocks story with the thousands of other messages I received in school at that time. What experiences do I still hold onto from fourth grade? Not many I’m afraid. The Pop Rocks story? It’s as if I were transported back in time. I experience the emotions, sights, smells and sounds of those moments. The story and the experience come to me in full color.

So what makes an idea, concept, or service stick while others disappear in spite of our best intentions? Part of the answer lies in identifying the common characteristics found in those messages that earn our attention.

Principles that Add “Pop”

Here are two excellent concepts that help create messages with power and impact.

1) Speak to the core of your idea in simple but profound terms

Simplicity is critical when looking to craft a message with staying power. And in order to reach this goal effectively you need to be clear what you stand for so you can crystallize and live by your core ideal. Complex or subtle messages often confuse people and/or lead them astray thereby diluting the message.

Let's say Company Y's "core idea" is *"Make access to mental health treatment easy."*

And from this idea they prioritize their marketing efforts, redesign business processes, and make tough decisions that keep the company on track. Their community involvement, the marketing vehicles they use, and the services they offer and don't offer all exist because they support their core idea. If they hear about a fabulous opportunity that doesn't address their core concept, it's not chosen. Simple as that.

2) Use the element of surprise, and use it in support of your core message.

The element of surprise is a powerful communication device. But surprise isn't enough to create a compelling message. Their ideas must also provide insight that is directly related to their core message.

When messages sound like common sense they go in one ear and out the other. However, when you reach out to others with an unexpected message and that message also provides a new level of insight, your chances of generating interest are dramatically improved.

Example

"Make access to mental health treatment easy." As I mentioned earlier, this core message is the driving force for Company Y. The unexpected lies in the depth of this simple and clear idea. "Easy access" means more than committing to a faster admissions process. It means referring potential patients to competitors if they offer a better solution, it means finding resources for families with challenges that have little to do with our scope of services, and it means relentlessly supporting the success of community providers.

When a referral source or potential patient experiences what Company Y means by “easy access”, there is no doubt their message becomes powerful in the marketplace.

How do you craft messages that capture attention? How do more and more people take notice of the great work you do? Here's a great place to start.

- Clarify your core message
- Use the element of the unexpected to gain attention that is everlasting



The Art of Science

“I DON’T GIVE A DAMN FOR A MAN WHO CAN ONLY SPELL A WORD ONE WAY.”
— MARK TWAIN

It's easy to lionize art. The mere mention of it conjures up images of freedom and creativity. Science...not so much. And yet, both science and art are essential. Each gives life to the other.

Many moons ago, medieval mapmakers depicted dragons on the far edges of their maps. *Hic sunt dracones* (“Here be dragons!”), they warned. Now that's one hell of a warning to stay within the lines!

In spite of our best efforts to walk the line, we discover there are true gifts beyond the borders. And no matter how hard we try to adhere to the rules, we will eventually come face to face with the mystery. Therein lies the comedy of it all.

So what about science and form? Well...they're an absolute must. We need a solid foundation based on research, technique, and proper theory. You and I know this. But there comes a time when we need to move beyond the structure set before us and find new possibility. Only then will our work reach new heights.

As Natalie Goldberg states, “...we should learn from form, but we should also remember to fill form with life.”

Intellectually, I know how to write a haiku and how to paint with watercolors, but I don't understand the interplay between creativity and form that gives these art forms true life. When we practice giving ourselves this kind of space we touch our imaginations.

Keep this in mind when you approach a new project or challenge. Stay grounded within your principles then give yourself space to wander and see things with newfound openness.

When you come back to speak, you'll find yourself giving life to dragons.

A Look on the Flip Side

I'm a big advocate of new marketing models that cost little and yield big returns, but I am not naive. Sometimes you need to invest more than you think to get to where you want to be. This doesn't necessarily mean you need to spend more money (*although in some cases it might*). It could mean becoming more efficient in order to free up your time to do work that will grow your business, or choosing to spend more time on professional development in anticipation of future rewards.

I've spent several years talking about "new marketing" concepts, resources and ideas. However, if we are to fully explore sales and marketing it's good practice to view these concepts from all angles. Let's balance things out a bit and take a look at some investment principles from "the other side" that can pay off big for you.

Challenging the "This for That" Model

"An honest days wages for an honest days work."

We've all heard this statement at some point, and it's worth noting here because in many respects, it is misleading and limiting. The problem with a traditional one to one business model is that people tend to reach the limits of their earning potential quickly. There are only so many hours in the day, and there is just so much that the market will bear for your services. I see a lot of service oriented consulting businesses struggle as they try to grow their practices under this framework. It can be a difficult proposition.

Where do you turn once you reach the boundaries of your service delivery model? I suggest looking for ways to diversify. Expand your service offerings and/or partner with others in an effort to create multiple streams of income. When you hear stories of people who move from slow and steady growth to immeasurable success what you find, more often than not, are people who leverage the power of passive income. They have found a way to generate income with less effort not through smoke and mirrors but by setting up systems to where they can add value in numerous ways.

I understand that the phrase “passive income” elicits all kinds of negative responses. Many people associate it with pyramid like schemes. However, passive income has value if used with purpose and principle. Consider this example.

When I lived in Washington, DC I knew a psychologist who had a thriving clinical practice with offices in Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia. She understood the power of systems and built a practice around up and coming therapists in the DC metro region by offering a win-win opportunity. Talented but inexperienced clinicians received mentoring, supervision, counseling experience, and a percentage of earnings while my friend received her own percentage from each practitioner.

This is not a new model for any of you I am sure. However, what struck me about this approach was the fact that it had a snowball effect that seemed unstoppable. My friend's reach within the marketplace was astounding. She had income coming in simultaneously from numerous clinical groups, individual sessions, trainings, and workshops without her having to be present for each and every activity. As a result, she had more time to focus on other business matters such as networking functions, clinical research, strategic development and writing. It made her smarter and more marketable within the field.

Free Up Your Time for Work that Really Matters

You don't need to start a group practice to free up time for yourself. You simply need to take time to analyze and assess the work you are doing in order to make yourself more efficient.

Prioritize what you do on a daily basis based on your interests and goals. If you work full-time for a large organization but never have time to explore new directions then I believe you owe it to yourself to find that space where creativity has a chance to take root. I'm well aware of the necessity to work and the restrictions that go along with it. But I am also a big believer in not letting the profession define you, which it most surely will do if you let it.

The need to consistently analyze workflow applies to everyone in the field. It makes no difference if you work a 9-5 job with a government agency or if you work for yourself. Either way, I recommend assessing work activities and ranking each activity according to its overall business value. Are you spending hours and hours a week on clerical tasks? Paying the

bills, making appointment reminder calls, and filing claims are critical activities, however, ask yourself this - *“What is more valuable to you from a profit-generating standpoint – clerical tasks or development time for new service offerings?”*

Prioritize your work, guarantee yourself time for the most important activities, and if possible, put some of your financial resources into outsourcing activities that will make you more effective, impactful, and marketable.

Spending is Not A “Bad Thing” – It is an “Essential Thing”

If you want true change, you need to take some risks. This means you must be willing to put in the time, and you must be willing to invest so you do things that are in the best interests of your business or career (*e.g., a website done right; a public relations campaign; advertisements*). There are situations where spending your money is worth a whole lot more than cutting corners.

Consider website development as an example. Your initial reaction may be to create a free website or to design one on your own. You may tell yourself that all you really need is a small presence on the web so potential clients can find you. The irony of the situation is that your initial efforts at controlling costs will cost you a heck of a lot more in terms of lost business and the time you put in to troubleshoot and manage the site. If you have a poorly designed website it will reflect poorly on you in the eyes of visitors. In addition, you will be missing out on new referrals because you will not be utilizing all that the web offers in terms of outreach.

There is no doubt that new marketing principles which emphasize value, relationship building, and community are an important part of business growth both now and in the future. However, like everything else, it is not an all or nothing proposition.

There is value on the flip side.

“Not So Obvious” Steps to Marketing Success

I'm not a big “list” person, but this past week I found myself swimming in ideas. Ideas I wanted to share. So today I am purposefully breaking my “one idea – one message” rule. Here are some interesting thoughts worth pondering.

1) Be Mindful of “The Big Three”. If you do nothing else, keep these three market realities at the forefront of your mind. They will have a positive or negative impact on your business depending on how well you understand and utilize them.

- Market Fragmentation is your window of opportunity. Gatekeepers are disappearing all over the place, leaving you with possibilities not available ten years ago. Don't miss the boat!

- The “old model” of work is dying out. State agency job opportunities and large corporate entities are great examples of this shift. What was once a clear and comfortable path is now a very risky proposition.

- Traditional forms of marketing do not have the reach and influence they have had in the past. Markets are about conversations and connecting, they are not about self-serving advertisements or brochures. You will need to make a real connection to break through the “information clutter”.

2) Approach Everything as a Creative Opportunity

For me personally, it starts with finding that place where there is no separation between “life” and “work”. Find this and you will begin to see opportunity where it may never have existed before. It's how I am able to uncover invaluable marketing lessons from my seven-year old son when he tells me about a 30-year old Pop Rocks myth (*a candy he has never even seen*), or when I learn about the value of a mobile Korean Taco Restaurant in Los Angeles, or when I receive a lesson in problem solving from a man named Dick Fosbury as he revolutionized the high jump more than forty years ago.

When you find something you are passionate about, focus relentlessly on it. Spend time learning and growing within that space.

3) Focus on the Process, not the Outcome

Don't become paralyzed trying to achieve perfection. And don't search for that one otherworldly idea, that one concept you feel is the epitome of creativity. What use is the idea if it lies well beyond the realm of possibility? Search the edges, that fine line between what is and what could be. Then dive in, produce something and share it with others. Avoid the temptation to be “perfect”.

Get yourself into action mode, put yourself out there, and be a part of that creative energy. It will serve you well, and will bring you to a place where things expected and unexpected can happen.

4) Let Go

Sometimes, opportunity arises when you choose to let go. It may be a belief or idea you have been holding onto for years, something you protect with all your might. What would happen if you set it free?

You don't have to take that lowly job so you can "pay your dues". You don't need to work harder at what you are doing. You don't have to hold onto your belief that writing a novel is frivolous and unrealistic.

If something isn't working, and you want to define things on your own terms, try giving it up and see what happens.

5) Sometimes You Should Try the Lunch Special, Even When Others Say, "Yuck"

If you are exploring the edges of opportunity, chances are some of your ideas will be met with luke warm responses. You may need to go it alone for a period of time. Don't get discouraged.

It is often a good thing to be out there all alone, especially if you are looking to be first to market or if you have uncovered something that excites you. For starters, it means there are fewer fish in the pond.

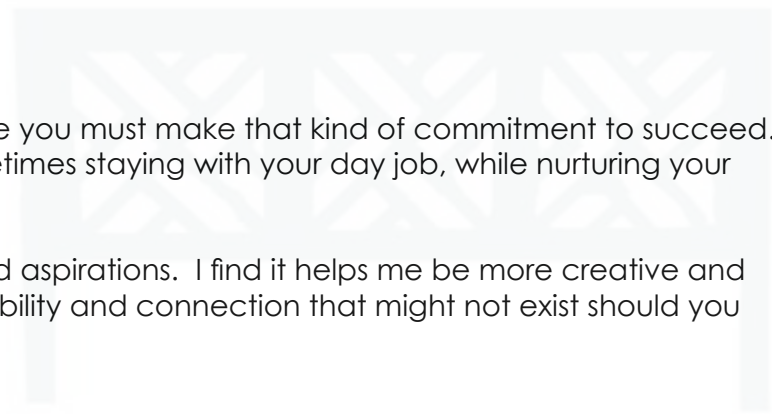
Furthermore, make peace with the fact that everybody is busy with his or her own life. Don't expect a big pat on the back or standing ovation. Don't do something based on other people's responses.

Do it for yourself.

6) Don't Quit Your Day Job

It's perfectly fine to dive right into something. Many experts believe you must make that kind of commitment to succeed. But I don't believe it's an all or nothing arrangement. In fact, sometimes staying with your day job, while nurturing your passion, can be the smarter move.

Why? It helps keep that balance between day-to-day realities and aspirations. I find it helps me be more creative and motivated. In addition, your day job may also add a level of credibility and connection that might not exist should you jump ship right away.



7) Break Someone's Guessing Machine, Then Fix It

If you're looking to market your services more effectively, try thinking in terms of the unexpected. You'll earn more attention when you challenge what people have come to expect. Find the unexpected implications of your message. Make people a little uncomfortable and get them off balance by breaking the thought process and judgments we commonly use to make sense of a specific topic.

Offer material that seems perplexing, and then help bring clarity to the message. You can use this approach in your elevator speech, in your advertisements, and in your service delivery model.

Why do I write about Spiderman and swimming lessons when I am trying to introduce a useful marketing concept? It is a great way to surprise, engage, and educate.

8) Watch Out For Resistance

“I AM AN OLD MAN AND HAVE KNOWN A GREAT MANY TROUBLES, BUT MOST OF THEM NEVER HAPPENED.”
— MARK TWAIN

There have been times when I've talked myself out of something, or when I couldn't push myself through a critical period because I felt sorry for myself. I found a million and one reasons why something would go terribly wrong. I was stuck.

Find ways to give yourself permission to be bigger!

9) Be Giving: It's Your Number One Marketing Strategy!

“Inscribed on one of the six pillars in the Holocaust Memorial at Quincy Market in Boston are stories that speak of the cruelty and suffering in the camps. The sixth pillar presents a tale of a different sort, about a little girl named Ilse, a childhood friend of Guerda Weissman Kline, in Auschwitz. Guerda remembers that Ilse, who was about six years old at the time, found one morning a single raspberry somewhere in the camp. Ilse carried it all day long in a protected place in her pocket, and in the evening, her eyes shining with happiness, she presented it to her friend Guerda on a leaf. ‘Imagine a world,’ writes Guerda, ‘in which your entire possession is one raspberry, and you give it to your friend.’” – The Art of Possibility, Zander & Zander

Make the shift from a scarcity model to one of generosity and possibility. Give to others, and share in their prosperity. Offer value without any expectation of something in return! This strategy will multiply your power and influence by a factor of 100. Besides, it's the right thing to do!

10) If Someone Has to Ask for Clarification...You Already Lost

One of the keys to success in business is eliminating barriers to buying. Give people permission to take part in what you have to offer by providing solutions.

Do I have to navigate through some convoluted messaging service to connect with you, am I forced to talk about a sensitive situation with your secretary before I can get to you, or must I sit in an uncomfortable waiting room? If the answer is YES, you are NOT making it easy for me to buy your services.

Do you think you have it covered? Why not ask someone to test the experience? Have them visit your website, call your office, and schedule an appointment. Better yet, have them come to your office and wait for the appointment. Then listen to what they have to say about the overall experience. You might receive some surprising and important feedback.



Why Buy Matching Socks?

A therapist approached me the other day saying she was lost in uncertainty. *"I don't know who I am anymore within the profession,"* she said. My initial response, *"Good for you! You're one of the lucky ones."*

Now before people start throwing tomatoes my way, let me explain. I'm well aware that uncertainty is not the most delightful of sensations. However, I feel the alternative can be even more damaging. Staying in your head or sticking to a pre-packaged plan is extremely limiting. It can make you feel as if there is no way out.

Lao Tzu says, *"The truth of you reveals itself in the moments when the imagination of you lets go."*

When I talk with people about my passion for change, I'm happy to discuss the small detail oriented changes. I'll share resources and offer step-by-step tactics that will add value to people's work. But my true passion lies with the kind of change Lao Tzu references. Remarkable and inspiring change that comes from a place of letting go.

Consider a company known as [Little Miss Matched](#). They are perfectly comfortable in a sea of uncertainty. And from this place they create an incredible product – Socks.

Are you excited yet? I'm guessing no. There aren't too many things more "commodity oriented" than socks. But you'll get excited when you learn how Little Miss Matched views socks. It's inevitable.

First and foremost, the people at Little Missed Matched don't see themselves as a sock company, they see themselves as a creative company that challenges your view of reality. Instead of offering the obvious and practical solution: a pair of socks, one for each foot, they wonder, *"Why sell only two? We're going to sell three to a pack."* They'll need to match of course. *"Do they?"* Even their company name defies that rule. *"Why should they match? In fact, wouldn't it be exciting if they didn't? Wouldn't that offer our customers more than just a warm pair of toes?"*

This remarkable business takes a tired and worn out idea and turns it into something worth talking about.

They sell an experience, and in the process give their audience much more than they bargained for.

CLICK HERE
to view video



What I love about truly original ideas is they create space for something new to take hold. They are somehow greater than what you and I see on the surface.

So where can you and I push the envelope?

“Why can’t we sell unmatched socks, three to a pack?”

Before you begin thinking about ALL the ethical, legal and best practice implications of this question for your profession, pause for a moment give the question some space. You may find it evolves into something you've known all along.



When Markets Fragment

"You have to excuse us," Ailsa stated. "Our Scottish accents can sometimes be difficult to understand."

"Not at all," I said. "I absolutely love your accents. My all time favorite in fact!"

Marc, Ailsa and I laughed before launching into a discussion about a video idea I had for my upcoming book launch. Thanks to Skype and Elance, I was now brainstorming with a young Scottish couple from across the pond. We were discussing possibilities for a script and sharing documents and video samples back and forth in real time. All of this happening free of charge.

Such is the realm of possibility in a world where markets have loosened considerably. Fifteen years ago this discussion would not be taking place. Not unless I were a movie mogul or working for a company with very deep pockets. Yet here I was, connecting with freelance videographers from Scotland to talk about producing a cost effective video. Marc and Ailsa were full of great ideas and talented (Contact them here and see how they can help you! cuillin1@me.com). Here is the video they produced for a very modest fee.

CLICK HERE
to view video



The world is getting smaller. We hear this statement so often it causes most of us to tune out immediately. Yet it's critical that we pay attention. In spite of the poor economy, seemingly unfathomable budget cuts, and record job losses, we do not have the luxury to ignore the yin to this yang – the vast reservoir of possibility greeting us at our door on a daily basis.

NEXT STEPS

Success, for me personally, often arises when I give myself permission to focus on a process or an experience, as opposed to scratching and clawing my way to an outcome that may never arrive.

It's my hope that the writings in this book steer you away from the responsibility of having to "do something right away" in order to achieve a desired outcome. Too many books argue the value of blind faith towards a goal, the importance of taking risks, and the unwavering devotion to your passions and desires. I would argue that this approach is misleading.

If you look closely at the short stories in this book, you will see a common theme throughout – the power of thinking different. Your willingness to view the world with fresh eyes helps to create space for your wishes and desires. Having the courage to "step off the bench", is less about risk, and more about looking at yourself and the world around you in a different way. This perspective gives life to your personal and professional goals. And when you take that step for yourself, you are better equipped to share your gifts with the Michael's of this world. This is the true power of living your passion.

I thank you for being a part of this experience, and I look forward to connecting with you and your work in the future! If you enjoyed this book then I suggest you take a look at some additional books and resources I offer at www.davidpdiana.com.

You can also join in on the conversation by signing up to receive my articles via email. I write two articles per month on the topic of professional development and marketing. It's free of charge and provides a great opportunity to learn about new resources.

All the best!

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