



*Buy Your
Own*
ISLAND

The Ultimate Guide to
Breaking Free and Making
Your Dreams Reality



— **DANNY FLOOD** —



Buy Your Own Island

**The Ultimate Guide to Breaking Free
and Making Your Dreams Reality**

Danny Flood



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PRAISE FOR *BUY YOUR OWN ISLAND* AND OTHER BOOKS BY DANNY FLOOD



Buy Your Own Island

The Ultimate Guide to Breaking Free
and Making Your Dreams Reality

"One of my favorite books on entrepreneurship! I've read a lot of books about entrepreneurship and Danny's book is surely one of my favorites. I love how he not only covers strategies, resources and tools but also the mindset that you should have as an entrepreneur. Highly recommended!" - Jasper Ribbers, Amazon #1 best-selling author

"Read this book and change your life! One of the most inspiring books I have ever read; if you want to create a new life, make money and travel the world doing it this book makes you realise just how possible that is! Everyone should read this book!"

- Nicole Hilditch, The Roaming Renegades

"Get out and see the world - this book will help you get there... Thrilled to see this from Danny Flood, who's been engineering his own lifestyle for years. Pick this up if what you want out of life is to experience more of this world on your own terms. Then ask yourself, what is your island?" - Nathaniel Boyle, The Daily Travel Podcast

"Since reading Danny's book we have moved to a tropical island, grown our online e-commerce jewelry web sites and opened a retail store. We broke free and are living the dream and loving life and adventure. BYOI is a wonderful tool, take the leap of faith on your dream life and make it happen." - Alicia Hanson, Hi Octane Jewelry

"This book is full of specific tips and information, not vague generalities. The author states he spent a year putting together this book and I believe the content speaks for itself. A must guide for entrepreneurs, lifestyle designers and digital nomads."

- Liz Marino, Amazon author

" One of the top books to reach on lifestyle design. As a fellow location independent entrepreneur who has been around the block, I learned so much from this book. And as someone who knows Danny personally, I can say he writes based on genuine and unique life experiences. It's well-written, thorough, motivational, and will get you on your way to living life on your terms." - Grant Weherly, Amazon #1 best-selling author

"If you want to open your eyes to a new reality where you live the life you've always dreamed of you should stop reading my review and go read this book! Danny's words are encouraging, his methods are achievable, and his insight is far beyond his years."

- Jon Norris, Musician

HACK E-MAIL

**Connect with Anyone, Build Your Business and Brand,
Become an Unstoppable Force**

"The book is a must reading for either freelancers or for those entrepreneurs and marketing professionals who are trying to improve their performance in email outreach. I strongly believe that this book will become my trusted companion in daily email activities and will lead me securely to new business horizons! Keep up the great work, Danny :)"

- Gabriella Miteva

HACKING UPWORK

How to Make REAL MONEY as a Freelancer

"One word: Wow! Anyone using Upwork or who is a freelancer of any kind should really invest in the time it'll take to read this eBook. You'll avoid pitfalls and unnecessary mistakes. The author offers tips that are a little out of the box but so simple, you'll wonder why it's not common sense. Definitely get this!" - Anonymous Reviewer

HACK YOUR MIND

To Become Bulletproof

"Definitely changed my outlook on my life and circumstances. As entrepreneurs, keeping a positive, healthy mindset is critical. I found the section about perception filtering the most helpful. This guide has shown me how to be more effective in pursuing goals. Highly recommended." - Nathaniel Wilson

About the Author

Danny is an author, entrepreneur, world-traveler, rabble-rouser, friend, and lover from California.

He is the founder of OpenWorld magazine, and also hosts the OpenWorld podcast where he interviews the world's most exciting adventurers and location-independent entrepreneurs. Personally, he has started 3 location-independent businesses. During that time he also traveled to 30+ countries, and reduced his working hours to 10 per week.

Danny has been named to the list of "Sexiest Male Travelers Alive 2014," "Top Travel Bloggers to Watch in 2015," and "Top 30 Adventurers Under 30."

Danny believes that life is a daring adventure or nothing. He challenges those around him to step out from their comfort zone, take risks, and do something new - to see how refreshing it feels. He believes that we should live life on our own terms without outside pressure from others. His book, "Buy Your Own Island" is a playbook designed to help individuals find the love, adventure, passion, and purpose that they seek.

For additional resources, articles, and educational and inspirational podcasts, visit:

www.OpenWorldMag.com, a magazine and podcast managed by the author. Also connect on [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).



This book is for:
a new generation of explorers, adventurers,
free-thinkers, leaders, and action-takers.

A new world is on it's way.
We welcome it.

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Printed in the United States of America

Book Design by Danny Flood

First Edition

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Last But Not Least

Acknowledgements

INTRO: Buy Your Own Island

*"Dream what you want to dream; go where you want to go;
be what you want to be, because you have only one life and one chance
to do all the things you want to do."*

-Anonymous

1

Buy Your Own Island

Tynan, also known as *Herbal* from "The Game," dreamed of owning his own island. Owning a plot of land had little appeal - but an island, this was another matter entirely. "As long as I've remembered, I've wanted to buy a private island," Tynan says. "I wanted to share a miniature country with some friends and see what we could build."

One day a friend discovered an island listed for sale on Kijiji, the Canadian version of Craigslist, for less than \$100,000. Tynan e-mailed a few friends, and they agreed to pitch in on the deal. And just like that it was done. A couple of weeks later the deed was signed, and they found themselves standing on their very own island.

As Tynan explains: "It's funny how huge lifelong dreams can become practical and be made to happen within a matter of weeks. Sometimes it's just a matter of thinking outside the box and doing a little research, rather than assuming it's impossible or impractical."

Buying an island might seem crazy, but it's not. As surprising or unconventional as it may seem, real-world accounts like these are becoming typical of what has been happening all around the world. The stories go on and on.

Steve Areen built his dream home in Northern Thailand in less than 6 weeks for only \$9,000 USD. Serena Roffo took a few days to set up a crowd fund campaign, and raised over \$5,000 to volunteer with kids and lions in Africa. Heidemarie Schwermer has spent the last 16 years living without money, traveling around and reminding people of the important things in life. Seth McBride is a quadriplegic who rode a hand-cycle from Portland to Patagonia, Argentina. I met Seth and his girlfriend Kelly halfway through their trip, during my own cycle ride across Mexico. My mentor Jared Heyman quit his startup in Atlanta, and went on an eighteen-month round-the-world sabbatical, a

transformative journey which landed him on the cover of INC.

Paul Ridley rowed solo across the Atlantic in 88 days to raise money for cancer research. Jia Jiang performed an experiment called “100 Days of Rejection Therapy,” where he aimed to have one rejection every single day by making crazy requests of people. He’s since been invited to speak at Google, TEDx, the World Domination Summit, and at an event hosted by Tony Hsieh. He’s penned a book deal with Crown Publishing, and been featured by Bloomberg Businessweek, the Huffington Post, and countless blogs. My friend Ryan (featured in Part 4 of this book) rents properties and generates between \$50,000 - \$100,000 a month in passive income. My other friend Zeke Camusio has started four successful companies, traveled to 72 countries, and written a book, all before the age of 30.

This is not a book about buying islands, in the literal sense. It’s a metaphor and a challenge to take your craziest, most outlandish dreams and make them reality, exactly as these individuals have done. The only limit is your imagination.

The Great Question

Nearly 40 years before this book was written, Andy Warhol noted a fascinating development:

“You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.”

If Andy were still alive, he’d be enamored by recent developments, because the playing field has been leveled. Today, everyone - regardless of social standing - has access to the same tools. The most successful people in the world log in to the same versions of Facebook and Twitter that you use, they search using the same version of Google, they send e-mail using the same free services, and probably use the same phone.

There are men and women doing extraordinary things each day, and these people

are no smarter than you are. They have no particular advantages, no special talents, connections, or resources. They simply made a decision one day to do what they wanted, and figured out a plan to make it happen.

As the 2014 Superbowl Champion Seattle Seahawks, heavy underdogs, told themselves: “Why not us?” Great question. *Why not you?* Your lifelong dreams are not as impossible or impractical as you may think. If you think outside of the box and have a plan, they can become very practical. So, my friend, what are you capable of? Let’s take a journey together and find out.

My Story

Who am I to write a book about lifestyle design?

Several years ago, I decided that life inside a cubicle was not for me. The idea of spending my short time on this earth in someone else’s office, working to advance someone else’s interests, did not suit my soul. I desperately needed to be free: to embrace this gift of life, to live each day to the utmost. I want my time on this earth to matter.

And so I vowed to blaze my own path, and almost went down in a blaze (several times) in the attempt.

I’ve burned bridges. Started business ventures that never acquired a single customer. Created products and only sold a few copies to friends. Had enough failed relationships to fuel my own series on the Oxygen network. Traveled around the world several times to over 30 countries. Teetered on the verge of bankruptcy multiple times. Been rejected (or ignored) tens of thousands of times.

But I persisted. This book is a product of that journey.

You’ll learn more about my story as you read this book. It took a lot of work and sacrifice, and I’ve fumbled along making one mistake after another. But I eventually managed to make almost every single “dream goal” I’ve set for myself reality. I’ve experienced the most thrilling highs and the most humbling lows imaginable. And from it all I’ve

developed the knowledge, experience, and **the process** which makes it all possible.

Knowledge is power, and ignorance is bliss. I think that most people are blissfully ignorant of the full scope of possibilities that are open to them. These days, with nothing more than a backpack, a few pairs of clothes, and my laptop, I am empowered in ways never before fathomed in human history. In just a few minutes, using my laptop, I can:

Find a job. Find a date. Create a blog. Make new friends and connect with old ones around the world. Find a place to live any where in the world. Book a plane ticket to anywhere. Rent my home for cash. Find new clients. Earn a living. Conduct interviews for a podcast. Advertise a business. Set up a business. Write a book. Create a video. Crowdfund for a business or cause. Organize and promote a dinner party. Create systems to easily manage my life and business. Connect with powerful mentors. Send an e-mail to a journalist and get myself or my business in a high-profile feature. Or outsource my work to highly-trained professionals at a very low cost.

All of the things listed above are just a sampling of the things I've been able to accomplish with my laptop, regardless of my current location. I've used my laptop to outsource work to contractors in Dubai, Bangkok, Manila, and other foreign places while sitting on my black leather couch in San Diego. I've used my laptop to set up dates in cities around the world. I've e-mailed reporters (who often include their contact information in their articles), and gotten my story featured in newspapers and magazines.

I'm not saying this to impress you, but to impress upon you what is possible. Everything that I and other successful "lifestyle designers" around the globe have done, you can do too. All it takes is the right skills and the right tools.

What You'll Find in This Book

This book is intended to help you in many ways; it's meant to provide a full catalog of options. I have worked tirelessly over the last several years to study, experiment, and implement proven cutting-edge techniques and effective strategies (all included in this book) to create the life I've envisioned. This book does not dispense in opinions or theories, but well-proven principles and facts. These are not a vague collection of un-

tested ideas, but field-tested resources, how-to tools, templates, success stories, and more. Whatever it is you dream about doing, having, or being, this book gives you the blueprint to do it.

I've also listed hundreds of internet resources, websites, and "hacks" that you can use to shortcut the entire process. My vision was to create the best and most comprehensive guide on the subject of location-independent living and "mobile" lifestyle design. Whatever your goals are, I humbly believe that this book will help you build your ideal lifestyle from the moment you first read it.

Can you really double, triple, or quadruple your income while working half as much? Yes, and I'll show you how. Can you really earn twenty thousand dollars within three months so that you and four friends can purchase your own private island? Yes, and there's a plan for that. Maybe you want to ride a motorcycle across planet earth. There's a plan for all of these things, and in this book I aim to give you that plan.

In Part 1 of this book, you will learn the mindset, strategies, and rituals that make exponential growth and progress inevitable. These are the building blocks that will enable you to fearlessly create your world, piece by piece. This section alone can change your life.

In Part 2, your efforts at lifestyle design will truly "take flight." The chapters in this section teach you how to create the "mobile lifestyle:" a highly-desirable scenario where an unlimited number of possibilities unfold before you. You will discover an array of options and strategies to manifest the ultimate lifestyle freedom that you seek.

Part 3 of this book teaches how to start a location-independent business that provides you the income and freedom to design your life. Based on the experience and knowledge of dozens of lifestyle designers, this chapter shows you the many different options you have to: earn an income from self-employment, create ideas and products that sell, attract customers, and construct your business so that it becomes your vehicle to ultimate freedom.

Last but not least, Part 4 features firsthand accounts of successful lifestyle designers whom I look up to as role models. Each has set up a successful business that supports

an unconventional (and often extraordinary) lifestyle. I devote an entire chapter to each individual, so that you can get to know their story, the hardships they faced, and their formula for success. Each was consciously chosen because they all specialize in a different area with a different type of business: freelancers, bloggers, photographers, podcasters, physical product sellers, supplement dealers, digital product marketers, consultants - it's all here. Whatever type of business you wish to start, this section is where you'll find the ideas, inspiration, and "how-to" tools.

Among other things, you will learn how to hack travel and live a rockstar lifestyle anywhere in the world. You will learn how to "hack the system" and quickly find a high-paying job overseas, or set up a profitable "lifestyle business" to enable the ultimate freedom that you desire. You'll also learn how to systemize and automate your business so it requires minimal management. Step-by-step charts, tools, apps, and software - it's all here.

Thousands of people are out there, doing these exact things. They come from all walks of life, nationalities, and backgrounds. But they all started at one place: the beginning. None of us are born at the top. You must decide *to take charge of your life*, just like these people, and begin creating a lifestyle and legacy that will serve as an inspiration to others. You must seek and find something meaningful, something so important that you push past your fears. Through courage, love, and persistence, you will discover your true destiny. Your true mission, your true calling, is out there. Do you have what it takes to seek it out?

On the flip-side: how would it feel to know you were going to die having lived an un-lived life? What if you never strove for your full potential? What if you never dared, or truly delved, to discover your true purpose and calling? Imagine the frustration of reaching the end of your life knowing that you played it small, never made a difference or contributed fully.

Fulfilling your destiny takes sacrifice. You are not choosing the conventional path. Your parents, friends, and co-workers may question your actions. They may think you are silly and foolish. Do not become discouraged; stay focused on making your dreams reality and become comfortable with being misunderstood.

Writing this book forced me to make sacrifices. I quit my first business - the very one that had supported me throughout my adventures around the globe. For the better part of a year I lived like a college student to focus on writing. The entire time, the desire to help you drove me. If my work is able to aid you in some way in your own journey, then I've accomplished what I set out to do. I want to help you realize your true potential, your true purpose, and help you share your unique gifts with the world.

Why This Book Was Written

"Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked.

There is no reason not to follow your heart."

- Steve Jobs

This book is written for the dreamer. The adventurer. The seeker. The doer.

I wrote this book for all the individuals who refuse to settle for mediocrity. Those who refuse to play small in their lives, who are sick of the average, mundane "middle road" that characterizes a normal existence. The one who wants to do things that others only talk about. The individual who has ignored their heart for far too long, who is ready to make a change.

If this sounds like you, then welcome. You are in good company. We are kindred spirits. And I know you. I know what you're about, what you crave, and where you'd like to go. You know that there is more to life. You realize that your time is finite. You sense that there must be an alternative, better way. And I also know what's standing in your way.

The single biggest obstacle to success in lifestyle design is ourselves. It's our own indifference. It's our own limited thinking, and the fearful resistance to change. Fear is the constant companion to any individual who strives to do anything great. We all feel the same fear. It's how one reacts to fear that determines the difference between a hero and a coward. And it's how we react to our failures that determines our overall growth and progress in life.

If you ever get discouraged, and you will, bear in mind that you are more than your current situation, whatever that may be. You are more than your bank account balance. You are more than your present circumstances, and you are more than your past. The events of the past are gone forever unless we breathe new life into them in the present. Blaming the past, or our circumstances, is no way to approach life. It's what we do today that matters. What we do now - in this very moment - determines our tomorrow.

Your best days are ahead of you. But you must be willing to learn, work, sacrifice, persist, and apply intelligent, efficient, high-leverage principles to everything you do. Self-actualized individuals attuned to their true purpose don't let anything stand in their way. Their mission permeates every fiber of who they are, and manifests itself through their thoughts, actions, and habits.

The question now is: are you ready to upgrade your role in life from spectator to superstar? Do you want to stay on the sidelines, or get in the game? If you're ready, then accompany me and thousands of other lifestyle designers on this brave new adventure. Onward to Part One!

PART I

Survival Kit for the Aspiring Lifestyle Captain

"When you manage to overcome your own mind, you overcome myriad concerns, rise above all things, and are free. When you are overcome by your own mind, you are burdened by myriad concerns, subordinate to things, unable to rise above. Mind your mind; guard it resolutely. Since it is the mind that confuses the mind, don't let your mind give in to your mind."

- Suzuki Shosan

2

Charting the Course

One Passage, Many Destinations

Before finishing this book I listed it for pre-sale, to gauge people's reactions and get feedback on the concept. Many people contacted me. I asked them: Why are you interested in this book? What is it you're looking for and what are you currently struggling with?

I got all types of answers. One lady told me that she was missing any form of passion in her life. Days passed and she felt uninspired; things that used to excite her didn't any more. At the opposite end of the spectrum, one lady told me that she wanted to learn as much as she could in order to grow as a person, and this book seemed to supplement her desire. Another person told me he wanted to travel more, get outside of his comfort zone, try something new. Still another person was feeling stuck in her current situation, feeling trapped by her own business and looking for a better way. Others were just bored, and sought out some fun and adventure in their lives.

Whatever it is you're looking for: whatever what you want to do, wherever you want to go, or whatever you want to be, there's a good chance that you will find it in this book.

With that said: I do not know you, I do not know what your goals are, where you come from, or what areas in life you want to improve in. You may be tempted to skip this section and go straight to learning about travel hacks or how to set up a profitable location-independent business. But I wouldn't - and here's why.

A person can spend a lifetime seeking out techniques, tricks, and tactics to improve their situation. Indeed, this book is full of many techniques and tools. But to get the

most out of this book, you should direct your attention inward first. Lifestyle design is a path of perpetual improvement and personal growth: to make meaningful changes in your life you must improve yourself. To control the outer world, you first must master your inner world. The better you are at managing the self: mind, thoughts, actions, and habits, the more successful your efforts at designing your life will be.

Your thoughts define your actions, your actions become your habits, and your habits define your destiny. All of the things that you create in your life - both good and bad - first form as a thought. Everything that was ever done or created by man first originated as a thought within someone's mind. It is first created on the mental plane, then the physical result follows.

The good news is that we can begin shaping the mental realm at any moment - including right now. All we have to do make a conscious choice, and continually reinforce that choice.

Risks and Rewards of the Journey

Lifestyle design is an uncommon art form. One who would lead an unconventional life spends much of their time living outside of their comfort zone. If we are ill-prepared, it can be a terrifying place to be.

Lifestyle design is not about hammocks and white sandy beaches - the quintessential marketing message engineered to sell timeshares to overworked cubicle jockeys. If two weeks outside of your cubicle (a "too-weak" vacation) each year is the sum of your ambition in lifestyle design, then by all means, stay on your current course.

In reality, a true lifestyle designer is constantly exposing him or herself to new, dynamic environments and unknown situations. It's about embracing change and breaking new and innovative ground. That's the name of the game.

When you seek an unconventional life you will almost certainly face enormous pressure from all sides. Some of this pressure will attempt to coerce you to conform to other people's or to society's expectations. Some of your relationships may not entirely serve you. Other people might get jealous, try to discourage you, or even outright attack you.

There are probably certain people in your life who are secretly hoping that you will fail.

I've averaged between 4-6 months of international travel each year over the last several years. I've slept on buses, trains, couches, in hostel dorm rooms, in a tent deep within the Brazilian jungle, inside of a sauna in a Vietnamese town, on a two-inch mattress outdoors on the cold ground, astride bales of hay with cows passing by, inside of a Laotian treehouse, in tiny wooden beach bungalows, and shared many a bed with a stranger in a number of other far-flung locations. On any given workday, I could have an appointment set with an elephant to roam through the jungles in Thailand - usually after sending off a few emails tending to client needs back home.

There have also been prolonged periods when I've lived on a mere \$5 a day - in foreign countries, thousands of miles away from any type of support network.

What is the common denominator of it all? In this game, as you can see, environments and situations are fluid. They are not meant to stay the same. The only constant is yourself. Your own mind is at the center of it all.

This is really great news, because we can consciously train our minds to become elastic. We can meet new and unknown pressures with magnanimity and equilibrium. We can also put certain routines and rituals in place to create patterns that re-define our limits and make us unstoppable.

Life is perpetually in flux. Your role as a lifestyle designer, should you choose to accept, is to continuously push the envelope. You will set goals for yourself based upon your wildest hopes and dreams - and reach them. Then you brave the next frontier, ensuring that the adventure to come is greater than the last. You may bite off more than you can chew - it's encouraged. You will face enormous pressure not to change, and almost certainly face challenges greater than you expect.

We can't always control the environment or situations that we will face. But we can control ourselves - manage ourselves - so that we master the circumstances surrounding our lives instead of being held captive to them. This self-mastery is the force multiplier that allows us to design our lives as we choose.

So you're ready to blaze your own trail? Part 1 of this book is meant to help you navigate the path to a dramatic life upgrade. To conquer the chaos that will inevitably come when you expand your comfort zone. You'll learn many simple and unorthodox strategies and techniques to: master time, become a top-producer, and multiply your life-quotient. Whatever your goals, it is my sincere hope that this material produces a positive, lasting, life-impacting change within you.

The Enemy of Progress

Before we can make any progress, we must take a lay of the land and identify the roadblocks that stop us. What challenges do you currently face? Are you overcome by them, or do you overcome them? Many people, unfortunately, carry around the same problems for years. They blame external factors, or their environment, instead of realizing that their issue is really internal. Top performing individuals do not struggle with the same problems for years.

There is a debilitating mental disease that cripples people and prevents them from making any progress: *alibi-itis*. Alibis are excuses for why we don't do the things we know we should do in order to get what we want. It is far easier for most people to employ a convenient excuse to justify keeping themselves stuck where they're at, then to put in the effort to change. I'm not above this either. I used to carry around my own "secret excuse." A few years ago I believed that because I wasn't earning enough money, because I hadn't yet "made it," I didn't deserve a great girlfriend. I carried this limiting belief - this alibi - with me *for years*, and it held me back from taking the action needed to date the kind of quality woman I deserved. Have you ever had a "secret excuse" or convenient alibi that's caused you to postpone taking action?

Here are some common excuses that keep us from getting the things we want:

Lack of money, lack of time, lack of energy. Fear of failure, fear of ridicule, fear of rejection, fear of loss, fear of inadequacy, fear of social isolation. Anxiety over events and relationships in your life. Feeling like other people control our circumstances instead of taking responsibility. Not knowing where to start, or not knowing where to find the information we need. Being afraid to admit when we have a problem.

The bottom line is this: if you let these excuses hold you back, they will kill your efforts at change before they ever begin. The main reason we carry around excuses is to protect ourselves: to keep ourselves from being hurt, or to avoid facing something unpleasant.

The good news is, if you have your own “secret excuse,” it probably isn’t as secret as you think. There are millions of other people who have shared the same excuse, and gone on to overcome it. Millions of people have faced their fears, and overcome them. There’s no reason why you can’t join them.

Our Most Valuable Resource

As we master our minds, we then master our time. An accomplished lifestyle designer makes time their ally; time is the key to making progress in our lives. You needn’t be an effective time manager in order to make time your ally. Using time to your advantage has very little to do with time management.

I’ve always been terrible at managing time. To this day, I don’t keep a calendar. I rarely plan things more than a day in advance.

The real key to using time effectively is to step back, prioritize what exactly you want to do or where you want to go, and then apply the principle of constant improvement to get there.

Mis-alignment of Priorities

For the first two years running my own business, a combination of poor prioritizing, poor time management, and poor planning culminated in chaos. Weekends, nights, and holidays were lost as I slaved away on my business. My to-do list was perpetually filled with more things than I could reasonably hope to accomplish.

Things came to a head when I met with three friends at a coffee shop to discuss our lives and our work and I realized: “I have GOT to get a life!” These friends were part of a “bucket listing” group, and when I listened to them share their own bucket list goals it really opened my eyes. My goals, on the other hand, seemed to serve no other purpose other than to increase the volume of my work. Hit a higher target in sales volume. Write

more blog posts each month. Increase staff. I didn't have much else going on - nothing, really. I had few friends outside of work. I kept filling the days with meaningless tasks and duties. They were meaningless because they weren't really leading me towards an overall purpose; I was simply spinning in circles. I trapped myself in my business and needed a way out.

That evening at the coffee shop was a defining moment in my life, and my priorities underwent a massive realignment. I began to actively search for ways to manage myself and my work better. Now that the pupil was ready, the master began to appear - in all sorts of ways. Eventually, EVERYTHING changed. I reduced my 80 hour workweek to 10; all while happily earning more money and accomplishing more. I was able to free up more time for friends, and fun activities that I love - such as traveling!

In this section of the book I'm going to share with you everything I've learned - from mindset, to techniques and tricks to squeeze both the most productivity and life from your time. Read this chapter thoroughly, and implement the strategies and techniques one by one until you HAVE THEM DOWN.

Time is the only non-renewable resource in the universe. It is also the one resource that everyone has an equal amount of. I have the same 24 hours each day that you have. The president of the United States and a tavern drunk both have the same amount. Time is distributed equally regardless of gender, race, income, or physical inequality. What we choose to do with this precious resource - to use or squander it - determines our destiny.

There is no time like the present and the best time to start is right now. If you take nothing else from this book, read and implement the ideas in this section. I know they will create a significant improvement in all of your endeavors for the rest of your life. Turn to the next chapter, and let's get started.

3

Attain the Warrior Mindset

“If one fully understands the present moment, there will be nothing else to do, and nothing else to pursue. Live being true to the single purpose of the present moment.”

-Tsunetomo Yamamoto

What is the key to getting things done? Would you say it's the way we manage our time? While managing minutes and hours can make us efficient, it doesn't make us effective. What's far more important is our mindset. Our mentality determines the energy that we bring. It dictates how fully engaged we are in the moment. To accomplish any significant progress towards our “dream goals,” we have to be completely committed to making them a reality. To do this, we have to cultivate and enforce a “gun to the head” mentality. This is a **state of mind** akin to having a physical gun pointed at our head, and it's the single greatest secret to maximum personal productivity and effectiveness.

I had unknowingly stumbled upon this powerful mentality when I was 13 years old. After I underperformed in public school during seventh grade, my parents sent me to a boarding school called the “Army Navy Academy.” Each night, we were subject to a mandatory “quiet time” study period. I spent most of those evenings goofing off and playing Starcraft.

During the day, I would gobble up lunch quickly and rush back to my room to type up my English essays JUST before my afternoon class. I wrote far faster and far **better** during those 20 minutes than I ever would have during the previous night's two hour study period. And guess what? I got an A on EVERY single essay! For the first time ever, I even achieved a 4.0 GPA. It wasn't until much later in life that I realized (and appreciated) what had taken place.

When we force ourselves into a situation where we MUST succeed, at all costs, we don't fool around. When we walk the metaphorical tightrope wire without a net, all of our thoughts become hyper-focused on crossing successfully. We don't idle away our time on meaningless activities, like browsing photos on Instagram or Facebook, or playing Candy Crush on our phone. We develop the sense that we must do whatever is necessary to see that our task is completed successfully. No excuses. No wasting time. No half-assed work. Nothing but our very best.

Burn the Ships

"One who is supposed to be a warrior considers it his foremost concern to keep death in mind at all times, every day and every night, from the morning of New Year's Day through the night of New Year's Eve."

- Code of the Samurai

"The Art of War," the military classic written by the ancient strategist Sun Tzu, has been studied by history's greatest generals for nearly fifteen centuries. Its concepts have also been practiced by business leaders as well. Sun Tzu would observe the various effects of different fields of terrain on army movements and battle outcomes. One of the many unique concepts that Sun Tzu introduces is the psychological effect of "death ground." This is also often referred to as "burning the ships."

Sun Tzu noted that soldiers fight their fiercest when their backs are up against a wall. He proposed that generals deliberately cultivate this psychological edge by backing their armies against difficult terrain where there is no possible escape route. The soldiers would have only two options facing them: fight like hell, or die.

With no where else to turn, the men were unified for a single goal. Worked up into a bloodlust, their heightened emotional and psychological state would increase their combat performance. The increased effect was so great that many times they would vanquish a stronger foe.

Most of us are familiar with the story of the 300 Spartan soldiers at Thermopylae. Hernan Cortez, in perhaps the most famous historical example, used this strategy to vanquish the mighty Aztec empire. By landing in Mexico, Cortez violated his mandate from the governor of Cuba. His soldiers squabbled amongst themselves over the matter of returning home until he secretly ordered all of his own ships to be burnt. There was no longer any possible return route. The men had only one option: they would have to unite and conquer, or perish in a hostile and foreign land.

It is known that Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the great Russian author of Crime and Punishment, deliberately gambled away his money whenever he became comfortable off his success. Suddenly, without all of the trappings of wealth, his true purpose once again materialized. He was forced into a position where he needed to produce or starve. Interestingly, Dostoyevsky wrote a novel called "The Gambler" in just 26 days to - you guessed it - pay off a gambling debt.

A wealthy man has many problems. A hungry man has only one.

All great achievers - from Alexander the Great to Steve Jobs - have used the "gun to the head" mindset. They each had an important destiny to fulfill, and they knew the limits of their own mortality. **They embraced the truth they would eventually die, and used that fact to create legacies that would last forever.**

The "death ground" is the most powerful strategy whenever we need to move in a new and important direction in life. When I started my first business, I was on my own "death ground." I was sleeping on my cousin's couch in his one-bedroom apartment in San Diego. I had enough money to buy cheap frozen microwaveable foods to survive on, but not enough for much else. I could either accept the status quo, find a \$10 an hour job appropriate to someone in my situation, and spend each day feeling like a failure. Or I could work my butt off and try to do everything I could to improve my station in life. Even in that situation, I knew that I was capable of so much more - so I set out with a vengeance to prove it. I was willing to overcome any obstacle.

Several years later, I had a strong desire to write this book. So I quit that same business, resigned from all of my ongoing client projects, and devoted all of my energy to writing. I had to stretch my savings and make many sacrifices to my lifestyle. But I

also understood that if I maintained my business I would not have taken the process of writing this book seriously.

So, for practical purposes, how can we create our own “death ground” without discarding all of our money and assets? How can we foster the “gun to the head” mentality needed to get the big things done? And most importantly, can we do it without burning down our home?

Seven Virtues to Hone the Mind

The samurai of feudal Japan lived their entire lives with the possibility of death imminent. They developed a closer relationship to death than anyone; to die when necessary was part of their duty. Faced with the near-certainty of death, and recognizing life’s fragility, the samurai developed seven virtues of correct action and living which came to define their way of life.

Translated roughly, these virtues were:

- 1. Kennin** - Fortitude and Perseverance
- 2. Shinnen** - Conviction and Faith in Oneself
- 3. Shincho** - Care and Discretion
- 4. Seigi** - Righteousness and Justice
- 5. Sessei** - Moderation and Temperance
- 6. Jizen** - Benevolence and Charity
- 7. Kibo** - Hope

Samurai realized that their reputation, honor, and legacy could transcend death, and so they devoted themselves completely to these ideals. In a samurai’s daily life, each of his actions had to align with these values.

Over time, I have come to identify seven modern values that codify a productive, purpose-driven life. I find that the more you integrate and implement these values, the richer your life will be. Together, they foster a mindset and a way of living that uses the promise of eventual death to make the most of the here and now.

- 1. Write down all of your most important goals and put them in a place where*

you'll see them every day.

Place your goals on the wall above your bed, or in your wallet. These days I keep a file on my laptop's desktop that I look at each morning. When you list out your goals, don't say "I **will do** such and such," say that "I **am doing** such and such," so that you build confidence, and start acting towards their attainment now.

Don't say: "I will travel in the summer." Because when summer comes, most people will then say: "I will travel in the winter." Many people fall into the delayer's habit and never break out of it. Develop the mindset of an effective doer who takes action in the present. Take baby steps in the direction of your most important goals. Start working on your biggest goals, in some small way, now.

Baby steps lead to big breakthroughs. Before I took the first big leap in my life and spent four months in South America, I made a trial run by spending nearly two months in Mexico. I found a beachfront property in Baja California, and disconnected completely from my usual environment. If anything went horribly wrong I could always head back: it was only a three hour drive back to the US. The result? Everything went fine. My confidence increased, and I realized that yes, I can achieve my dreams of traveling and living abroad.

And before ever leaving for Mexico, I made a few week-long trips within the US to places like Hawaii, San Francisco, and Utah. Before these trips, I had never traveled anywhere on my own. But each little step brought me further in the direction I wanted to go: towards exciting, extended adventures in exotic locations.

The biggest thing stopping me from leaving behind the comfort I knew and departing to chase my dreams on the other side of the world were irrational fears about the potential bad things that **could** happen. These were nothing but hobgoblins in my mind, but they were enough to cultivate a sense of general malaise and indifference towards my goals. These fears are paralyzing - they debilitate action - and they place dreams out of reach. Baby steps - trial runs - are what move us past these fears and into the new and unknown territory we want to go.

I know many wildly successful entrepreneurs who failed at several endeavors before

finally striking it big. My childhood friend Justin works from home and earns between 40-50 thousand dollars a month through one of his online businesses. But before he achieved such remarkable success, he had tried out at least four or five other business ideas which didn't work so well. And when I say "tried" I mean that real time, effort, and money went into these projects.

Donald Trump tells a story of a man who had an idea for a soda product. He called it "3-Up" and released it into the world. But it didn't take off. Then he tried calling it "4-Up," "5-Up, and "6-Up," but those too failed to attain success. Finally, in frustration, he gave up. Someone else came along later with a soda pop called "7-Up," and it was a huge success.

2. Elevate your standards and expectations of yourself. You are more than your current station in life.

Everyone starts at zero. Abraham Lincoln, America's most-beloved president, failed at law, failed at business, and lost several political elections. Sylvester Stallone kept his belongings in a bus station locker, slept in alleys, and ate out of dumpsters before getting his break in acting. Stallone's script for "Rocky" was rejected multiple times before finally being accepted. Think about the significance of what had taken place: a homeless man created a movie that scored a 4-star rating and earned ten Academy Award nominations, **winning** the award for Best Picture.

Walt Disney bathed in Central Park bathrooms before creating the greatest media empire the world has ever seen. John Paul DeJoria is the billionaire co-founder of Paul Mitchell, founder of Patron, and a dozen other companies. He's often seen with friends like the Dalai Lama, Kevin Costner, Pierce Brosnan, Sir Richard Branson, and others. But in his twenties DeJoria was a homeless single parent. To feed himself and his young son, he would go out each night picking through trash and collecting coke bottles to cash in for a few cents a piece.

It doesn't matter where you are now. It really doesn't. What matters is your own self-respect. You must believe that you are more than your present bank balance. Whatever your status was yesterday, it doesn't equal your tomorrow. The actions you take now and the habits you develop from these actions will ultimately determine your destiny.

My dad always used to tell me, “today is the first day of the rest of your life.” But just believing it isn’t enough - we need to set big goals, take massive action, and fight to link everything we do each and every day to our goals.

3. *Invite rejection - often.*

You can’t make any forward progress in your life if the fear of rejection or failure holds you back. Become comfortable with the possibility: deliberately force yourself into situations where rejection is likely. The marketer Dan Kennedy says that if you haven’t pissed someone off by noon, then you probably aren’t making any money. It’s not my style (and it probably isn’t yours) to anger people, but I have learned that becoming comfortable with rejection and welcoming it head-on is an important component of growth. Also, if you actively employ the positive after-math effects of rejection, it can light a fire within you. The simple desire to prove wrong those who have doubted you instills the inner drive that can help you to get things done. Don’t run from rejection - take it as a signal to become better, and to do better.

Remember that Michael Jordan, considered by many to be the greatest professional basketball player of all time, initially failed to make his high school varsity basketball team. They wrote him off, saying he was “too short” to play at that level. This failure motivated him to prove his worth, and he became a star. When former Chargers running back LaDainian Tomlinson asked Jordan for advice on how to stay driven, Jordan’s reply was: ***“Use every little slight to motivate you.”***

Get into the habit of developing large proposals to present to people. Ask them for big things. If they say no, save each rejection letter in a file or print them out and go back to look at them whenever you need to shake yourself up.

Creating proposals and sending them out to people has an additional bonus: it will train you to become an effective and persuasive communicator. Some of your proposals may even be accepted - especially when these proposals are linked to your important mission. Reaching out to others is a critical skill for both entrepreneurs and lifestyle designers to develop, and I will teach you how to effectively reach out to important people in another section of this book.

Remember that the real enemy is not other people, but our brain's capacity to cultivate an **indifferent** attitude. The reason to subject ourselves to rejection is to shake ourselves free from the indifference that cultivates a passive attitude, which leads to passively accepting what the universe gives us. Which, for the majority of us, isn't usually very much.

Indifference happens to us all from time to time. We get complacent. The world is full of distractions. But by reaching out and aiming higher and higher, we subconsciously raise our own standards. We increase our threshold, and with it, our capabilities. Even the best get rejected, so learn to accept rejection even if you can't be completely comfortable with it. View rejection as a blessing, and also as feedback to learn from.

Guy Kawasaki is the former Chief Evangelist of Apple, a successful entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and author of 12 books, including several bestsellers. His career and achievements are commendable. Yet, to this day, he still has his original rejection letter from a job application he sent to Microsoft back in 1982 (over 30 years ago!). He says that he has his rejection letters framed, and goes back to them from time to time.

How you interpret rejection is what matters. Learn to find the good even when bad things happen. Successful entrepreneurs and successful "New Rich" lifestyle designers have a "reality distortion field," where they see things as better than they are.

4. *Become the "Unjealous Friend."*

At the same time, revel in the success of other people. When you see other people working on important things, encourage them and support them. Congratulate them on their successes. Share in their joy and gains without envy. People do notice and appreciate this, **regardless** of how high up they are on the professional or social ladder.

Equally important, successful people like to see others achieve success. Before long, the power of association will kick in and you will subconsciously raise your own expectations. In time, you will reach your own heights of success and achievement. Build a supporting network of people like you who are also trying to make a success, but do so by supporting them instead of trying to cajole them into supporting you.

Before long, the same people that you supported will see what you're doing and support you in turn. They will open doors for you, and introduce you to others who will help you in **your** mission. This spiral of positive support continues going upward, and its a very cool thing. Mentally, you will hold yourself to a higher standard, and impel yourself to create awesome products and services, because you won't want to let these people down. Their belief in you will buoy you.

At the same time, beware of envy. It's a poisonous cancer that causes our worlds to contract. If you harbor envy it will never lead to anything pleasant. Avoid people who put you down or who try to make you feel unimportant. Sometimes these are friends we've had for years, who knew us when we weren't so successful, and refuse to recognize how we've changed. If someone does acknowledge how far you've come and congratulates you for it, this is a true friend that you want to keep in your life.

5. Align everything you do with your purpose.

This is what is going to help you to overcome inertia and push through all the sweat and sacrifice. You must have a purpose that drives your actions, to really give them meaning. Most importantly, think about who will benefit the most from your success, besides yourself? Take some time to think it over.

How will you help those you care about? While writing this book I often thought of real people I knew who were eager for a dramatic change in their lives. They wanted to learn what I had learned. Several people within my network have approached me, invited me to lunch, and asked to pick my brain. They had followed my movements and adventures around the world and wanted to know how they too could live a similar lifestyle. They were feeling stuck, unsatisfied with their jobs, bored, and ready to pursue their own dreams with reckless abandon and passion.

Much of this book was written on the road - in situations and environments that weren't completely conducive to writing. There have been many mornings when I just didn't feel like writing - but I overcame my own resistance when I turned my thoughts to these people. I wrote this book for them - out of a deep, genuine desire to help them transform their lives in a meaningful and radical way.

In marketing, there is a concept called a “customer avatar.” When writing advertisements, we begin by describing our ideal prospect and giving that person a name, then imagine that we’re writing our ads specifically to that person. This makes our marketing more effective. Can you think of a real person - an ideal prospect - right now who will benefit from your work?

Remember him or her when you sit down at your desk - you have reasons to finish your project to completion beyond just you and your own needs. You are providing an important service. It’s your obligation to continue.

If your work is linked to some sense of higher purpose, and your actions have meaning, it will multiply your productivity. When we have a strong enough “WHY” that’s driving us, we tap into a force that makes us unstoppable. We don’t have to get into the right mood to work, or be in the right work environment. We can wake up in the morning eager to take on the day, or just as easily stay up late burning the midnight oil, because we love our work.

Scott Turow, a highly successful multiple best-selling author, wrote out his first novel longhand while commuting by train to the law firm he worked at. He has now written eleven books which have sold over 25 million copies, and several movies have been based on his books. All of this while working as a practicing attorney. Do you think he had strong enough “reasons why” spurring on his accomplishments? You bet he did!

If you link your goals solely to making money than I think you will fail. Sooner or later you will dread facing the day, and your productivity will screech to a halt. Find ways to become motivated for the right reasons, or create them. Always keep one eye fixed on the people who will benefit through your success.

Also, when you create your goals: think about what you value most in your life, and create a compelling vision for your present and future around these values. For instance, when starting out, I valued being my own boss and I valued freedom. I believed (and still believe) in advertising and marketing as the highest-leverage business activity, and saw that as my path to freedom. So I went into business for myself in advertising. Every goal created and every action took thereafter was somehow linked to making progress in these three areas: entrepreneurship, advertising, and lifestyle freedom.

Every time I learned a new skill such as web programming, copywriting, or search engine optimization - I felt confident it was a correct action because it was increasing my knowledge of advertising and its related services, thus enhancing my value and contributing to my vision.

Goals can become impotent and fade, or replaced with new ones. But it's your vision that stays. Napoleon Hill calls this your "Definite Major Purpose." Create a compelling vision, and it will guide your actions.

6. Set time limits.

Cultivate a sense of urgency. Give your movements purpose. If you feel yourself slowing down, speed up. The samurai thought about death constantly: it could come at any moment. The fact that death was omnipresent motivated them to fulfill their purpose, each action become more refined, and the present moment carried with it a greater dignity.

Whenever I have important work to do, I often like to use a digital timer. I'll set it for an hour, or a half an hour, and use that time to single-task on the project I need to complete. The constant ticking down of the seconds reminds me that time is limited and its quickly running out. Sometimes I'll deliberately set a low amount of time for a task to force myself to work faster. Racing against the clock is a great way to get things done.

On the flipside, when you work with other people, suggest time limits with them as well. If they regularly miss deadlines, you may be better off without them. Other people can poison us with sloth, laziness, and indifference - but only if we give them that influence over us.

7. Get Inspired. Often.

We can't always choose our environment. Each of us will regularly come into contact with people and situations that will pull us down. It is inevitable. But remember, the mind is essentially free. If we choose to let our minds languish amidst our present circumstances, it is our own fault.

The good news is that inspiration is everywhere, if you know where to look. These days, I rarely have to look outside of my own network of friends and acquaintances to become inspired. But it wasn't always this way. If you don't yet have a strong supporting network, stay focused on your mission and it will soon develop. In the meantime, seek out inspiration in the right places: from books, magazines profiling successful people, TED talks, or from entrepreneurial community websites like Mixergy.

Also - if you spend a significant amount of time traveling, you will meet all kinds of positive, upbeat people whom you can look up to and admire. Many of the most incredible people in my life are individuals I've met while on the road. At the same time, it was humbling, because each person had their own interesting stories and knew about many things that I did not. These experiences opened my eyes and made me realize the incredible potential that can be found in other people.

4

Techniques for Top Performance

Develop the Courage and Confidence to Become Unstoppable

We've explored how important our mentality is when it comes to shaping our lives, and how following a set of virtues enables us to be at our best. Now it's time to explore the most powerful techniques that will transmute our thoughts into real results in the physical realm.

When you have a great idea, there is something you should do immediately to increase your chances of following up. For most of us, our natural tendency is to "think it over." Days pass, and other things occur in our lives. And as we become distracted by other things our forward motion has been halted and we turn on the idea, coming up with the reasons why we can't follow up. Progress towards a goal is always moving either forward or backward, and once it starts in either direction it is very difficult to reverse.

Once you realize this, you discover the need to take action immediately. Instead of dwelling upon all of the reasons why you cannot do something, get out a sheet of paper and write down all of the reasons why you can. Maybe you want to write a book, travel the world, start a new business, or begin a new career in a foreign location.

What happens when you do this exercise is that your mind will start to go to work to find reasons why you CAN achieve your goal. You begin to influence your unconscious through positive self-talk, affirmations, and visualizations. This exercise uses your conscious thought to create positivity within your subconscious.

Too often when we come up with a great idea, it sometimes seems so far removed from our current reality that it seems impossible to follow up on. Our minds immediately look

to reasons why we can't do it. If there's something that you REALLY want, this exercise forces your mind to come up with all of the reasons why you can get it. This creates the proper self-talk needed to move you forward. Your thoughts become aligned to your goal, and thoughts eventually become actions. There's a saying that "energy goes where attention flows," and it's absolutely true.

Right now, at this moment, you have all kinds of latent talents that you may not even realize. You don't have to have godly Michael Phelps-esque talent to be successful at something. You can combine your unique set of skills to do great things.

It is also true that you and I both possess knowledge and experiences unique to us. And we can use our unique backgrounds to write a book that can help many people, create a podcast, or start a profitable business.

For example: any time you can combine two areas in which you have knowledge and experience in, you have a chance to place yourself in a leading role through the combination of the two.

Scott Adams, the creator of the "Dilbert" comic series, doesn't consider himself the best animator. However, he does have quite a bit of experience in the office workplace. He's in a unique position to combine these two areas of his life to create a comic about office life that's appreciated by a lot of people. A dentist who loves golf may not be the greatest dentist in the world, or the best golfer in the world. But, he knows more about dentistry than the majority of golfers, and he may very well know a lot more about golf than the majority of dentists. He's in a unique position to capitalize on that market.

You too can use the background, knowledge, and experience that you already possess to embark in a new and exciting direction. Think about your professional or academic background, and think about your passions. Write down all the reasons why you can accomplish your dream, right now.

Mindstorming - Storming the Castle of the Mind

This brings me to another exercise that's very similar to the first one. We just wrote down all of the reasons "WHY" you can realize your dream or idea. Now, let's do another

exercise called “Mindstorming,” where we write down the “WHAT” and the “HOW.”

Get out another sheet of paper, and write down everything you can think of which will bring you closer to accomplishing your goal. Maybe there are certain books or blogs you need to read about the topic, a training program to purchase, or certain people doing what you’d like to do whose brain you could pick over a coffee or lunch.

The purpose of mindstorming is to take your great idea and break it into small steps and milestones that you can begin taking action on immediately. Write down whatever comes to mind, anything that you think might be relevant, whether it’s a good idea or a bad idea. Don’t think too much, just write it down.

Many of these steps, such as building a website or a logo for your idea, can even be outsourced to trained contractors (which I’ll explain how to do in Part 3) in mere minutes. The key is to write everything down; get it out of your head. By writing these action steps down in paper, you affirm your commitment to making your dream a reality.

Mindstorming in Action

Let me give you an example. In the early summer of 2012 I created “The WordPress Design Institute.” In order to affirm and promote my expertise at WordPress, I began teaching live trainings and seminars in late 2011 and 2012. I organized these by contacting leaders of LinkedIn groups that met in local areas and through heads of university clubs, such as the Advertising Club. There was always a huge turnout at these events, and I knew I could create a winning product based on the demand.

My knowledge of this topic had become immense, and I was the right man to create a training program teaching graphic designers how to create beautiful, user-friendly WordPress websites. My goal was to teach all of this in a single program, using the software **Camtasia** to create videos recording my screen.

The biggest hurdle I faced when creating the product was getting over myself. I was still living hand to mouth; struggling to make the rent each month and have a little bit left over. My freelance career had me busy all the time, stuck in the swamp, swatting off

alligators. I could never seem to prioritize the actual creation of the course; after all, I was too busy simply trying to survive.

That's when I read this fine quote by Eric Hoffer, which changed my entire belief system:

"There are many who find a good alibi far more attractive than an achievement. For an achievement does not settle anything permanently. We still have to prove our worth anew each day: we have to prove that we are as good today as we were yesterday. But when we have a valid alibi for not achieving anything we are fixed, so to speak, for life. Moreover, when we have an alibi for not writing a book, painting a picture, and so on, we have an alibi for not writing the greatest book and not painting the greatest picture. Small wonder that the effort expended and the punishment endured in obtaining a good alibi often exceed the effort and grief requisite for the attainment of a most marked achievement."

What I'd realized then was I had become **addicted to my struggle**. My idea for this program had become my "way out;" a way of comforting myself for the situation I was in. The problem I'd created was mental: I was using this idea as a crutch to validate my self-worth to myself, instead of taking any concentrated action towards its completion. I was holding onto a dream instead of putting in the work to make it real. It was then I realized that I was caught in an action-postponing, never-ending loop of my own making.

How many people do you know would say, "I'd like to, but..." to their dreams? Then you understand where this quote is coming from, and you can imagine the myriad number of excuses I had at that time holding me back.

In short order I moved into an oceanfront guesthouse in Mexico for the next 2 months. I wanted to be somewhere where I could get away from the noise and detach from my normal habits and routine. Then I began to mindstorm. Using a notepad and paper, I very simply broke down the entire process into sections. There were many little steps to designing and optimizing websites using WordPress, many of which I had taken for granted, or accumulated through years of experiences. I created about a dozen different sections. Each section had its own page, and then I would write down simple bullet

notes listing out all of the relevant points and best practices that would fall under that section.

From this I recorded a video for each section, using my notepad as a reference from which to build on. This aided me greatly while I taught the different subjects, and also made it extremely easy to create a table of contents with which I could easily present the information within the training course.

For instance, Session 1 covered things like domain registration, web hosting, WordPress installs, and configuring databases. Sessions 1 - 4 dealt with the setup basics, sessions 5-8 covered the creation of content, sessions 9 - 12 taught advanced website customization techniques, and sessions 13-14 taught advanced WordPress techniques. All of these were written down and mapped out during the Mindstorming phase before I began the project, and provided the basis for everything which followed thereafter.

The mindstorming exercise is a powerful technique to follow through on anything - from developing an information product course to creating a sales and marketing plan. Remember, the key is to organize your thoughts. By writing them down, your thoughts become things, and by listing them out, you can go to work on them, one by one.

Share your Strategy with Advisors

Once you've begun working on your idea, tell your friends about it. Robert Cialdini, in his book "Influence," describes the concept of "Commitment and Consistency" as one of his six "weapons of influence." The law states that people act consistent to commitments that they make **publicly**. If you announce to the world that your plan is to lose 15 pounds by May, then you've raised the stakes. You've increased the pressure on yourself, and pressure is great for getting things done.

I can say right now that I would not have written this book, and probably not achieved many other things, if I hadn't created a mastermind group a few years back. By freely expressing my biggest goals with close and trusted friends each month, I affirmed my commitment to achieving them. And with such a strong supportive group, we help each another in any way we can. I'll show you how to create and optimize your own mastermind group in Part 2 of this book.

The High Leverage Performance Chart: Your Deployment Plan

By this point, you've built up a lot of momentum. The pieces are in place: you've developed the warrior's mindset, you've listed out our reasons why and how, and you've solidified our commitment to realizing your "dream-goal." It's time to roll up the sleeves and get things done!

To enable consistent progress over time, we have to make time our ally. We must prioritize. Time inevitably brings change, for better or for worse. Life is busy, there are many things that demand our attention and time. Distractions fly in each day from every direction. It's easy to lose ourselves in the chaos.

But there is an exercise we can perform to assert control. This technique will dramatically improve our work habits, allowing us to direct our time to the completion of our most important priorities. It's time to create your own "high leverage performance chart."

Start by taking out yet another piece of paper (yes, I'm a big fan of good old-fashioned paper and ink, if you can't tell!). Using the full page, draw up four sections, one of top of the other.

Start categorizing all the activities that you do, or could do, on an average day. Label these as follows, from top to bottom:

- 1. High Value Activities**
- 2. High \$ Per Hour Activities**
- 3. Low \$ Per Hour Activities**
- 4. Zero or Negative Value Activities**

Below I'm going to list some examples of what you might put in each.

High Value Activities

This category includes activities such as the following: Finding and developing relationships with mentors, creating *and sticking to* a nutrition plan, developing a

thrice-weekly gym schedule, spending time with your favorite people, writing a novel, meditation, etc.

This is also where you write down your biggest, most audacious goals. Which activities will contribute most to your fulfillment, satisfaction, and quality of life? What do you value most? What activities would make the biggest difference in your life? Don't forget to add important life-enjoyment activities in the "High Value" column.

High \$ Per Hour Activities

These are activities you specialize in and do well. In this category, focus only on the ones that are the most valuable. There are many activities that you *could* do, but don't *need* to do. For example, you may be a great programmer; but if you want to own a software company, you're going to need to delegate much of the programming gruntwork to others. Here we focus only on business activities that deliver the highest return.

You might put "marketing for customers," or "prospecting" in this category. But I would tell you that "marketing for the *right* customers" is more appropriate. Chasing after tire-kicking, low-value prospects who chew up your time is one of the biggest time-wasting activities of all! Instead, examples of high-leverage, high \$ per hour activities could include: developing efficient business systems, creating high quality content, and nurturing relationships with your best customers (the ones who happily pay you substantial sums of money).

Low \$ Per Hour Activities

These are activities that you could do, but would be better off either outsourcing or delegating, or ignoring altogether. These are usually very time-consuming tasks, and don't really equate to high-value or high-leverage. These could include admin work like paying bills, buying things online, etc. Can you outsource these activities to an assistant or minimize the time spent on them?

When I was performing search-engine optimization services for clients, I quickly found out that writing articles and re-purposing content for my clients was incredibly time-consuming, not something I did particularly well, and it did not deliver a high return. Outsourcing that activity to a specialist was one of the best decisions I ever made. This category also includes activities such as: over-communicating with high-maintenance

/ low-value customers, shotgun networking, checking e-mail, and excessive micromanagement.

Yes, I could spend time on Skype micromanaging contractors from oDesk, but why? I clearly lay out the instructions, and if they have any questions they can e-mail me. No one should have unlimited access to us. My Skype status is always set to “Do Not Disturb.”

Zero Value Activities:

Activities that not only provide no value to our lives but also detract us. This includes activities like gossip, watching the news, smoking, aimless wandering of the internet (no laughing matter - I’ve spent hours reading pointless Wikipedia pages!), wasting time on social media, or just spacing out. If our energy gets low, instead of wasting an hour watching ridiculous YouTube videos, wouldn’t it be better to use that time to take a nap instead?

Remember: don’t just copy the examples I list here. Think over all of the things you personally spend time doing, and create your own chart.

Now, draw a line around each category. Create a line between the top two categories and the bottom two, like this:

High Lifetime Value Activities

High \$ Per Hour Activities

Low \$ Per Hour Activities

Zero or Negative Value Activities

You now have a clearly defined map of your priorities. It’s your objective to spend as much time in the top territory as possible. The area below the halfway boundary is a mine-filled “no man’s land.” Imagine a big “KEEP OUT” sign in bright red letters. Any activities that fall in this category should either be eliminated, minimized, or outsourced.

Another way to gain traction from your performance chart is to think about what your

ideal billable hour is, or what you want it to be. Let's say it's \$125 per hour. Write that in next to the central dividing line. This number should be on your mind constantly. Before engaging in any activity, ask yourself which area does it fall into? Is it something that's worth \$125 an hour? If yes, then proceed. If no, ignore it.

The thing to remember is this: if you are self-employed, there are certain activities that are overpaying you, and others that are underpaying you. If certain activities are necessary (such as inputting information into a database) but low \$ per hour, then outsource it (check out Part 3 for a full suite of outsourcing techniques). In the same vein, working with 3 of your best clients may pay you \$500 an hour, while the other 10 may only pay about \$20 an hour. Yet these clients will try to take up as much time as you give them.

On the other hand, I earned \$0 an hour while writing this book during my own time, but it was a high-lifetime value and important "purpose project" for me. It's up to you to make your own judgment calls each time a new decision-making opportunity occurs, and this chart provides the blueprint.

Lastly, take three or four activities in the top two sections of your performance chart (High Lifetime Value and High \$ Per Hour) and assign a star to them. These are the "vital few" - the most important things that you want to form a habit of doing, every single day.

How to Maximize the Value of Time

Now we have a map laid out for how to plan our time, and a good sense of what we must spend each day doing. It's now time to assign a real, numerical dollar value to our hours and days. There's some math involved, but it's relatively painless. It's important to have a base income target for your hours, days, months, and year - so you get a solid idea of the value of your time and can make good decisions how to invest that time.

You'll want to perform the "Dreamlining" exercise in the second chapter of Part 2 to determine how much money you actually need to fulfill your ideal lifestyle. From that, you can get an estimation of what our target daily and monthly income needs to be to realize each of your dream goals. But for now, let's just create a rough example

to explore how the process works. Let's assume that your Target Annual Income is \$120,000 USD (\$10,000 a month).

Now estimate how many days out of the year you spend working. Let's assume that, on average, I work 6 days a week, leaving Sundays open. We'll subtract those 52 Sundays from 365 days in the year: $365 - 52 = 313$ days.

Next, let's subtract about two weeks for holidays and other days off. We'll round it down to 300 working days to get a nice even number. $313 - 13 = 300$.

Now let's divide:

\$120,000 (Target Annual Income) divided by 300 working days = \$400 per day (Target Daily Income)

And then divide again, assuming you average four productive hours a day:

\$400 per day (Target Daily Income) divided by 4 hours a day = \$100 per hour.

Really simple right? You can then make adjustments, for example, if you wanted to scale down to 200 working days, you would need to either earn \$600 per working day or work 6 productive hours at \$100 per hour instead of 4 (a calculator helps).

Even if you're nowhere close to your target hourly income at the moment, do this exercise and keep your target hourly and daily numbers at the forefront of your mind. Write them out on paper and place it somewhere you will see it often. It will give you something to aspire to, and give you a real sense of the value of your time. You will make better decisions about what and whom you devote your time to. As your career blossoms and your income goals are realized, you can come back to this exercise whenever you like to assess or re-assess how to allocate your time.

Also - one important caveat - how often you or I should work depends on what's most important in our lives in the moment. In general, I work about two to three times more when I'm at home in the US than when I'm traveling. During a 7 month-long backpacking trip in Asia, for example, I averaged about 10 hours of work a week. Maximizing my life enjoyment and exploring are my biggest priorities during overseas romps. By leveraging geo-arbitrage (spending a strong currency in a country with a

weaker currency), my disposable income and lifestyle quotient is multiplied. Thus the balance of priorities during these periods are tipped to about 80% lifestyle / 20% work. For instance, while last in Bangkok I was training in a Muay Thai gym twice a day, three days a week - for a total of 18 hours a week. During that time, I scaled down my work activities to only the vital few, averaging only about 2 hours a day managing work projects. Though my total earnings moderately decreased during that time period, my per capita dollar per hour value was at its highest.

When I'm at home, completing important projects that bring fulfillment are prioritized, so it's closer to 70% work / 30% life. I'm much more likely to work 25 or even 30 hours per week, depending on what I've got going on. Determine what the priority is for you at this stage and plan accordingly.

You may see no need to determine a set hourly rate, but I still encourage you to do this exercise. It will allow you to stand firm when dealing with clients, or other people in general. That hour-long meeting you had just cost you \$200. Was it worth it? When you think in these terms, you start to equate time to money and make good decisions about which activities and people to engage, and which not to. There are simply not enough hours in the day to do everything.

Sharpening the Knife: Mastering Time Allocation

When we sit down to work, it helps to develop our own process of designating certain blocks of time for the completion of certain activities. Everyone you ask will have different suggestions about how to do this, and each "time management coach" swears that their way of dividing up work hours is the best. I'm going to list some of the most popular ideas, and you can experiment and adopt the approach that works best for you. Again, if you acquire a digital timer, it can prove to be immensely helpful in training you to control time.

Pomodoro Method

Working within 30-minute blocks of time. 25 minutes followed by a 5-minute break. After four pomodoro sessions, a longer break is taken. The reasoning is that short work "bursts" contribute to peak mental alacrity. Named for the "pomodoro" kitchen timer.

Swiss Cheese/Salami Slice Method

Overcome procrastination by: punching a hole in a task (like swiss cheese), or taking a large task and slicing it up into small pieces. Both involve engaging in large tasks in some small way, even if only for a few minutes. Credit to Brian Tracy and Alan Lakein for these two concepts.

Flossing One Tooth

More of a metaphor than a method. Similar to the “swiss cheese” technique. The idea is that a person can take up the habit of flossing if they can commit to flossing **just one** tooth. Eventually they’ll be flossing them all. The whole point is to develop the habit, and then create a recurring pattern that is easy to adhere to. This can apply to anything, from exercising to writing. For example, if you want to write a book or start a blog, set a small minimum requirement of writing at least 200 words per day. Some days you may end up writing a lot more.

Ultradian Cycling

A concept credited to Tony Schwartz, author of “Be Excellent at Anything: The Four Keys To Transforming the Way We Work and Live” and “The Power of Full Engagement.”

Schwartz’s research claims that we have varying 90-minute cycles of alertness. These “ultradian rhythms” were first observed in a study of sleep cycles when we transition from light to deep sleep. Schwartz argues that it applies during the daytime as well - and that our energy, attention, and focus is always shifting. If we work longer than 90-minutes at a time, then we draw on “energy reserves” which tax our system and lower our alertness. Using Ultradian Cycling, you work in 90-minute chunks of time, and then engage in periods of renewal by taking 15-30 minute breaks in between. I sometimes use my own variation of this by working for 50 minutes, taking a 10 minute break, and then finishing with a 30-minute period for a total of 90 minutes.

Master Leverage: Defy Gravity and Commence Forward Motion

Let me give you a big-picture metaphor to help place everything into greater perspective. For more than two thousand years men dreamed about manned flight. But it was simply a dream - a fool’s quest. The possibility eluded even the greatest thinkers, including 15th-century Renaissance man Leonardo DaVinci - because the simple act of defying gravity

proved too difficult. It wasn't until the properties of hydrogen were explored that the first manned free flight became reality in France in 1783. The king initially decreed that the first pilots be condemned criminals. How's that for a vote of confidence?

When airplanes and spacecraft came along later, these too had to overcome the most troubling ordeal of defying gravity during the initial take off. Eventually, this process became easier once the laws of physics were well-studied and understood and new innovations, such as the combustible engine, came along. Here is my point: 90% of manned flight comes down to the simple act of defying gravity. Once a vessel overcomes the initial takeoff and is in motion, forward momentum takes over. The movement of the craft is almost effortless, and requires little else to keep it in flight.

The history of flight directly parallels our own quest to engage in any new and important venture: the most difficult thing to do is overcome our own internal resistance. Getting started is the most difficult part of the entire process. If we want to develop new habits based on our highest-leverage activities, we need to identify our own internal resistance.

These are nothing but simple doubts: observe them, but don't submit to them. If we can engage in our highest-value activities every day for a few weeks, even in some small way, we will form the proper habits and "overcome gravity," in our own way. This applies to any brave new activity that we want to engage in - from writing, to travel, to sales, to language learning.

Neuroscience supports this: engaging in a new pattern of activity affects neural pathways and synapses, in a process of brain development known as "neuroplasticity." The more we engage in the activity, the stronger these neural pathways become. In the beginning everything inside of us will say, "No, I don't want to do that!" The only way is to push on, gain forward momentum, and let it carry us towards our dreams.

Using Pain and Pleasure Motivators

When the pain of inaction is greater than the pain of action, it becomes far easier to push through feelings of unpleasantness. Yes, asking out an attractive member of the opposite sex can be downright terrifying. But isn't the notion of spending your life alone without a companion scarier? Now imagine that you have to make a hundred sales calls

today: does the thought alone instill a sense of impending dread and fear? But, let's assume that if you didn't make those calls, then you would have nothing to eat. It is far easier to take action because the pain caused by inaction is far greater.

You can use this very simple psychology as a tactic to your advantage. Research shows that we humans are twice as motivated to avoid pain than we are to seek pleasure. To keep motivated, use a healthy balance of both to-pleasure and away-from-pain measures. For instance, let's say you had a highly-productive day and accomplished a very important task. Maybe you closed a big deal. Allow yourself to bask in the afterglow. Pat yourself on the back and be proud. Then do something to reward yourself. Meet a friend for a drink, go for a surf, or get a massage. Celebrate your victories.

On the other hand, use pain-avoidance techniques as well. If you want to start an exercise plan, tell five of your friends that you will give them \$50 for any day that you miss a workout. Then hold yourself accountable. Simply imagining the "fear of loss" is a strong motivator to action.

5

Small “Lifestyle Hacks” That Make a Big Difference

This chapter covers a collection of small “lifestyle hacks” that contribute to peak performance. An entire chapter could be written for each of these, but they’re well-documented elsewhere. Instead, I’ll just touch on the most important habits to focus on for the purposes of productivity. If you incorporate all of these together, they will add up to make a very large difference.

Exercise

I’m not going to tell you how, or how often to work out. Just find something that you enjoy, and you’re much more likely to stick with it. Some people are Crossfit fanatics, some prefer the solitude of jogging, and still others like to get out aggression through martial arts. The important thing to remember is this: our bodies regain a sense of balance through movement. Physical movement increases oxygen intake to the body, and activates our lymphatic system (our body’s waste disposal system), dispelling toxins. Movement releases endorphins in the brain, which contributes to a positive attitude. For the sake of peak performance and productivity, incorporating physical movement of some type is a necessity.

Nutrition

Raw foods provide the most real energy and nutrients that our bodies can actually break down and use. Avoid processed foods and sugar. Stay away from food products that are “enriched” through artificial means - these can cause more harm than good.

Breakfast

The importance of breakfast - the “most important meal of the day” - is well understood. I’d like to add that a breakfast that’s high in protein provides the most sustained energy

throughout the morning and into the afternoon.

Metabolism

Eat a meal or snack every two and a half to three hours. This keeps your metabolism fuel burning, and eating several small meals throughout the day will keep your energy levels at their peak.

Low-Maintenance Meal Planning

Deciding on something different to eat each day occupies a portion of our decision-making potential. Think about it: do you ever spend a half hour before lunch simply trying to decide **what** to eat for lunch? For this reason, I encourage you to eat the same foods every single day, at least 5 days out of the week. Pick healthy foods that you enjoy, and default to them for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This may seem basic, but it was a huge breakthrough for me when I first adopted this pattern. There are also health benefits to eating the same foods with regularity, because it streamlines your metabolism. Your metabolism adjusts and becomes able to break down the food with startling ease.

To-Do Lists

The best way to organize thoughts are to write them down. In this way, thoughts become things. I used to overload my to-do list with far more items than I could possibly hope to complete, which always left me with an impossible workload and feelings of frustration. Now, I simply make it a priority to focus the majority of my attention to my two or three highest priority items.

Additionally, create your to-do list (or at least register within your mind what needs to be done) well in advance. If you spend your Sunday evenings watching "Game of Thrones," use that time to also put together your to-do list for Monday morning and the week ahead. If you create your to-do list on Monday morning, it's already too late.

You then have to "re-route" your mind to adjust its focus on those items. But if you did it the night before, you can sit down and jump right in. Your subconscious mind has had time to collect its thoughts, and figured out ways to complete the day's tasks. By planning **before** we begin working, we calibrate our minds ahead of time, which streamlines our focus.

Environment

Note the environments that you work best in. Do you work best in solitude, or amidst the hustle and bustle of human activity? I'm quite finicky about this - sometimes at a coffee shop I'll switch seats if I get a better "vibe" from the window-side table versus the one in the corner. Additionally, I find it hard to work in a room that is not well-oxygenated. I know, it sounds crazy, but we all have our own quirks. The key is to just observe the environments in which you work best, and plan accordingly.

"Tickler files" and templates

Keep a database of resources that apply to activities you do regularly. When you adjust from one type of activity to another, take a few minutes and go over them. This can "tickle your mind" and start your thoughts upon the path it needs to tread. When you've mastered an activity, create a system or a template. For instance, take an interaction where you closed a sale. Identify the key points in that interaction, from opening to close. Then create a script, or template, that can be replicated again, and look it over before beginning the next interaction.

Nuts & Bolts

There's an awful lot of "productivity tricks," systems, and software out there to help employees and entrepreneurs be more productive. Many of them work, it just depends on the individual and how they're used. Here are a few I can recommend:

Time Doctor (www.timedoctor.com) Time tracking software. I'm generally against using software apps when simple, old-fashioned tools will do. I find all the software and tech often complicates my life more than it helps. However, after receiving several recommendations from friends I gave this a shot, and it's actually pretty cool. Whenever you begin a task, Time Doctor starts to record what you're working on. You'll get feedback and detailed reports on your productivity for the day, and you can compare and find ways to increase your personal productivity. Useful for anyone who struggles to manage their time (as I do). Available for both individual and business use.

Inbox Pause (www.inboxpause.com) A free add-on that lets you "pause" and "unpause" your Gmail inbox, preventing new e-mails from appearing until you're ready to receive

them. Useful if, like me, you use your inbox as a repository for archived information. From the site: “INBOX PAUSE - the paradigm-shiftingest, game-changingest email innovation of 2012! With INBOX PAUSE, you can put new messages on hold, making it so they won’t appear in your Inbox until you are ready for them. Paradigm shifted. Game changed.”

Rescue Time (www.rescuetime.com) A software app that runs in the background while you work on your computer, tracking your activities and how much time you spend on certain websites and applications. You’ll then receive a detailed report showing where you spent the most time, giving you an outside perspective to help make your workday more productive. Rescue Time Premium includes additional features such as goal-setting features, the ability to block websites, and more, and costs either \$6 or \$9 / month (depending on the length of your subscription).

Mixergy (www.mixergy.com) From the site: “Learn from Proven Entrepreneurs.” Candid, off-the-cuff interviews with successful entrepreneurs. Awesome. This website’s aim is to be an online business school for anyone on how to make it as a successful entrepreneur. The owner, Andrew Warner, has interviewed close to 1,000 business owners (at the time of this writing). Topics range from raising capital to sales to branding, marketing, public relations, from writing a book to building an app. Interviewees include Guy Kawasaki, Gary Vaynerchuk, Dane Cook, Tim Ferriss, and countless others. There are also “courses” with worksheets and exercises that you can use. Whenever you feel yourself getting into a rut, this is the place to get unstuck. Recommended.

That’s it. Everything shared in this section of the book represents some of the best and most effective strategies and techniques for peak performance that I’ve uncovered and utilized. If you took something from it, I’m thrilled. Hopefully you were able to find several takeaways from this section. Feel free to write to me at: danny@openworldmag.com and share with me what you learned, and what you plan to do with it.

Finally, before closing this chapter I wanted to sign off with one paradigm-shifting lesson about success which has stuck with me ever since I heard it.

Re-Defining the Rules

Anthony Robbins, in one of his audio programs, talks about the definition of success. He jests about a businessman who earns one and a half million dollars a year, who considers himself to be unsuccessful because his definition of success is earning 3 million per year.

He goes on to say that you shouldn't feel the need to achieve anything in order to be happy or successful - you can be happy now! He says that his standards of success require two things: 1) that he gave his best, and 2) that he learned something from the experience. By defining success by these standards, he creates a situation where it becomes impossible to fail! I encourage you to adopt this attitude yourself: apply yourself 100% to every effort, but look as "setbacks" as opportunities to learn and grow. Put a positive spin on them. If you give it your best and you learn something, then you are successful. In this way, you can "happily achieve" instead of needing to achieve to be happy.

PART II

Discover the New Worlds that Await

*"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams,
and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined,
he will meet with success unexpected in common hours."*

- Henry David Thoreau, Walden

6

A Crash Course on the Mobile Lifestyle

"Every great dream begins with a great dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars and change the world." - Harriet Tubman

The World's Greatest Goal Achiever

As children, we held the wildest dreams for our lives. Remember how you wanted to be an astronaut and explore outer space? Or maybe your sights were set on becoming president. I wanted to be a major league baseball player. No goal seemed out of reach... why would it? We were invincible, and we could do anything. The world seemed ripe with opportunity and we were full of optimism. So... what happened?

When did the world become closed off to us? When did we limit our aspirations and begin aiming low? Why is it that during the process of "growing up," we became "realistic?" Why must we spend our entire youth in school, find a boring but secure job, keep our ambition in check, and live vicariously through action heroes on television and in the movies?

Let me tell you about a man who never gave up on his childhood dreams. In fact, he spent his entire life pursuing them.

It almost reads like something out of a story book: in 1940, John Goddard was 15 years old when he overheard his father's friends complaining that they had never done the things that they dreamed about doing. It seemed obvious to him: adults were letting their lives pass them by. Goddard decided he wouldn't make the same mistake. At the tender age of 15, a time when most of us don't even know who we really are yet, he took charge and wrote down a list of things he planned to accomplish before he kicked the

bucket. At the time of his passing at the grand old age of 88, seventy-three years after he compiled his list, Goddard accomplished 120 of the 127 lifetime goals that he had set for himself.

These were not simple or easy goals. They included climbing the world's major mountains, exploring from source to mouth the longest rivers of the world, re-creating the travels of Marco Polo and Alexander the Great, piloting the world's fastest aircraft, running a mile in five minutes and reading the entire Encyclopedia Britannica. He became the first person in history to navigate the entire length of the Nile river, in a grueling 4,160 mile, nine month kayaking expedition which the Los Angeles Times called "the most amazing adventure of this generation."

Referred to as "The real-life Indiana Jones," Goddard was attacked by vicious hippos and crocodiles, bitten by a poisonous snake, charged by a rampaging elephant and rhino, almost buried alive in a blinding sandstorm, shot at by Egyptian river pirates, stoned by a mob of hostile natives, survived desert temperatures of over 140 degrees, weakened by malaria and dysentery, and trapped in quicksand. He survived a plane crash, was caught in earthquakes, and almost drowned four times while running rapids and deep sea diving.

The dreams of children have true power, as Goddard demonstrated. Take the imagination of a fifteen year old and combine it with courage and perseverance and anything is possible. Before he passed, John imparted a simple but profound message on to generations of young people: "don't waste your one and only life!"

Mobility, Lifestyle Design, and You

"One should respect public opinion in so far as is necessary to avoid starvation and to keep out of prison, but anything that goes beyond this is voluntary submission to an unnecessary tyranny, and is likely to interfere with happiness in all kinds of ways."

-Bertrand Russell

The objective of these chapters is to teach you how to live life on your own terms, so you can attain the "mobility" needed to become a fully-fledged, independent lifestyle

designer. “Mobility” in this context is synonymous with “freedom.” It’s about personal power. It forms the basis of true wealth. Our lives are a canvas and mobility is the brush. In this age of information, it’s about having access to the right options, the right information, and the right tools that allow us to make our own choices. It’s about stacking the deck in our favor and wearing our best poker faces as we stare down a growingly uncertain world.

To achieve “mobility” we have to do the opposite of what is conventional; we must challenge all of our basic assumptions about life, money, and time; we must analyze and re-analyze our relationships. We must look at our life through the lens of a microscope and prioritize, again and again. We must reverse spending time and energy on **consumption** and direct it towards **creation**.

Mobility is the key that will open the door to our ideal life. It is both the conduit and reward of true lifestyle design. One component of “mobility” involves location independence, but there’s much more to it than that. Mobility is freedom, specifically three types: freedom of **location**, freedom of **time**, and the **capability to deploy our time** as we see fit.

The potential for radical personal transformation, today, is greater than at any time before in history. Everyone has the power to do almost any thing they can imagine. By leveraging and becoming rich in three forms of wealth: relationships, time and monetary wealth, we can multiply our lifestyle quotient.

Our upbringing, as a whole, trained us to be subservient worker bees. We were led to believe that trading away our time was the way to earn a living and get ahead, without realizing that time is our most precious asset. After all, it’s what everyone else is doing. Do as others do and don’t question things. I remember in elementary school I raised my hand so often and asked so many questions that the other kids would roll their eyes and make me feel **guilty**. How’s that for pressure to sit down, be quiet, and do as your told? Easier just to stare at the clock and wait until 2:30 when class is over and I get to go home!

How can blindly trading away our time give us true wealth or freedom? If you think about the logic it makes no sense: we’re meant to spend 90% of our time earning money

so that we can enjoy our free time during the remaining 10%? How could this cycle of living lead us anywhere?

Yet this practice continues since it forms the shackles of the 9 to 5 wage slave, upon whom economies based on consumption depend. If our free time is kept scarce outside of work, our natural inclination is to be lazy, unambitious outside of work, and dissatisfied with our lives - *leaving a huge empty void*. A perpetual cycle of wanting and craving for instant gratification is the inescapable result of this system. To set ourselves free, we must break the chains of this broken system. Then - and only then - can we create our own system of living that serves us, others, and the world we inhabit in a better, more meaningful, and more fulfilling way. It's not about subtracting work; it's about valuing work **more** by selectively engaging in work that has purpose and meaning to us.

The Roman senator Sallust once observed that “few men desire liberty; most men wish only for a just master.” And for good reason, too! True freedom can be downright terrifying, because it means taking full accountability for our successes - and our failures. We trick ourselves into believing that it's easier to stick within the system, kiss our boss's butt, and never rock the boat - even though this leads to a perpetual cycle of unhappiness and unfulfillment. In doing so, we lose sight of the ultimate truth: that we have just this one and only life, and that we truly have nothing to lose.

To survive and thrive as designers of our own lives, it requires all of the resources we have at our disposal - mentally, physically, and spiritually. We have to be 100% committed to integrating these beliefs and actions into our lives, or we will fall short. Half-hearted efforts lead to the “someday disease,” and our dreams will be relegated to a future that is neither promised nor likely to come. To attain a true autonomous degree of personal power and freedom, we can never become complacent. We have to intensify our desire over time. We must keep evolving, and improve upon the past each day in every way.

When you “break free” - what will you find on your journey? What is it that you personally are seeking? What will you find? Where will your journey take you and how will you be different as a result?

Only you can discover the answers. In this book I aim to give you the tools to guide you in this journey. And I hope that through learning, practice, and experience, that you will become a bonafide master of the “mobile lifestyle” - at which point I’ll be eager to learn a thing or two from you.

Right now you are like an artist with a mound of clay. Your art is your life. It’s time for you to sculpt your own masterpiece. Let’s get started.

The Magic of Minimalism

“I see all this potential, and I see it squandered. God damn it, an entire generation pumping gas, waiting tables; slaves with white collars. Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don’t need.

We’re the middle children of history, man. No purpose or place.”

-Tyler Durden

The most direct path to lifestyle freedom leads one into the realm of minimalism. I see no other way. We are overwhelmed each day from every side: ads targeted towards us, social media, work, email, the daily news, friends, family, love interests, people cutting us off in traffic, and on and on. To free ourselves from this overwhelm and moving in the direction we want to go, we need to eliminate what’s excessive and focus as much as possible only what is vital.

A System Reset

Think of your brain as the highest-performance supercomputer ever created. Even the top achievers amongst us have but a limited amount of RAM for use each day. The more things we have to do and own and manage, the more RAM it occupies in our brain. By using up our brain’s output, we don’t leave much room for anything else. We need to eliminate or reduce as much as possible the things that aren’t moving us forward in the direction that we want.

By freeing up our mental RAM, we unlock access to our creative power. Lifestyle design involves absorbing and creating new and exciting ideas; it requires a creative, elastic brain - much like a child’s. We’ve drowned out our imaginations for years. By reducing

or eliminating the things that stifle it, we can give our imagination wings once again.

Minimalism isn't about burning all of your cash or pulling a Christopher Chandlee and going off "into the wild" whilst renouncing the world. Instead, ask this: Does each waking second of your day need to be occupied by an activity? Does each empty space have to contain an object? Whether we realize it or not, anything that's extra but not necessary has the destructive potential to rob us of energy and happiness. Researchers at U.C.L.A published a study last year titled "Life at Home in the Twenty-First Century," which observed 32 average, middle-class families and found that all of the mothers' stress hormones spiked during the time they spent dealing with their belongings. Three-fourths of the families involved in the study couldn't park their cars in their garages because they were too jammed with things.

The writing is on the wall, how long will it take until we see it? It takes a complete re-wiring of beliefs and values to realize that by ridding ourselves of all the inessential things we've collected we can live a bigger, better, richer life with less. Outwardly we may have less, but our inward wealth becomes far more abundant.

Directed Focus

There are many things that lie outside of our control, we just need to let them be and prioritize where we direct focus and expend energy. An unhurried sense of time is in itself a form of wealth. A sense of freedom from the need to be in control (where we can just **be**), is in itself a form of wealth. There's a zen-like calmness that can only be experienced through minimalism liberation. It's something that needs to be experienced to be fully appreciated. Individuals who are able to fit everything they own into a single backpack have come to know this. Their best piece of advice is invariably the same: get rid of all the things that are holding you back. Sell them, give them away, or put them into storage if you must. Through this minimalist practice of cutting down on the things that run our lives, the world expands and opportunities multiply. Instead of waking up to the dreaded alarm and several cups of coffee to face the day, you can wake up each morning on a white sand beach to swim with sea turtles in clear turquoise water - and that's a far more accessible goal than you may now realize.

When you free yourself up from the things that run your life, the endgame is that you'll

undergo a powerful personal transformation. This is what happens to each person I've met who has undergone this same process. A realignment occurs. You'll become a new person with new priorities, new values, and a new and more meaningful life path. You become more self-aware as you challenge each of your assumptions about yourself and the world. You'll come to know yourself better and learn how to listen - truly listen - to your heart.

Minimalism teaches us to value money less and time more; possessions less and people more; recognition less and impact more; assumptions less and intuition more; appearances less and substance more. Minimalism isn't about **running away** from responsibilities; it's about **running to** more purposeful priorities, uncovered through a journey of self-discovery.

The most valuable thing that money can buy is time. How you use this time is up to you, though I may have a few ideas for you... so read these chapters in earnest.

What Will Lifestyle Design Bring?

Why should we design our lives? I've spent a lot of time searching, pondering, and reflecting over this question. I've traveled to different corners of the world trying to open myself up to the experiences and ideas that would give me a better handle on the meaning of this thing called "life." I've talked to some of the most inspirational lifestyle designers and picked their brain, asking plenty of questions. What should I - or anyone - really be doing with their time on this planet? Moreover, how can I handle and ultimately satisfy all of my strong underlying urges - towards wealth, respect, pleasure, and the desire to be loved?

My experiences shaped me in ways that I could not have expected. All of my basic beliefs had been challenged and ultimately shattered.

The first thing I experienced when I became a successful lifestyle designer was the euphoria of ultimate freedom. I felt as though all of the things that I truly wanted, all of my dreams that I'd spent my lifetime repressing, were now **finally** available to me. I danced with joy because I felt like a kid again. Life again become fun, new, and exhilarating. It's like living life on a high that never comes down because the shackles

that have held you down have been removed forever.

Except... that lasts until the honeymoon ends. The wanderlust has settled, the urge to meet new people and visit exotic places has cooled somewhat, and the desire to return to normalcy takes over. This is when deeper questions enter the mind because you've done it. You've accomplished the things that you dreamed of. And now - you ask yourself, how can I do better today (and tomorrow) than I did yesterday? How can I live more deeply, how can I love more openly, how can I appreciate each moment more fully?

Socrates, one of the most revered thinkers of his age, observed, "I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing." The more we learn, the more we realize we have yet to learn. The more we do, the more we wish to do. The more places we go, the more places we want to go. Each step forward will make you stronger, smarter, more confident, and more self-aware.

Perhaps the greatest change that's come across me from three years of traveling around the world is that I completely lost the inner sense of superiority to other people that I used to carry around as a young man. I think too many of us, especially Americans, like to think that we're somehow smarter, better, sexier than the average person. We think that the average person is stupid. But in truth our egos are thieves - they rob us of the chance to grow, learn, and evolve.

When you engage in something like long-term travel, and truly to get to know the new people you meet, you realize that there are so many interesting, smart, and talented people in this world. You realize that every single person has something they can teach you. You develop the ability to respect and truly connect to another person despite differences in background, religion, ethnicity, nationality, or social class. The things that separate us suddenly fall away. You become a citizen of the world and realize that people are the greatest gift that travel offers - and that we all want many of the same things regardless of whether we're capitalists or communists, Muslims or Christians.

This shift in thinking represents the single greatest gift I've received from my efforts in lifestyle design.

Are you Ready?

*"The big question is whether you are going to say a hearty
'YES!' to your adventure."*

-Joseph Campbell

The question now is: are you ready to make a new and exciting change in your life? Make no mistake: there are new and exciting worlds out there just waiting for you to explore. "Out there," just beyond what is comfortable or familiar, you have the ability to do everything you ever dreamed about. You have the chance to meet interesting people, visit exciting places, do and see incredible things, and create real relationships that last a lifetime. The options to live and learn and grow are endless. It doesn't matter whether you drink Dos Equis or not. I never touch the stuff.

Will you seize the unlimited potential and endless opportunities that await you? Only you can answer that. If you want it badly enough, you will get it. I will help you if I can.

7

Obstacles that Prevent Progress

"People will choose unhappiness over uncertainty."

-Timothy Ferriss

Read this First

What reason do people give as to why they can't do something (like travel)? You can probably guess: they say something like "I can't afford it," or "it's just too expensive." And that's where the conversation usually ends. By creating these alibis, we postpone the things we want into some idealized version of the future. Then we defer taking any action in the present. If we're comfortable (though perhaps not particularly happy) where we are, why sacrifice comfort for the unknown? Better to choose the evil we know than the one we don't.

This pattern of thinking and behaving is nothing new. Travel writer Rolf Potts, author of "Vagabonding," shares a powerful metaphor that he uses to shake up the "dreamers" and spur them into becoming "doers." About 1,700 years ago, during the time of the Roman Empire, there were two friends named Theodore and Lucius. They were sworn into the order of the Desert Fathers in Egypt, and took solemn vows to become monks of the new Christian faith. The Desert Fathers were a particularly strict Christian monastic group, heavily devoted to asceticism and withdrawal from society. Monks of the order had to swear off all worldly pursuits. Any earthly temptations were the work of the devil.

Both Theodore and Lucius were educated, and they had a strong desire to go out and see the world. But having made their priestly vows, they were confined to the monastery. So they solved this urge by "mocking their temptations." In the summer they said, "We will leave in the winter." Then in the winter they would say, "We will leave in the summer."

On and on this went for fifty years, and both eventually passed away, never once leaving the monastery or breaking their vows.

Shake off the “someday disease.” Realize that our alibis are only a big deal because we make them that way. I’m here to say that you can not only afford to travel, but you can afford to realize any possible goal that you could possibly dream or imagine for yourself in this world. You don’t have to do anything incredibly difficult like become a workaholic or repeat a bunch of affirmations to reach your goals. All you have to do is put into practice the techniques outlined in this chapter. Try them out, and see where you can go.

It is great to dream. Dream big. Take your dreams seriously and begin acting on them now. Beginning to live an awesome new lifestyle begins today - not a year from now, not a month from now, not next week. Our lifespans - mine and yours - are like hourglasses, and the sand of time is slowly slipping away.

What’s Really Stopping Us?

“There are riches which cannot be measured in terms of dollars, but millions of people will say, ‘give me all the money I need, and I will find everything else I want.”

-Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich

Have you heard excuses like these before?

“I’d like to, but...”

“I can’t afford to travel the world for a year!”
or “I can’t because I have to work.”

Money is nothing more than pieces of paper, but all too often we let the fear of poverty paralyze us from taking action. Money really isn’t the problem; fear is. Any time we take a risk in life we’ll encounter fear. This is normal. Every successful person you admire has had to handle and overcome the same doubts and fears that you and I do. There’s a classic book by Susan Jeffers called “Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway,” where she plainly states that highly successful people - from business leaders to presidents, experience the

very same fear that you or I do.

But in most cases this fear is unfounded. In Steven Covey's work "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" he explains that we all have different paradigms or "maps" (as he calls them), of viewing the world around us. These maps are heavily rooted in our own perceptions and beliefs, and are quite often wrong. From Covey's lesson we learn to challenge our assumptions. Especially the ones that defeat us.

It usually starts out something like this: that attractive person across the room hasn't even noticed us. And an hour earlier another attractive man/woman passed us on the street without bothering to make eye contact. Our mind could take clues like these to assume that we must not be very attractive or interesting. Or perhaps that members of the opposite gender are not very friendly, in general, and that there must be something wrong with them. But these assumptions, developed in fear, are entirely unfounded. If you overcome the fear that these assumptions create, and go up and talk to that person anyway, you will often find the exact opposite to be true.

I'm certainly not above fear either. Money-wise, I've gone through "feast and famine" cycles for years. But from that chaos, I've learned how to instill order so that money, and most importantly - fear of poverty, don't control my life. The best way to handle this fear is the same way we manage any irrational fear: by breaking it down.

Know the Numbers

First, let's tackle the issue of not being able to afford nice things. Most successful lifestyle designers and entrepreneurs share something in common: they know their numbers. Knowing the numbers lends wings to decision-making, because it plainly tells us what we can or can't afford to do. If you're anything like me, then you're probably not a number counter. Being a right-brained creative person, I used to cringe at the suggestion of anything related to personal finance. To this day, I still don't manage my own books.

But one simple technique that WILL radically improve the quality of our lives is to learn how to track our expenses and budget. It really is quite easy, painless, and provides a wide range of rewards. Budgeting can also improve both our mental health (by

removing fear paralysis) and our social lives, which I'll explain in a minute.

First - a bit of context. Let's assume that you bought a one-way ticket to the other side of the world with no plans. You're in a new continent, you don't know anyone, and all you have are some loose plans about where you want to go and what you want to do. This is a situation I've found myself in quite a few times. But you don't have to be daunted - a situation like this proves itself to be a perfect training ground to foster development of new and valuable life skills. I learned how to budget because I HAD TO - and if you were in this situation, you would to... despite any internal resistance you may encounter over the idea.

During my second round-the-world trip, I found myself in Thailand and needed to tackle the uncertainty of not knowing what I could and couldn't afford to do. This uncertainty was bankrupting me mentally - it robs us of our mental currency. This is when we become stuck in an area called the "gray zone" where we're not able to enjoy the present moment.

During my previous backpacking trip in South America, I too often limited myself by being stuck in this gray zone. There were many things I wanted to do, but I kept believing that I should be as frugal as possible and hoard my money - just in case. As a result, I didn't do all of the things I wanted to do, or go to all of the places I wanted to visit. Further, I had to constantly deal with the mental uncertainty around money.

So this time around I set to the task of doing something about it. My solution was simple: for one week, I kept a sheet of paper within my back pocket and tracked every single expense during the course of each day.

After one week of doing this, I was able to quickly get a sense of what my daily budget was and get a very good idea of how much money I needed per month. Eighty to ninety percent of all travel expenses fall under three categories: housing, food, and transportation. The fourth and fifth categories which make up the other ten to twenty percent are entertainment and other attractions - learning courses (Thai massage classes, samba lessons, Jiu Jitsu sessions, etc) and excursions (rappelling from waterfalls, horseback riding, etc). Shopping expenses are usually very slight or nonexistent because "backpacking" and long-term travel are synonymous with

minimalism and packing light.

Interestingly, the time I did this expense tracking exercise also coincided with a period in which I lost most of the clients in my business. ***But the huge “pay off” was that I didn’t worry. Not one single bit.*** Even if I didn’t make a single red cent, with my current savings I could still afford to travel for at least five months!

I can’t tell you what a breakthrough this was for me. Gone was my anxiety. Gone was staying up at night racked with anxiety over my long-term survival. Since that time, I have never worried about money quite like I used to. Yes, I still want more of it, but this simple exercise helped me turn things around and maximize my lifestyle under any budget. When it comes to designing a life, this is the key to options and power.

After performing this exercise for around ten days, I refined it and made it even simpler. Since I determined my daily budget for each day, I would then carry ONLY that amount in my wallet each day. The rest I’d leave in my backpack or at the apartment. This was the ultimate minimalist approach, and it simplified my life. If someone invited me out for drinks and I still had 300 Thai Baht left, then the sky was the limit. I had no hangups about whether or not I “should” go out or whether I should save my money instead. The bills in my wallet advised me plain and simply and directed my course. And it was as though a giant weight had been lifted off my chest ever since.

I advise that everyone perform this expense tracking exercise for at least ten days. Any longer than that, and I start forgetting to do it. But even after ten days you will get a great idea of what your range is.

These days, I no longer use a sheet of paper and pen, opting instead to use an easy iPhone app called “Trail Wallet.” Trail Wallet simplifies the expense tracking process. It was developed by a British couple that have been traveling the world non-stop for the past three years. You can quickly track your expenses on the go, and categorize them. The app also tracks your daily and monthly history, and has support and conversion for multiple currencies.

In the last chapter of this section, I talk more about getting the most out of Trail Wallet and lay out some other “tools and tricks,” such as useful apps, that may aid you further.

Other Reasons that Block us From Progress (And How to Overcome Them)

So there you have it. I just took one excuse that was causing failure and showed real, practical reasons for overcoming it. But I encourage you to dig deeper, and look inside yourself. Do you currently carry around any other “secret excuses” for why you aren’t succeeding right now?

I think the vast majority of us do. I’ve been held back by my own alibis FOR YEARS, and I know many people who have gone on to be successful who have overcome these as well.

For some people maybe it’s their income, maybe it’s their age, maybe it’s where they work, where they live, lack of a support network, physical appearance, or the fact that they don’t have the BS degree that they need. Maybe someone’s pride is preventing them from asking for help when they really need it. So that excuse defines who they are - it defines an entire period of a person’s life.

What really makes these “secret excuses” dangerous is when they become a MENTAL handicap that holds us back. And even WORSE - we hold these to ourselves, thinking that we’re somehow incapable, inadequate, incomplete in some big and important way, but it is such a sensitive and personal issue that we try to bury it and pretend that it’s not there. We don’t want to face up to it ourselves, let alone admit it to anyone else.

First, understand that every successful person has had to overcome many of the same hurdles that you and I face. Most people actually succeed in spite of themselves, NOT because they’re particularly talented or special.

Take your Biggest Dream and Make it Reality

*“Dream what you want to dream; go where you want to go;
be what you want to be, because you only have one life and one chance
to do all the things you want to do.”*

-Anonymous

Now I'm going to teach you a process that myself and other successful lifestyle designers use and simultaneously issue you a challenge. I want you to start believing in your own ability to take real control of your life and circumstances, to shape and improve the world around you, and create the type of future that you really want.

But first let me ask you: when was the last time you visited any major bookstore? Take a stroll around the self-improvement section. You'll see dozens of books that talk about the importance of setting goals, how to think like a winner, and so on. It's all great advice.

Most people merely read the books, form some judgment one way or the other, and then put them down, never to think about them again - never mind acting on the information.

Don't let this be you.

Most of us are too busy filling our lives with minutiae - picking up the milk, upgrading to the latest iPhone/iPad/iPod, looking for a new roommate, shopping for clothes, texting friends, checking email, watching porn, etc... that we don't leave ourselves with the time or mental capacity to focus on the big picture or the direction we want our lives to take.

I think that the reason more people aren't doing MORE, is because they haven't spent enough time to really think about what it is they really want. Imagine a ship in the ocean with no particular port as the destination. It simply bobs and floats along, and never really goes anywhere. A person without any direction or goals never really goes anywhere; they simply float along.

Take a moment to think about it. Ask yourself WHAT you want to do and WHY you really want to do it. Go to the beach, or your favorite park, someplace quiet where you can be alone. Once you finish, keep reading.

Now then, I'd like to humbly suggest a goal-setting exercise that has radically transformed how I (and several of my successful friends) approach life. It's made

every dream I've had of doing thus far completely within my reach, and I know it will for you too. It's based on the "Dreamlining Exercise" from the "Four Hour Workweek" (fourhourworkweek.com/blog/lifestyle-costing). I've taken this great exercise, and developed a few ways to make this exercise even MORE powerful and to improve the odds that a person will actually **follow-through** and implement these "dream goals."

It's a simple 3-step process, which I'll share with you now.

Step 1. Have an honest conversation with yourself. Re-read the sections above about alibis, and spend some serious time contemplating, at a core level, the type of life that you truly wish to create. What excites you, and makes you come alive? That's a great place to start. Write it all down so you can pick it all apart.

Step 2. Visit the "Ideal Lifestyle Costing" page on the 4HWW blog, you will find a free template that you can download and print out. You can just type "Ideal lifestyle costing" in Google and you'll find the page with a link to download the template. Take some quiet time to yourself and think about all of the of the things you dream about: 1) Having, 2) Being, and 3) Doing.

You want to push yourself to fulfill these "dreamgoals" within a 3 or 6-month period, so it pressures you to begin acting now. Write a star next to the 4 most important goals, and write down the steps you need to take to make them a reality: today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. Also, try to accurately suss the cost required for each dreamgoal, either in terms of time or money needed (or both).

Many of the goals you write down are "periphery" goals that can be accomplished alongside of the main ones. For example, one of my main goals was to train to be a competitive Muay Thai fighter in Bangkok. But other goals included rock-climbing at Railay beach in southern Thailand, riding an elephant through the jungles of northern Thailand, visiting the Angkor temples, buying a motorbike and riding it across Vietnam, studying Tai Chi, and learning to play a Chinese bamboo flute. Within the span of a few months I accomplished all of these. While the elephant ride only cost around \$20 USD (less than the price of filling up the tank back home), all the dreamgoals I had set required a long trip to Thailand, obviously, so it makes sense to group them together.

In the opposite vein, don't make goals that conflict with one another within the 3 to 6 month time-period that you're allotted. If you make plans to compete in the Panama Ironman Triathlon in February, yet also want to attend St. Patrick's Day in Ireland the next month, you'd be pressing yourself a bit too hard to complete them both within the same time-period. Remember that it is easy to see the world through a map, but when you travel you have to bring your body along with you. Be kind to it, don't push yourself too hard. Your experiences will be far more rewarding if you take as much time as possible to absorb and savor them, rather than rushing through your goals at breakneck speed.

Step 3. Now, we're going to take the concept of goal-setting and dreamlining and make it even BETTER and more powerful. This is the secret of the most successful lifestyle designers. We need to consciously apply the principle of "Intentional Repetition." It is not enough to take one evening off and simply write down our goals. All too often, we'll simply go back into our regular patterns tomorrow and forget to act on them. We're creatures of habit, and many of the things we do tomorrow will be the exact same things we did yesterday. So if we want to change, we need to create a routine for coming back to these goals often, and create an accountability group - a MASTERMIND group.

If you apply only one thing from this book, do THIS. It will make a difference.

Napoleon Hill, in chapter 10 of his landmark work "Think and Grow Rich," calls the mastermind "the driving force" towards the accumulation of power. If the subject of a mastermind interests you and you care to explore the concept further, download "Think and Grow Rich" and read chapter 10. Hill's book is a work in the public domain, so you can find a free copy easily if you search online.

To paraphrase, though, Hill says that by the mere act of joining a mastermind, you're already half way towards reaching your objective. Hill defines a mastermind as "Coordination of knowledge and effort, in a spirit of harmony, between two or more people, for the attainment of a definite purpose."

Andrew Carnegie commissioned Hill to write this book, and what Hill had discovered was remarkable: Carnegie himself had assembled a "mastermind" group of fifty men, to which he attributed responsibility for accumulating his entire fortune. Hill states,

emphatically, that the shared power of great minds is the only principle towards which great power can be attained.

“This form of cooperative alliance has been the basis of nearly every great fortune.” Hill writes.

He explains that an individual would have great difficulty succeeding if they had to rely upon their own intelligence and experiences alone. He says that by having a supportive and select group of individuals, the collective intelligence, accumulated experience, and capability to gather new facts and ideas, is multiplied several-fold through the creation of the mastermind.

Benjamin Franklin, one of America’s most brilliant early minds, formed his own mastermind group, which he called the “Junto.” An association formed for the mutual improvement of its members, there are still a variety of Junto chapters operating around the world today. Tom Peters, a renowned modern-day author on business management, also advocates assembling one’s own “board of directors” to empower each other to rise out of wage slavery.

I will tell you now: if it weren’t for my own mastermind group, this book may never have been written. It probably would have, but without a group of my closest and most supportive friends checking in each month to keep me accountable, I would have taken my time about it - and again, it may NEVER have gotten finished.

How to Create Your Own Mastermind Group

Within your network, think about the most ambitious, upbeat, and forward-thinking people that you know. They may only be loose acquaintances or friends of a friend. But you can usually notice these people by what they’re achieving in their own lives, and the ideas and thoughts they express. Find four or five of these individuals, and create your own “mastermind” group.

While you can meet everyone in person, it’s hard to do this regularly. If you want to keep things going over the long-term, it’s best to go virtual. Use Google Hangouts - it’s a free group video conference that integrates with Google+. You just sign into your Google+ or

Gmail account, click “Start a Hangout,” and then you can invite your friends individually (by the way - quick update - Google is always messing with the interface of their Google Hangouts, including the name. After writing this “Start a Hangout” has been amended to “Start a Video Party” but the function is basically the same).

Sounds easy enough, right? So why don't more people do it? I've noticed a lot of people struggle to put together a successful mastermind group, and I think a big reason why is that the format they put together lacks any structure. There's no clear objective, no real major purpose to the group.

That's why I encourage you to follow the dreamlining process, and use it to form the basis of your group. Each person in your mastermind should be challenged by the other members to make tangible, measurable progress towards each dream goal. Also - keep your mastermind selective and don't let your mastermind group get too big. Screen each member carefully and only invite ones who are serious and have big goals - these are the people you want to have around.

The goal of a mastermind group is to have a strong and supportive group that contributes and helps each another for the benefit of all individuals involved. It is very hard to make it in this world alone. The higher you set your goals, the more support that you will need.

Taking Things Further - Make Your Mastermind Even Better

Once your mastermind group is up and running, take an active interest in improving upon the model. Ask your members for suggestions and allow everyone to contribute to the growth and success of the group. In my particular mastermind group, there are a couple of simple things that we've tried that have worked very well.

First, ask that during the interim between meetings (our group meets once a month) that each member of the group do something to help out another member in some way with their goals. It could be anything - making an introduction, recommending a book or two to read, or calling them up to give them some advice. The process of helping someone is just as rewarding as receiving help. Basically, you want to engender a spirit of cooperation among supportive individuals who will sync together harmoniously.

Another great way to improve the masterminds and increase the value that it provides to members is to invite guests onto the call. Find leaders whom you respect and admire, and reach out to them. I've never had anyone I've invited to a mastermind say no to me. Our very first mastermind guest was an INC magazine cover model. I simply read his article, Googled him and found his blog, and began the conversation from there. We had a lot in common, became fast friends, and we still keep in touch to this day. About a year and a half after he joined our mastermind call - we finally met for the first time in San Francisco and went out for an awesome night on the town, and he let me crash on his couch.

This is just one example. But it's a brave new world. Start dreaming, set dream goals, and get people around you who will support you. Wherever you're at is fine. Success and gratification don't come instantly, but you can begin putting together the pieces and network that will lift you upward until you become the ultimate master of your destiny.

So there you have it. You now have the plan and path laid out before you. The question is, will you take action? I can't personally help you, but there are others who can, and you can help them too. Invite them into your mastermind group.

Follow these 3 steps, in *exactly* the order I mentioned them, and I guarantee that you're already halfway towards making your dreams reality. Within 1-2 years, you'll see growth and progress of such magnitude that it may seem impossible at the moment.

In the following chapters I'm going to give you access to the tools which will speed you in your journey.

The Bucket List

Another important tool in your arsenal is the **bucket list**. The best lifestyle designers are always seeking new ideas, because no one success settles anything permanently. They still have to prove that they're as good tomorrow as they were yesterday.

So a bucket list is a collection of ideas that can form the basis for your dream goals. It has less structure - its simply a working document, such as scrap book, where you keep a

list of things you'd like to do before you die.

Some sample bucket list items might be:

Learn Chinese. Take up fencing. Surf in every continent. Write a novel. Full moon party in Koh Pha Ngan. Party at the Playboy Mansion. Climb Mt Kilimanjaro. Run with the bulls in Spain. Survive Carnival in Brazil. Spend a week with sherpas in Nepal. Scuba dive in the Cayman Islands. Shark dive off the coast of South Africa. Visit the Northern Lights. Train in Yabusame (horseback archery) in Japan. Zipline through the jungles of Laos. Cross the Capilano suspension bridge. Explore the cloud forest of Costa Rica. Hang out with monkeys at Angkor Wat. Create an illustrated children's book.

Are you getting the hang of this yet? Don't worry about whether an idea seems outlandish... just write it all down. Not every item on the bucket list will be attainable yet. But you may wake up one day and find you have indeed completed a good deal of the items on your bucket list, and suddenly many more are within your grasp, whereas they weren't before.

A great website for bucketlist ideas is Wishberg.com. You can browse other users' bucket lists for ideas and upload your own.

Remember that a bucket list is comprised of things to do before you "kick the bucket." Our days are numbered, and they could run out without warning. So whatever it is you'd like to do, start taking some action now. Don't let your life resemble a ship floating aimlessly at sea. Map out a destination, and begin paddling.

8

How to “Hack” Travel

*“How to begin the journey? You need only take the first step.
When? There is always now.”
- George Leonard*

The Biggest Mobility Secret: Free and Low-Cost Accommodation

A Comprehensive Guide to Successful CouchSurfing

Are you on CouchSurfing yet? There is an incredible, interconnected community through the site (www.couchsurfing.org) with locations in over 100,000 cities all over the world! In Hanoi, for instance, there is a strong “Couchsurfing Hanoi” group that meets for coffee and drinks three times a week, each event packed with dozens of friendly locals. I developed so many great friendships through that group.

The potential for cultural exchange is incredible, and the richness of your travels can be multiplied to an extent that simply isn’t possible without such a community. One time, on my way back home to the US after several months of overseas adventures, I had a ten hour layover in Tokyo. I posted that I’d be in town a couple days before arriving on the Tokyo CS page. A friendly local girl met up with me, showed me around the neighborhoods of Shibuya and Harajuku, and we even caught part of the Nihon Grand Sumo tournament together. It sure beat sitting around the airport all day long!

There are so many uses for this website, beyond just sleeping on strangers’ couches. You can pose questions, buy or sell items, find pub crawls to join, meet people, and so much more. I’ve traveled the world pre-CS and post-CS and since making the switch recommend it to everyone. The site also uses a verification and “reference” system which

allows you to screen people before you agree to meet anyone.

Of course, the potential for a less than incredible experience exists, just like any situation in life involving other people. After having a local cart me 45 minutes away from the Hoan Kiem Quarter of Hanoi (the only place where I really wanted to hang out) to sleep on a mat shared with two other people, I decided that simply paying \$6 for a hostel bed and all-you-can-eat breakfast was a better deal. But to have a truly bad experience is extremely rare.

Upon returning to the US after a 7 month-long RTW trip, within a few weeks I was traveling again. This time I set off on a month and a half long road trip across the US and Canada. Even while traveling at home (which many would agree is far more expensive than most developing countries), I was able to keep my daily budget under \$25! The secret was that I had a friend host me in every city I visited.

Usually I stayed in a guest room with my own bed, though I slept on a couple of couches. In cities where I didn't know anyone, I was able to connect quickly with like-minded locals and they hosted me in their home. Not only was it cheaper, but the travel experience was incredible. I had as an enjoyable experience traveling within the US and Canada as I had previously in any foreign land anywhere in the world, and a big part of it was being able to hang out with local friends and having them show me around.

Before you Begin...

Couchsurfing successfully is not easy. There are right ways to go about it and there are wrong ways. Above all, it requires a healthy combination of common sense, tact, intuition, and excellent social skills. Here's a few "guidelines" to keep in mind that will help you to become a successful CouchSurfer.

Be Interesting

First of all, be someone worth meeting. Create a detailed profile that shares your passions. What are your favorite travel experiences? Are you a great photographer? Are you writing a book, or working on something else that's interesting? Are you an expert on a topic that would make someone else want to meet you and learn from you? Share

all that stuff. Show the community who you are - the more information you share, the greater your chances of having positive interactions with other members. And show pictures of you having fun. Also, CouchSurfing allows you to provide links to your Facebook, YouTube, etc. which you should definitely include.

Be Interested

Be interested in other people. The biggest mistake that people make when using CouchSurfing is they only think about themselves. Too many people are out to “take” free accommodation, without considering the feelings of the locals who could potentially host them. They make shallow requests, and have no interest in a potential host whatsoever beyond what the host can do for them. There are far too many college girls who register for the CS website a week before their first trip abroad, looking only to get a free place to stay.

When you interact with someone through CS - either a fellow traveler, local, or potential host, read their profile first. Find common ground, shared passions, and build rapport. Or maybe you're completely different and bring something new to the table. Find a way to engage a person based on their interests. Someone opening their home for you to stay is a BIG deal. So in what way can you provide value to your host?

Don't prioritize surfing people's couches

When traveling around the US, I'm usually fortunate enough to have friends in each town I visit. But, I don't want to become the kind of person who only calls a friend when I need something. None of us wants to be that person. So if I'm going to connect and potentially stay with someone, it will be one of the last things I suggest - and even then, very indirectly and subtly. Don't ask your friend if you can stay with them - ask if they happen to know anyone who could host you. If they suggest themselves, say “well I don't want to be a burden.” If they reply by saying it's no burden, then you've got yourself a host! The point is - don't come across as assuming they'll let you stay, if they are willing, give them the opening to suggest it. ***You are not entitled to anyone's couch.***

The same rule applies to new friends you meet through the website. In many ways, CS is parallel to online dating - you don't get married on the first date. The best way to meet

someone through online dating is through something low-commitment, like lunch or tea. The person may not look the same way as they did in their pictures, or you may not like him/her anyway for some other reason. Approach potential hosts the same way - if the two of you “click,” and both parties like each other, then scoring a couch is almost a given. Like other people and be liked in turn and you will go far as a couch surfer.

Avoid this mistake when searching for hosts

On the new CouchSurfing interface, finding hosts is a simple 1-2-3 process - but you'll be more successful if you know how the process works. Start by clicking on “Plan a Trip.” The site will ask you to provide some details about your trip, including your arrival and departure dates, and then you can begin contacting hosts individually.

If only it was this simple. Getting a host can be extraordinarily tough if you don't know what you're doing. The odds are stacked against you even further if you're a male and over 25. When the website presents a result of hosts in a city, the CouchSurfing website prioritizes the most active members. In other words, the same top 20 hosts that show up on your screen are the same top 20 that show up on everyone else's screen. These hosts get BARRAGED by a never-ending stream of couch requests - especially the ones who seem the coolest-looking.

Because of this and other factors, the majority of your couch requests will be declined or ignored.

How to Increase Your Chances

Start by going deep into the list of host profiles - go back about ten pages. Find about 5-6 hosts that last logged in to their home city - they could very well be traveling themselves. Next, find hosts with a high response rate, but who haven't been active for at least a few days or maybe a week (if they were online today it's likely because they were answering couch requests!).

The next thing to consider is the host's age. In general, you'll have greater success as a couchsurfer if your hosts are older - old enough to earn a good income and live in a decent place. If you're contacting hosts that are 21, be prepared to sleep on the floor.

Additionally, an older host around 30 who is on CouchSurfing is most certainly well-travelled themselves, and they've probably done quite a bit of surfing of their own. They have stories to tell, and can often even provide you with valuable professional references.

Lastly, try and plan out your couchsurfing stays well in advance. Messaging hosts two weeks before you arrive gives them ample time to reply. I am notoriously bad at this. Being a poor planner, I've often contacted hosts 2-3 nights before arriving. A few times I've gotten positive responses after I'd already left the city.

Duration of Stay

In general, you should try to shoot for 2 or 3 nights with any particular host. Many hosts are not willing to have someone stay longer than three nights, and often they will post the maximum length on their profile. If the two of you get along really well, it's certainly not uncommon that a host will invite you to stay longer - but as far as expectations go, it is safe to assume a span of 2 or 3 nights. Since couchsurfing often entails short stays in each place, it's important to be flexible and always have multiple options available to you - both in the city you're visiting and the next destination.

Spend Time With Your Host

Since you usually only get a few nights per couchsurfing assignment, I'd recommend finding a balance between hanging out with your host and taking time to yourself. Do a favor or two for them. If you can't cook, then offer to pick up food. Be a gracious guest. Clean up after yourself. Take an interest in their life and if you see anything you can help them with, offer to do so. Even if it's just some simple work in the garden, do your best to endear yourself. It's always a nice touch to remember their address and send them a friendly card or postcard afterwards, too.

Couchsurfing is definitely an art that improves with practice and experience.

The How-Tos of Housesitting

The internet is your best friend when it comes any modern lifestyle design pursuit, and

housesitting is no exception either. Housesitting is another great way to subsidize your adventures, and unlike most other options its seriously overlooked and under-utilized.

Want a free condo in Brooklyn for two months? How about a beach house in Nicaragua, or a villa in the Italian Alps? Housesitting, combined with the Internet, allows you to take the locations you've always dreamed about living in and places them at your fingertips. Literally.

Unlike CouchSurfing, you can pick a location and stay for an extended length of time - from one or two weeks to a few months. Plus, it's a great way to "reverse geo-arbitrage." Many independent lifestyle designers choose to live only in certain hubs where their first-world currencies go the furthest. But by housesitting, you can save BIG even in expensive, developed countries by getting free rent, a kitchen to cook in, and other amenities (sometimes even a car!). You also get that feeling of "home" and get a taste of the local scene in ways that most travelers never will.

Housesitting is nothing new, and has been around in some form or another for many years. While in the past limited generally to neighbors and friends, it's found new life in the exciting power of the internet to connect people from every corner of the globe. As of today there are over twenty housesitting websites that connect homeowners with housesitters. Most of these websites are international, although some are heavily or entirely-focused on certain regions or continents.

Housesitting is possible because housesitters provide an important role to homeowners. A responsible housesitter allows a homeowner to take longer vacations and more of them. Housesitters also help keep homes safe while the owner is away and a dedicated housesitter is more reliable than a neighbor. Seventy-five percent of all housesits involve pet care of some type. More than anything, a housesitter provides peace of mind to the homeowner so that they can enjoy their vacation.

In my opinion, the three best housesitting websites to find a successful housesit are:

- 1) www.housecarers.com (\$50/year)
- 2) www.mindmyhouse.com (\$20/year)
- 3) www.trustedhousesitters.com (\$60/year)

You can get started right now. Simply choose a site(s) and sign up. But in the same way that finding hosts to couchsurf with can be difficult, obtaining a successful housesit is no cakewalk either. There may be tens or hundreds of other people applying for a housesit. Competition for housesitting opportunities can be fierce! But just like anything else, there are ways to stand out from the crowd and dramatically improve your chances if you know what to do.

How to Obtain a Housesit

Successfully finding a housesit is similar to finding a couchsurf. It requires a great presentation of your best self, persistence, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, and a touch of common sense.

Create an outstanding profile

A true lifestyle designer can never skimp on creating a great profile. Each online profile represents our brand, and profiles are the lifelines that enable us to live this type of lifestyle. Just like your CouchSurfing profile, the more information you fill out, the better.

Spend some time looking at other housesitter's profiles, and you'll get an idea of what a great profile looks like. It all comes down to showing potential homeowners what they are looking for. Remember, your profile is like a resume, so you want to put any and all information that may matter to homeowners. **Focus on the homeowner's needs**, not your own. Point out what you can bring to a housesitting assignment. Do you know how to care for a cat? Do you have experience in gardening or home improvement projects?

Choose a few of your best photos to include. Show bright, happy photos of your face. Don't include photos of you in a skimpy halloween costume or any that involve you holding a beer in either hand (San Diego, where I'm from, is the brewery capital of the US, and you'd be surprised how high a percentage of San Diegans' photos include one, two, or several beers in them). Do include photos of you with any pets, since most housesitting jobs involve petsitting.

How to E-mail and Get the Gig

On most housesitting sites, homeowners will place “adverts” seeking housesitters. It’s rare for homeowners to start a search by contacting housesitters directly (unless it’s someone they’ve used in the past). On some sites, you have the options to receive notifications when new adverts are placed, and you can even select certain target countries or cities.

When you get notice of a new advert that seems like a good fit for you, respond quickly! If you’re one of the first members to contact the homeowner it will improve your chances that your e-mail will be read and responded to. Including any and all pertinent information in the initial e-mail is another way to stand out and reduces unnecessary back and forth for the homeowner to get information to make a decision. In your opening e-mail, include a selection of your best references.

If you really want to stand out, record a video with your computer’s camera and appeal to the homeowner directly. Upload it to Youtube with the unlisted privacy setting, and email them the link. This will give the homeowner a much better idea of your personality, it shows a little extra effort and initiative, and improves your chances of being accepted.

Just like couchsurfing, it’s all about finding some common ground with the human being you’re reaching out to and building a strong rapport. And I’ll say it again: always remember to focus on the other person and their needs!

Once You Arrive

You arrive at the housesit and meet the homeowner in person for the first time. This is the “handover period” where you and the homeowner get to know each other. You want to also get to know the home, neighborhood, and be clear about all of your responsibilities. Collect important information about the household such as garbage pick-up days, how to set and disarm the security system, and the location of electrical breakers. If tending to a pet, ask about the pet’s feeding routine, medication and walking requirements, number for the vet, etc. If tending to a garden, ask about the plant watering routine and necessary tools. Find out if there is an emergency contact,

whether anyone has a spare set of keys, and if there are any neighbors you can contact in case something goes awry.

Be clear on what needs to be done should an emergency occur, and what the homeowner expects in terms of communication. Some homeowners will want to be contacted at regular times, and some prefer minimal communication. Depending on which housesitting website you use, you should also be provided with a housesitting agreement to go over with the homeowner and sign.

Once the homeowner has left and your housesitting job has begun, you are on your own. There will be a host of responsibilities that you will be expected to tend to. Be clear on what these are before the homeowner leaves, and be an ideal guest and responsible caretaker while they are away.

Get Your Feet Wet

If you've never housesat before, how would you start? My advice is to start local first. Offer your services to friends and family who own homes in other cities besides your own. Post to your social network that you're looking for a housesitting opportunity. You never know what may happen. You could even set up a simple website or blog using WordPress to advertise your services. For one example of this see: www.chezvous-sitters.co.uk.

Other Unorthodox Accommodation Options

You only live once, right, so why limit yourself? If you're the type that's willing to try anything once, then keep reading. On the following pages are a couple other unorthodox accommodation options that are worth looking into.

Camp in My Garden

For the rugged individual looking to do something different, you could also consider "camping out" in someone's garden (www.campinmygarden.com). Most of the available garden campsites are available in Europe, with an especially high concentration in the UK. You can search countries you're interested in traveling to, and use an interactive

Google map feature with location icons to click on properties and get more information. You can get general information about the property and homeowners, see the available facilities, and contact the homeowner. Really cheap way to travel Europe (many locations are available for under 5 Euros a night). Something I personally have never tried but probably worth doing at some point.

Warm Showers

“Warm Showers” (www.warmshowers.org) is a site similar to CouchSurfing that caters to long-distance cyclists. There are over 25,000 hosts on the site who can offer everything from a bed, to food, to laundry service to touring cyclists.

Bizpora (formerly Startup Stay)

“Bizpora” (www.bizpora.org) is a CouchSurfing / Airbnb hybrid for shoestring entrepreneurs. This is the site I wish I’d used last time I visited San Francisco. Many hosts offer their room or couch for free or at low-cost.

From free options in popular cities like San Francisco to Berlin, and low-cost options such as \$15 a night in Manhattan. Not bad. To successfully find a stay, employ the same principles that you would for couchsurfing or housesitting: focus on rapport-building and the value you can provide the host. Don’t just be after free accommodation.

Far beyond just finding places to stay, this website is an awesome tool to network. When you sign in to your dashboard, you will see a personal feed of other entrepreneurs who have checked in to your location. You can also read their profile, get information about their business and see what their background and interests are. All of these people are on here to network and meet other entrepreneurs, so don’t hesitate to reach out early and often.

Also, just like CouchSurfing, you can become a host yourself and invite other traveling entrepreneurs to stay with you while they’re in town. Most business deals are made in informal settings, and what better way to build strong business relationships?

Negotiating with Innkeepers

Sometimes if you visit a guesthouse or a small, independently-owned hotel, you can negotiate a free or low-cost place to stay. Simply explain to the innkeeper that you're a traveler and have very little money to spend - and ask if they have a sofa or even a sleeping bag or **anything** - and people will often help you. Be cordial and polite, and offer to help out in any way if needed. Best case scenario, they'll have a sofa or a mattress for you for free or minimal cost. Worst case, they'll recommend another place where you can try your luck.

Just don't expect the Buckingham Palace. And don't take your iPad out afterwards and wave it around in front of them after they give you a deal.

I traveled through Vietnam during the week of Tet New Year and everywhere I went accommodations were booked because all of the Vietnamese were on vacation. But one innkeeper gave me a mat, blanket, pillow, and mosquito net to sleep under. Another gave me a mattress and my own room - a sauna. I have a British friend that I met on the road named Ben who, at the tender age of 18, managed to hitchhike from one end of Baja California to the other without any money. He did what he had to, relying on the kindness of strangers, and people helped him. We're brought up to be so reluctant to ask for help - it's almost like admitting weakness. But most people are willing, and want to help, if you ask them.

And by the way - having "little money to spend" doesn't have to mean that your bank account balance needs to be teetering near zero. It could simply mean that you've set aside a budget for your trip that you're trying to keep within. During a recent overland trip through Mexico, I resolved to only bring a few hundred dollars of cash, and travel as frugally as possible. I had plenty of reserves in my bank accounts - but I wanted to keep that money there for when I returned home. Frugality is a useful skill to acquire, and setting and keeping within a budget is a good thing to practice.

Trade Services for Room and Board

In the next chapter, I mention WorkAway, an awesome resource which allows you to connect with hosts around the world with whom you can trade your services.

However, if you're traveling for the long-term, it is actually very easy to approach a few

hostels or BnB's directly and offer a trade in exchange for a place to sleep for one or two months. You can negotiate a long-term stay, and cut your expenses to virtually nothing. I've done this on several occasions.

Almost unanimously, these establishments need help with their website and their online marketing. If you take an evening to teach yourself how to set up a self-hosted WordPress website (I have a WordPress training program with videos that you can check out at wordpressdesigninstitute.org), you can help these people set up a website or blog in exchange for a free bed. You can literally design a website or blog for them within 2 or 3 days: you simply register the domain, add hosting, set up a nice theme, then add content and graphics.

You'll earn their gratitude, and save quite a bit of money in the exchange. If you do good work and are familiar with online or social media marketing, there's also a good chance that the owner may hire you to help with their marketing. If you do this right, it can pay your way as you travel long-term around the world. Simply work with a different hotel / hostel / BnB in each location.

Booking Hotels Online - Good, Bad, Ugly?

When it comes to booking hostels or hotels, I'm a bit of an oddity because I NEVER book online - and this is possibly going to draw an eye roll from at least a few of you reading out there. I've observed that a lot of 3rd-party hotel booking websites charge an extra commission on top what you'd normally pay.

But I realize my spontaneous style and methods aren't for everyone. Some people like to plan in advance. Regardless of your style, there are a few things you should know to get the best hotel and hostel deals online.

HotelClub

Hotelclub (www.hotelclub.com) is a membership website that offers free travel rewards and exclusive deals for those who register. It's worth signing up for updates to this site, as sometimes you can find deals that you can't find anywhere else.

Hotel Rewards

Using a rewards program through American Express is an easy way to earn free stays at Starwood hotels (such as the Sheraton). Hilton also offers a “Hilton HHonors Card” through American Express. The requirements are minimal, use your card for expenses and simply spend a certain amount within a given time period. The points add up and before long you’ll be able to make reservations at the Sheraton (or Hilton) during your next trip!

Booking Hostels

If you’d like to book a hostel in advance online, your first and last stop should be Hostels.com. It’s the best database for hostels around the world, bar none. You just search a city and a list of hostels will come up, and you’re sure to find one within your budget range. You can also check out the hostel’s location, and read reviews by past guests. Also, Hostels.com doesn’t charge a commission on top of the hostel rates.

Why would you stay at a hostel? The best reason is that they are hubs, quite possibly the best place to meet people and get information. The social aspect alone is powerful. You can meet tons of other travelers who can share stories and give you inside tips that you simply won’t be able to find online. The best source of information-gathering when you travel, in my opinion, is talking to other people. Don’t be shy or hesitate to ask lots of questions.

The second obvious reason is the economic value of hostels. Budget travelers find dormitory beds to be most suitable for their needs, and breakfast is often included for the same low rate. Even if you don’t wish to share a room with others, you can find private rooms in most hostels that are still lower price than hotels, and at the same time get all the benefits of the hostel’s social aspect.

How to Get Free Office Space Around the World

Regus is a company that provides low-cost offices and business lounges around the entire world (www.regus.com/office-space). For a low monthly fee, they offer a gold membership to their Businessworld program, where you gain access to business lounges in over 600 cities worldwide. And these are not just corner cubicles in dingy warehouses,

either. While living in Bangkok I got access to an office 30 floors up in All Seasons Plaza, in the center of the business district, in the tallest building in the city (which also housed several embassies). Not too shabby. When I got back home to Southern California, I was given the same access to a workspace with a balcony overlooking Petco Park and the beautiful San Diego bay.

It's no longer just corporate suits who get to work in cool skyscrapers and plush offices. When you have work to do, do it in style - whether at home or on the other side of the world. Aside from the "eliteness" factor, it can help you become far more productive while traveling. Coffee shops on the other side of the world can be noisy, difficult to find, and unreliable to use as work spaces. Wifi not working and you have an important call with a partner back home in two minutes? Tough luck, buddy. It goes without saying that being 4,000 miles from home and not having a dedicated workspace can make for a stressful situation when you have to get things done, and these work spaces are an excellent solution.

Plus, these offices always seem to be located in the best parts of town, which can be big if you are in an unknown city setting and want to make your way directly to the best neighborhoods first.

Regus offers a variety of reward programs with partners so that you can use their office lounges for free. I was able to get 12 months for free from one of these programs without any hassle. You can search around online to see the different types of rewards programs that are available. I can't share it here, but if you go to my blog at www.OpenWorldMag.com and join the newsletter, I can share the exact promotion code I used. Enjoy your free international office lounge access!

Getting Around

"Getting around" in a new environment can vary widely depending on the latitude and longitude coordinates you find yourself in, as well as the economy of the country and its politics.

In a socialist leaning country like Argentina, for example, the government assumes responsibility for much of the transportation. In Buenos Aires buses and subways are

subsidized, and you can get a ride for one or two pesos (depending on when you read this), which is basically nothing. Additionally, BsAs has a program called ***Mejor en Bici***, a bikeshare program, where you can check out free bikes and return them later, much like a library system (mejorenbici.com). Many other cities have bikeshare programs as well: from New York to Madrid to Hangzhou (China).

In the US, established bikeshare programs are available in major cities like Boston, Denver, Miami Beach, Austin, Minneapolis, Denver, and Washington D.C. Bikesharing programs are rapidly gaining in popularity in the United States and currently there are over 30 bikeshare programs. I haven't found any single resource that provides information on all of the bikeshare programs, so your best bet to inquire is simply to google "bikeshares" in the country or region you plan to visit. Some programs are free, some charge small hourly fees, and some have subscriptions; check into each individual program for official terms and rates. In Paris, a day pass costs just €1.70 and there are over 1,700 stations! There's also a website called "Ride the City" (ridethecity.com) with an interactive map function that provides the safest routes for bikes and also connects you with bike shops in cities around the world.

Different regions also have their own flavors of transportation. Everyone's heard of the Venetian gondolas (which, by the way, is a tourist trap!). Near Battambang in Cambodia, you may find yourself riding a train made out of bamboo (there's only one set of rails, however, so pray there isn't a train coming the opposite direction)! If you go to Vancouver, you can find yourself a free transfer from a public bus to the "Seabus" crossing the Burrard Inlet. In the Northeast or Northwest of the continental United States, you can get around cheaply by using the "Boltbus" (boltbus.com). The cheapest I've ever gotten was a \$14 bus ticket from Portland to Seattle, but Boltbus advertises available "\$1 fares" on their website.

Another great way to get around across long-distances and save a bundle is to rideshare. There are a number of free websites that specialize in connecting drivers with passengers to share a ride together, in exchange for a share in the cost of gasoline. Some of these services include Zimrides (zimrides.com) and Ridejoy (ridejoy.com). It is always best to try and find a ride to your next destination at least 3-4 days in advance, but naturally, sometimes you will need a ride tomorrow. The best place to find rideshares, though, is probably on the good old CouchSurfing website. In each city's

forum discussion thread, there is an entire category devoted to rideshares. It's never too difficult to find other travelers headed the same direction as you are. If all else fails and you can't find a ride of any of these sites, try the "rideshare" section of Craigslist (craigslist.org), and you're almost certain to get a ride.

In major cities, you can request a personal driver quickly and easily with a few clicks of your phone using the Lyft and Uber apps. Lyft is actually an off-shoot of Zimrides created by the same founders. You just open the app, and an interactive map will pop up showing you locations of nearby Lyft drivers. Then you click "Request Ride!" (Lyft) or "Request a Black Car" (Uber) and you will automatically connect to the nearest driver, who comes to pick you up. Both Uber and Lyft provide driver reviews, so you can research the driver you're getting before requesting them. Lyft driver and rider profiles are also linked to Facebook, providing easier access to information for both parties.

The main difference between the two is that Uber provides professional drivers, while Lyft recruits ordinary people. Also, Lyft is a bit cheaper and you're allowed to decide how much you wish to pay, while Uber provides flat rates. At the time of this writing, Lyft is only available in 18 US cities, while Uber operates internationally in 20 countries throughout the US, Europe, Middle East, and Asia.

If you find yourself in Asia, there are MANY cheap options for hitching a ride. Tuk-tuks, jeepneys, rickshaws, songthaews, the backseat of a motorbike... all are cheap and sure to provide you a thrill. If you choose any one of these "unorthodox" options, the best advice I can give you is to negotiate the fare before the ride, not after. Often the drivers are struggling to earn a living, and some may be little less than honest and over charge you. The same thing happens with taxi drivers, and dishonest taxi drivers happen to be the biggest complaint of tourists in cities around the world.

Long-distance transit in Asia is cheap, too. You can take a train from one side of China to the other for less than the cost of filling up your gas tank back home. I took a sleeper train from Bangkok to Penang, Malaysia for less than \$30. Buses are also a great way to go; whenever possible, book these directly from the bus stations rather than through a local tour agency to avoid any possible hidden fees. Probably hands-down my favorite means of transportation in Asia, however, is my own motorbike. Motorbikes are everywhere, and in places like Thailand you can rent them for as low as \$5 a day. While

in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam I bought one from another American for the equivalent of \$270 USD. Two months later I sold the bike in Hanoi, recouping my entire investment.

There is also an awesome regional budget airline called “Air Asia” which provides cheap flights throughout the region. Air Asia hosts a variety of great deals on flights throughout Asia, but you have to be quick or you’ll miss them. If you look at flights for next week at 11 in the morning, but come back to the site later at 6PM to purchase, you’ll most likely find the price has changed. More on budget airfare (and Air Asia) in the section to follow.

How to Save Money on Flights (Without the Hassle)

When it comes to international flights, my style is to book one-way tickets about two weeks in advance. What I’ve found is that while international flights tend to be relatively static in price when compared to domestic flights where you have to play a game of “whack-a-mole” to find the cheapest fares. In addition, there are a bunch of great deals and seat sales that are offered during every season if you keep your eyes and ears open to them.

There are several ways to do this, and I’ll cover them, but by far the best “secret weapon” for getting incredible deals on international flights is by using Google’s little-known free tool called “Matrix Airfare Search” (matrix.itasoftware.com). Yeah, I have no idea what it means either, but this neat little tool is like Kayak on steroids. The Matrix Airfare Search aggregates data that you can’t find on other travel search websites, and provides a ton of other options that the others can’t match. You can’t book directly through the tool, but it will tell you which fares and flights are available. I could tell you more, but it would be more fun if you just go try it for yourself.

Also - you can use Google Flights (google.com/flights) to find the same information, but I prefer the Matrix Airfare Search because it gives you more options, and it’s easier to find multiple dates within a two-month range. What I usually do is start with Matrix, and then switch to Google Flights (GF) to book the flight, since GF includes links to the booking websites. Again, you’ll need to keep your dates flexible because the low deal you find may have changed; but if you change the date to a week or two later you can almost always snatch up a killer deal.

Subscribe to Travel Deal Updates

Travelzoo (travelzoo.com) is a great “referral” site that finds and notifies you about travel deals on airline sites. The “Top 20” also features the best deals available at the moment (many, though not all, of these are package tours). There’s also a category dedicated to airfare, but the best deals are often snatched up quick which is why it’s best to subscribe to the site by email. Two other tools that are great for finding cheapest dates and flights to travel are Skyscanner and Hipmunk. Skyscanner has a very nice app for iPhone, iPad, and Android.

The Cookie Monster

Here’s a online booking tip that may save you a few coin (nod to my friend Austin for noticing this):

If you’ve ever checked the price of flights before but didn’t go through with the purchase, you may come back a few days (or even a few hours) later only to find the price of flights have risen. You may still be able to get the lower original price by using a little-known trick. First, be aware that some airfare booking websites save “cookies” in your browser which notify the website if you’ve visited it before. If you have, then they will in some cases show you a higher price. However, there’s two ways to avoid this little “cookie monster:” either clear out your browser history, or try to find the same flight in a different browser or computer. By removing the cookies stored on your machine, you may very well be able to get the original lower fare.

Student Universe / STA Travel

Student Universe and STA Travel are two websites that offer incredible deals on international flights - the catch is, you’re supposed to be a student, or at least have a student e-mail to purchase flights through them. So if you’re not a student, but know one, you may be able to use their e-mail (though you didn’t hear this from me).

Port of Departure/Port of Entry

For long international flights to another continent, the price of your fare is in large part dictated by the airport you fly out of and the one you fly in to. For example, I live in San Diego but when flying to or from abroad I'll often go to LAX (Los Angeles). I'll make a trip of it, and spend a day or two visiting family or friends in LA. Larger cities generally serve as the best point of departure (since they have the most regular routes), though this is not always the case. For example, while traveling in Asia earlier this year, I found flights home to the US to be cheaper from Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) than they were from Bangkok.

When it comes to port of entry, check the fares for multiple destinations in the continent you plan to visit to find the cheapest flight. Flights into Europe, for example, are usually cheapest to Dublin or Amsterdam. Then, once you arrive, you can use a local budget airline to get to other destinations.

In Europe, there are a bunch of low-cost budget airlines. RyanAir and EasyJet are the two biggest, but there are many more. Routes and carriers are often in flux, so check attitudetravel.com for up-to-date coverage of all the different budget airline options available.

In Asia, the most tried-and-true option for budget airfare is Air Asia, as mentioned above. They simply have the most routes and cheap tickets available, especially out of Malaysia - and advertise fares as low as \$10 USD (not a typo). One can find hundreds of one-way flights throughout the Asian region (and even to Australia) on Air Asia for less than \$100.

At the same time, you'll always want to compare Air Asia's posted fares with airline websites and aggregators. For instance, Qatar Airways is considered one of the top quality airlines in the world and offers some routes at the same price as Air Asia. So, cross check the fares you get through Air Asia directly with airlines, Skyscanner, Hipmunk, etc.

Bottom line: the price of flights are always dynamic and you may find incredible deals if you keep your dates flexible and check multiple sources, destinations, and carriers. Subscribe to updates from aggregators like Travelzoo. A few of my friends were able to jump on a \$300 roundtrip flight from LAX to Peru. They used Lima as the port of

entry, and ended up exploring over half of the South American continent - visiting the Amazon, Machu Picchu, Patagonia, the Andes, and so much more. Pretty sweet deal for a \$300 roundtrip ticket.

Other Unconventional Flight Hacks and Tricks

Round the World Travel

A Round-the-World (RTW) ticket is a great way to fly to multiple destinations and save a great deal of money. Additionally, you get up to one full year of travel, so you can take your time. You also get access to airport lounges, free date and flight changes, and other benefits. Plus, the miles you earn as a result of just one RTW trip can earn you elite status with an airline alliance, providing a whole host of other benefits.

The two main options for RTW travel are Star Alliance and One World. There are others, but these two are the best, including the most airlines and offering the most options.

Star Alliance

From the website: “21,900 daily flights. 1,328 destinations. 195 countries. One Round the World Fare.” Star Alliance is the leader when it comes to round-the-world travel due to the sheer number of routes and destinations possible. Star Alliance’s RTW pass is available for Economy, Business or First Class versions. You’re also limited to a maximum of 16 segments - so when planning your itinerary, you want to optimize your ticket to both maximize your available miles and segments. Unfortunately connecting flights are also included in the segment total.

Star Alliance’s website includes a “Book and Fly” tool, which is a Flash-based map where you can plan your itinerary. Major cities with direct flights are listed in dark blue boxes, and destinations requiring a single connecting flight or multiple are light blue, or blue and white, respectively. When you complete your proposed itineraries, the tool will give you a price. If you use up less segments and keep your miles below one of the “benchmarks” of 26,000, 29,000, 34,000 and 39,000 miles, then the price will be less. If you use up 39,000 miles and all of the segments, you’re looking at about a \$10,000 ticket. Meanwhile, a 10 segment flight at or under 26,000 miles should cost around \$6,000. The

prices also vary depending on airline surcharges and where you depart from. You can mitigate or avoid surcharges by departing from certain countries.

One World

OneWorld offers two types of RTW products, the OneWorld Explorer and the Global Explorer. The OneWorld Explorer is unique in that it doesn't have a mileage limit. Instead it's based on the number of continents visited and 16 segments. Backtracking is also easy to do with this RTW ticket. A good RTW ticket with OneWorld is designed to maximize the total number of miles used. This can be useful if you'd like to zig-zag between the Northern and Southern hemispheres - such as from Asia to Australia, or North America to South America and then back to Europe, for example.

The Global Explorer is more conventional, like SA, and has mileage limits of 26,000, 29,000, 34,000, and 39,000. The advantage to this program is that more airlines participate, which lends to greater coverage.

RTW tickets are subject to many terms, rules, regulations, and surcharges for popular routes, which I don't have the space to cover. Both SA and OW have extensive FAQ pages on their website, and you can also get great feedback from folks who have done RTW trips through the forum on FlyerTalk.com.

There are a variety of other RTW products out there. Singapore Airlines has their own RTW ticket deal, featuring 90 cities in 40 countries and 5 continents. It doesn't provide all the options of the other two, obviously, but it's a top quality airline and you can get a more inexpensive ticket overall if you stick to the "intermediate cities" of each continent. SA's RTW ticket cannot be booked online, to book in USA call: 1-800-742-3333 and Canada: 1-800-663-3046.

Virgin Atlantic also has another RTW deal with their partners. From what I can tell, the only available departure point is London's Heathrow airport. There are a few other limited RTW deals offered by others such as Air New Zealand, and STA Travel, but these routes are pre-determined and don't allow the kind of flexibility that you'd want from a RTW ticket.

Is a Round-the-World ticket worth it? For people who are new to international travel, I would say no. But I think it's definitely something everyone should do at least once in their lifetime, and in some cases you can save a bit of money and earn boatloads of miles with some important airline alliances.

What other options are there? It's possible to travel around the world without flying at all. While traveling through Mexico, I met two Swiss guys on motorcycles who drove there all the way from Europe, crossing Asia and taking a ferry into North America. During that same trip, I met a couple cycling from Portland to Patagonia - the girl on a bicycle, and the guy on a handcycle (he is the first quadriplegic to make the attempt).

Like I always say, pick your own adventure. I can only suggest some tools to help you get there, but your life is your own, so get out there and make the most of it.



How to Work or Volunteer Abroad

*"Those who work and are never bored are never old.
Each day I am reborn."
- Pablo Casals*

Everyone Starts Somewhere

Ideally, you'll be able to use the techniques and strategies in this book to create a sustainable business that provides you income while you saunter off into the sunset. A lifestyle of your choosing - the freedom to do anything you want, anywhere, is what we're after. And nothing offers true location independent freedom like passive recurring income. But maybe you haven't had a big breakthrough professionally or financially yet - and **that's okay**. Maybe you just want to do something new and exciting, or take time to "find yourself." Maybe you want to volunteer and make a real impact in the world. When it comes to designing your own life, there's no right or wrong answer.

The mobile lifestyle designers that I've met during my travels weren't born as experts at business and marketing. They don't all have automated businesses generating \$40,000 a month - most of them don't. They've stumbled and blundered along the way but picked themselves back up, hustled hard, and got back in the game. To succeed in this game, it takes a staunch determination to make one's dream lifestyle a reality, using whatever means are currently available. This, coupled with a thirst for knowledge and growth, leads to remarkable eventual success.

I met my friend Johnny Ward (onestep4ward.com) at a dinner party I hosted in Bangkok. Over appetizers with myself and my other friend Carter, he revealed the full extent of his remarkable story and success. He left his home in Ireland back in 2006

to travel the world by any means necessary and never looked back. Today he owns a network of successful online businesses generating many thousands of revenue, and a full-time team working for him. His travel blog alone is well into generating five-figures a month. He's also visited over 100 countries and recently bought a condo in Thailand.

But when Johnny started out teaching English in northern Thailand he was only making about \$800 USD a month and faced a daunting challenge: how to use his meager means to travel from Thailand to China? He couldn't afford a flight on his salary, that was out of the question. Johnny could have simply said, "well, it's out of my budget, so I'll just stay home and hang about for the holiday." But he didn't. It was his lifetime dream to visit China, so he studied a map, took a bus to the Mekong river, and found a cargo boat with a crew of Chinese sailors to hitch a ride with. None of them spoke a word of English. But all he had to do was avoid the police, sign off on a Chinese document saying he was full-fledged member of the crew, and get off at the first Chinese port they came across. Simple enough. And that 5-day cargo boat journey turned out to be just as exciting as any trip he'd been on then or since.

Regardless of your background, skills, or education, this is the kind of attitude and resourcefulness that it takes to make it as a lifestyle designer. If you're determined to "break free" by any means necessary and but don't yet earn the needed funds, the options available to you are still many.

This chapter covers some "break free" options related to working and volunteering. No more excuses. If cash flow is the alibi holding you back, then this chapter provides the necessary "access to tools" to get you started today. Not someday - right freakin' now.

Or maybe you are already successfully earning some income and want to explore; or perhaps you want to take a break from entrepreneurship, and start a new business, but haven't decided what yet. Why not take six months or a year to try something completely new?

Working Abroad - Opportunities and Pitfalls

Thinking about taking up work abroad? Awesome. Finding work abroad is one of the most meaningful ways to settle in, immerse yourself in another culture, build real

relationships, and live like locals do. And let's be real - if you're from a western country, there probably aren't a lot of good opportunities in your field.

A friend of mine from college recently applied for a small in-house desktop publishing position at a publishing office. It was not the greatest, it didn't pay anything... but the hiring manager told him he had received 500 applications. This was a crummy design job and people were stampeding over one another to get it.

Each of us has heard the horror stories of college graduates with masters degrees and a hundred thousand dollars of debt working at coffee shops for \$9 an hour. Many youths from Western countries can't find work at all or are stuck working jobs that they're well overqualified for. This is not conjecture - according to the US Department of Labor, 53% of recent college graduates are unemployed or underemployed! Yikes. In the US and Europe, there are simply not enough quality jobs to go around.

Meanwhile, there are huge opportunities in massive emerging markets that are desperate for western-educated college graduates. Brazil, for instance, is a massive emerging market with an explosive economy. And yet, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, only 14% of it's youths are enrolled in university.

This same trend applies to emerging economies around the world. Businesses are desperate to hire managers with a Western education. Those 500 applicants fighting for an unimportant, low-wage job in the US could very well be appointed in a director role in Asia or Latin America. Further, because emerging economies are booming, modernization has occurred rapidly. Major cities in most emerging countries have quickly caught up to those in developed countries and in some cases even surpassed them in some areas. Yet the cost of living is still low enough that you can get a quality of living that may not otherwise be possible in the developed countries. All of these factors combine to provide a massive opportunity.

Wading into Murky Water

But let's get the disclaimer out of the way. First of all, the work abroad arena is a *marketplace*. That means that there are many third-parties, especially online, "selling" the dream of working abroad and making money off of people like you and me. On top

of that, there's also a number of other pitfalls to navigate if you wish to work. If you're brand new to this and thinking of working abroad for the first time, it pays (literally) to study up first.

To start, there's the official stuff. Red tape, and all that jazz. Look into the laws of the country where you plan to work to make sure that you know what it takes to work legally. There may be some restrictions based on your age, nationality, marital/student status, etc. The best place to find this information is through the government site of the country you wish to work in. You'll also need to secure the necessary work visa before you arrive in your target country. Arranging to get a work visa after you've arrived can be a huge hassle. And if you work illegally (depending on the country), you're likely to run the risk of getting deported, fined, or face jail time.

Next, know how to recognize a good travel job. This is my favorite. Guess which group of people often get stuck with the worst jobs? Travelers. Who take the very first job that comes along, because they didn't do their homework (or they're desperate - or both). Again, this is why it helps to do plenty of research. Is it worth it to work at a resort if you find yourself washing dishes six days a week for a pittance of a salary?

Work Abroad Resources

Backdoorjobs.com is a site where you get access to all kinds of interesting jobs, much of it temporary or seasonal. Some jobs are paid and include housing and meals. Much of it is voluntary, but so what? The possibilities to go wild are endless, so go explore and pick your own adventure. You can become a yoga instructor at a meditation retreat on Hawaii's Big Island, train as a dive instructor on a Caribbean island, or work with disadvantaged children in Peru. It can definitely be an enriching way to add a greater sense of fulfillment and purpose to your overseas romps.

Coolworks.com is a job board site with an abundance of outdoor jobs. You can find temp work as a resort worker on Mt. Rainier, or a tour guide in the Alaskan wilderness. Some of these jobs require certifications such as Wilderness First Responder training.

From mountaineering to snowboarding to sea kayaking, you can use the website NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) to take courses and get the necessary

certifications. NOLS also has a great customer service support that can answer any questions you may have, including a live chat through the contact page on their website.

Allianceabroad.com is an international recruitment agency with work exchange programs within Australia. You can apply to be a surf instructor at Bondi Beach, a massage therapist in Tasmania, work at a resort in a wine region, or get paid to housesit on Kangaroo Island. You simply work with a recruiter and they employ their international connections in helping you find work abroad. You provide them with your resume and they will work to get you the job. You'd also need to provide your own travel to and from your target destination.

They charge a program fee for the service: \$1,500 for six months and \$2,500 for twelve (prices at the time of this writing). Costs of airfare, training, certifications and visa are not included in the program fee. However, citizens of the U.K. and the U.S. have the option to only pay a small upfront "deposit" and delay payment of the remaining balance after receiving a tax return.

Alliance Abroad also has some other features and programs that they provide to individuals looking to live, work, and travel abroad, many of which can be quite helpful. You need to be within 18 to 30 years of age to take advantage of these exchange programs, and have either a high school diploma or one semester of completed college accreditation.

BUNAC (bunac.org) is a work abroad program with many opportunities to work, intern, or volunteer around the world in places like: Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, or the UK. For citizens of the UK, there are even more options such as Canada, the US, China, Thailand, Nepal, and South Africa. The price of the program is cheaper than Alliance Abroad's, but they don't necessarily set you up with a position in your target country. They offer some support and guidance to help you find one on your own.

The following is simply my opinion, but I never endorse "package tour" deals. I think they are dramatically overpriced and diminish the true experience and overall point of travel. How can you be excited about travel when it's all so predictable and simply zip from location to location in a day or two snapping pictures? You never get to fully embrace or explore the richness of any particular location. Personally, I feel the true rich

experiences come from winging it. My travel style is and always has been to purchase a one-way ticket, show up and chart my own adventure.

However, when it comes to working abroad, recruiters and recruitment agencies can be a great help in finding work, and cutting through red tape. You can most likely find jobs that are more interesting and pay better than ones that you would probably be forced to accept if you were performing the career hunt on your own. Also, the simple fact that you can have a job waiting for you in your target country when you arrive may be something you feel is worth paying for. It can help you overcome the final “hurdle” needed to make the big jump.

How to Avoid Overseas Job Placement Scams

There are literally thousands of job placement firms advertising their services online. For brevity's sake, I've only listed a few of the most reputable. Most firms ask for an “advance deposit” to help you secure job placement. It's entirely up to you to vet whether you'll be getting your money's worth and you need to perform your own “due diligence” by researching and being clear before going forward. Unfortunately some firms are motivated to receive your money but may have little or no contacts with actual employers and provide only minimal assistance.

Here's four steps to ensure that you're dealing with a good, reputable firm:

Request references. Ask for names and feedback from employees and employers that the company has worked for. If the company refuses, be firm stating your desire to check for authenticity and previous results before moving forward.

Look the company up on the Better Business Bureau website (bbb.org). You can check the company's rating, how long they've been established, and see if there any complaints against the firm.

Ask for a contract in writing. The firm should provide you with a clear list of services that it shall render on your behalf. Find out if the agency will actually place you with an employer or simply forward your resume to publicly listed employers. Make sure that you receive the same promises in writing that were advertised in the agency's sales

pitch.

Be clear on the firm's refund policy and aware of any hidden stipulations or requirements which may forfeit you from receiving a refund.

Landing a good paid position overseas can be competitive, and using a placement program can help give you a leg-up over other job-seekers. With that said, reputable programs tend to be quite expensive, and if you're willing to be adventurous, make the leap and put in some effort, you can definitely skip the expensive fees to find a great job in your ideal location.

Which leads us to...

Job-seeker? How to Hold all of the Cards

All the information in this chapter may be well and good, but you might be stuck wondering just **how** are you supposed to land a good job by yourself? Especially if you land in a foreign city where you don't know a soul?

There's no "fool-proof" method for getting hired in any field, but there are ways that we can stack the deck in our favor. What we don't want is to do what everyone else is doing. Because 95% of jobseekers are doing it wrong.

While I myself was a freelancer turned entrepreneur, I've coached over a hundred students who have themselves gone on to land good full-time positions. I've also played the role of an employer who has read at least a thousand resumes and cover letters from job seekers. The advice in this section applies to both freelancers seeking clients, and those seeking full-time employment (at home or abroad). Also, the focus here is towards knowledge labor (digital) rather than physical (carpentry, construction, etc.) though as a bonus I will touch on offline work a bit later!

Who Are You? And Why Should I Care?

First of all, realize that you are a brand. You are the sum of everything you've done up to this point in your life: all of your experiences, and the skills you've acquired. You need to

strategically differentiate yourself in a unique way. You have to create an identity that will become irresistible to potential clients and recruiters.

Here's the reality of the situation...

If your resume explains how you're a "good communicator" who is "proficient in Microsoft Office," ***you should slap yourself***. You won't impress anyone by highlighting your ability to edit Word documents or organize Excel spreadsheets. That's \$2 an hour work. Blame college, blame the recession, kick and scream if you need to. Best case scenario, you'll do boring, uninspiring, soul-sucking work at a company you could care less about. More likely you'll remain unemployed and living off Ramen noodles and frozen TV dinners for a long, long time. You can complain and do nothing, or increase your market worth by teaching yourself some skills that are both high in-demand and pay well.

So what skills are in-demand? According to Elance's Online Employment report, IT and Programming related-skills make up 54% of all online employment opportunities.

Programming basics like HTML and CSS are a good place to start and really aren't too hard to learn. Download the free browser add-on "Firebug" and you can start playing around with HTML and CSS right now. Firebug allows you to right-click on any website, and "inspect" its "element." It displays the mark-up behind the website, including the exact file and line of code location of each element. You can also edit in your browser any way you like, and when you refresh the page will revert to its original state.

A great resource for learning several programming basics is W3Schools (www.w3schools.com). It's a free self-teaching site with tutorials and exercises, and you can go at your pace. Within a week or two, you can learn the basics of HTML and CSS, and then move on to others. As a general rule, the more difficult a skill is to learn, the less competition you'll face. The most popular programming skills of the moment are PHP and Javascript (JS) - languages that power "content management systems" (CMS) such as Joomla, Drupal, and the mack-daddy of them all: WordPress.

WordPress as a web platform now powers one-fifth of all websites. WordPress takes PHP, CSS, JS, and HTML and bundles it all up into an attractive, intuitive interface.

It's also open-source, which means you can install thousands of features called "plugins" created by a worldwide community of developers. The simple ability to create WordPress websites and blogs has proven to be a solid in-demand skill over the years. It's also easy to learn, although the market is getting more saturated precisely due to its accessibility.

By the way, if you'd like to get on the fast track towards learning WordPress, HTML, and CSS, I've created a high-quality online video training course called the WordPress Design Institute (wordpressdesigninstitute.org). Yeah it's self-promotion, but I think it's a great "shortcut" to learning these skills. You can master in a few short weeks a variety of techniques that I acquired over years of learning and practice.

Cocoa is a development framework for building iOS applications and a hot skill to have right now. It also introduces you to Objective C, the programming language used to build Mac applications. Mobile and software app developers are killing it and will continue to do so well into the future. Some other useful development frameworks to learn include Bootstrap, Foundation, and Ruby on Rails.

Once you've acquired a real skill or two, you're ready to update your resume. Except now you may want to consider burning your resume... because **resumes suck**. The first resume was written in 1482 during the High Renaissance - **ten years before Columbus discovered America**. The resume is a relic from a bygone era: a time before electricity, running water, steam engines, steel, trains, automobiles, planes, etc. We no longer use horses as a main source of transportation any more, because we've invented a better way. And we no longer want to depend on resumes because we have something better, more modern, and more powerful, and it's called Google.

Become a Hot Commodity

It's time to start building your online presence, because you will be Googled. What comes up when you Google your name? If your accomplishments include winning the university beer pong championship and accompanying photos pop up, you've got work to do. If nothing comes up, you've also got work to do. You need to BE somebody. Nobody wants to hire a nobody - they want to hire a rockstar, someone who seems like they'll add a ton of value. Ideally, you want to be able to fill up the entire first page of

search results for your name with items that will prove irresistible to potential clients and employers.

To start, register your own name as a domain. Set up a blog and start posting positive, knowledgeable content related to your area of focus. WordPress blogs do very well in search engines. Start building up your social networks and sharing your content on them. When you post a link on Google+, it gets indexed by Google's search engine instantly. Twitter is another great resource to share content. Use the "Search Twitter Bios" feature on FollowerWonk.com and find people in your industry to follow. Keep sharing your content on Twitter, and they'll start following you, too.

Build up relationships with other prominent bloggers in your field by commenting on their blogs and offer to contribute a post to their blog. These "guest posts" will also show up in searches for your name. The bonus is that very soon you may become a known authority, or trusted source, within the industry. At that point, you needn't go looking for employers - they will find you.

Another tactic you should try is to contribute to real newspaper and magazine articles. Journalists usually leave their e-mail or contact information at the end of the article. If not, you can Google their name or check out the publication's website and find it. E-mail them: tell them you loved an article they did, and were interested in contributing to a similar article (on which you have, hopefully, become an authority on). Smaller publications and especially local publications (within your area) are more likely to reply favorably, so start small and build up from there.

Often you can join industry groups and contribute to these as well. One such group did a "Member Spotlight" on me and it continues to rank well for searches on my name. The point is, do everything you can to build up an impressive presence online.

The Principle of Association

Who's in your corner? You must meet the right people, or at least somehow associate yourself with the BIG dogs. That means aiming high, and being selective about who you meet. Avoid power networking. One of the best ways to do this is to form a mentor-mentee relationship with a successful entrepreneur or power broker within your

industry.

Take some time to search and find the most successful person that you can. Research them, understand them, and then get in contact. Make it clear that you share similar interests, that you're hungry and eager to learn and help in any way that you can. Think of ways you can add value to your potential mentor. Use positive "anchors" in your e-mail that will make the person smile and feel good (such as positive, upbeat subject lines and statements). Also - remember that while successful people are usually willing to help, they're also quite busy. So when you close with your call to action (to schedule a call, meet, etc.), "give them a way out." This is akin to Robert Cialdini's "rejection-then-retreat" style of closing. If option A isn't available, then offer option B as a concession.

If you've taken the time to become someone worth meeting, your potential mentor will respond positively to you. One way I try to build a relationship with mentors is by inviting them to be a guest in my mastermind group. By mentioning the fact that I run my own mastermind group, I'm implying that I'm a self starter with plans to get somewhere. Even if you're just starting out, as I was, you don't want to give your target the impression of a scrub that doesn't know where they're going. You have to somehow establish credibility, but do so without boasting. If you have a big project, big ideas, or an important mission that you can communicate clearly and concisely, your chances of successfully engaging mentors goes up.

Sometimes, you'll get the opportunity to be able to work directly for your mentor, sometimes not. You should be willing to work for free. Not indefinitely - but offer to do a small project or two. Over-deliver on the work and give it everything you've got. If you prove yourself invaluable, your mentor has more to lose by NOT hiring you. Even if they don't, a great mentor will be happy to connect you to important people within their network - people that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

Working with the best is another important way to stand out from the pack. Employers want to know who you've worked with before. If you've worked with noteworthy, respectable people in the past, their eagerness to hire you goes up exponentially. Too many other job-seekers aim low and try to go after any job they can get. This can be horrendously damaging to their career. It sets them up for a string of subsequent mediocre jobs because it won't look good on their resume.

If you're lucky, a great mentor can be all you need. In 2008 my friend Cody McKibben built a relationship with serial entrepreneur and multiple-author Rajesh Setty. That one connection and the ensuing referrals led to him building a successful freelance web design career, and Cody worked remotely from a base in Southeast Asia for the next five years.

How to Cut in Line for a Job

Raise your hand if you've ever tried to e-mail an address like "careers@somerandomcompany.net." If you've ever been applied for a job in your life, chances are good you that you have. Have you ever heard back from anyone?

Landing a job this way is like trying to find a needle in a hundred pound haystack. Human resources people aren't in the role of giving people jobs - they spend all of their time denying people jobs. To them, you're just a faceless piece of paper among thousands, which is not good. Most organizations are also using CV-filtering software that screens your CV for keywords, further decreasing the chances that your resume will be read by a human.

On top of that, most companies hire internally or through internal references. 80% of job openings are NOT advertised. You're joining 95% of all job-seekers for only 20% of the jobs! The prospects are not good. So, in order to land a great gig, we'll need to sidestep HR people and this whole process. We want to accomplish the best results in the quickest time possible.

Our goal, if we want to land a career abroad, is to arrange several final round interviews before ever setting foot on a plane. So, we'll have to turn to the internet. But let's skip Monster and CareerBuilder and use a under-utilized tool that allows us to reach decision-makers directly: LinkedIn Premium.

Hopefully you paid attention and have built up your personal brand, and can create a great LinkedIn profile. Add a professional picture, list your qualifications, and start adding connections. Ask your friends to write recommendations about your great communicative abilities, your dependability, and the fact that you always step up to

the plate when needed. Under the “Profile” tab click “Recommendations” and then “Request Recommendations.” You can fill out a form and request a reference from your connections.

LinkedIn Premium’s “Sales Plus” membership costs \$39.95 a month and allows you to send 10 In-Mails per month. In-Mails give you a leg up on all the other job seekers out there because they have a MUCH higher open rate than regular e-mail. If you don’t receive a response from the target within 7 days, your In-Mail credit becomes “refreshed,” and you can re-use it again.

According to the Social Media Examiner, In-Mails also average a 7% lead conversion rate: so with 10 In-Mails you have a 70% chance of landing an interview. You can keep the Sales Plus account for as many months as long as you like, or cancel once you line up a gig. In-Mail credits also accumulate month to month, with a 90 day limit.

Still with me? Good, because now things are going to get even more fun.

We’re going to use “cheat codes” - literally - and target the people we want to contact with our In-Mails with precision accuracy. There is a red-hot new tool created by recruiters that can let us find any hiring manager, CEO, etc. that we want using a few simple criteria. It’s called “RecruitEm” (recruitin.net), and it’s free. It uses advanced Google search strings to scrape all profiles on LinkedIn, Google+, Stack Overflow, and GitHub. You simply enter in some criteria into the fields, such as country, job titles, and keywords to include or exclude. Some good keywords might be “CEO,” “Chief Executive,” “Hiring Manager,” etc. Yes you can even try “HR...” but you already know my thoughts about HR people. Anyway, this tool is awesome and it will give you a huge advantage to literally get in contact with anyone with an online presence, at any company, any where in the world.

While LinkedIn Premium does have its own “Advanced Search,” the RecruitEm tool combined with Google is much more powerful.

What are we looking for? We want to find expatriate managers in our target city or country. Expat managers are more likely to respond favorably to unsolicited contact from other foreigners than local managers. Makes sense, right? If you can find expat

managers from your university or your country, they're much more likely to be an ally in your job hunt. Also, you can look for local managers who worked or studied abroad - they'll also be more likely to respond to your In-Mail. Look for any clues that can establish commonality. If you're American, focus on managers with American-sounding names: John Cook, Bill Anderson, etc. Same if you're Norwegian, French, etc.

Compile a list of 20-30 target companies, along with the name of the target manager. Create a template that you can use for your In-Mails, then customize each and send them out one by one. Start out with a greeting, a courteous introduction, some specific examples of work that you can do for them, a few specific reasons why you'd be a great fit for the company, and ask for a Skype or phone interview. Mention that you're currently in your home city but will be visiting the target city within a month or two. If you show energy, passion, and enthusiasm in your message, people can definitely pick up on that.

Expect some rejection. Maybe half won't respond to you. Some may respond to say nothing is available. In this instance, employ the "rejection then retreat" principle: suggest becoming connected on LinkedIn, keeping in touch, and ask if they have any advice or connections that may be helpful. Your objective is to have someone within an organization give you an internal reference.

Within the next week or two, you can set up 5-10 interviews with managers in your target city before ever leaving home. Getting the interview is half the battle. Once you've gotten it, don't waste it! Do your homework on the company, on the individual, on projects that the company has done. Also read their profile (or blog, if they have one), and try to understand what's on the person's mind. Try to find common interests, mutual connections, etc. If you've taken the time to build up a remarkable brand, researched your targets, and build strong rapport with a decision-maker in the company, you'll land the internal reference that will get you hired. Your information will be passed along within the company before you ever leave home.

From these Skype and phone interviews, you'll want to set up at least 5 final round interviews for when you arrive. Of these, you're certain to get at least one or two offers. If you can schedule 10 interviews, then you'll enjoy more options and more negotiating leverage.

Networking Through Facebook

Under normal circumstances, it can be very difficult to make a meaningful new connection through Facebook if you haven't already met the person in real life. However, there is a powerful shortcut to networking using Facebook that most people don't know about.

Simply type the following into Facebook's search bar (replace [location] with your target destination):

Friends of my friends who live in [location]

Ex: Friends of my friends who live in Melbourne

Facebook will return a long list of second degree connections that you have in that city, and show you whom your mutual friends are. You can browse the list of potential connections that you can make, then ask any mutual friends you have with those people to set up introductions for you. Simply reach out to your first degree contact and ask him if he'd be willing to introduce you to the person:

"Hi [Name] - Just noticed you're friends with [Contact] in Shanghai. I plan to travel to Shanghai in two months and I'm also looking to find work there. Would you be willing to introduce me to [Contact] so that I can connect with him when I arrive?"

Assuming your friend follows through with the intro, you can easily build your network this way. Also, if you share more than half a dozen mutual connections with the person you'd like to connect with, you could try to send a friend request and reach out directly.

There are also a number of other searches you can enter into Facebook, for instance you can search by interest as well (for more information on the different search strings you can perform, check out: www.facebook.com/about/graphsearch)

Ex. People who like travel in Bangkok

This is an awesome way to network in just a few minutes using only your laptop! With

this strategy, you can quickly and easily build a network of a dozen or more people in a city, well before you arrive. It works anywhere in the world. Try it out!

Networking via Special Delivery

There's also another impressive way that you can bypass HR folk and reach anyone directly. This is a "secret weapon" in my arsenal that few people know about. It involves sending FedEx packages. No one, going back to the time of cavemen, has ever NOT opened a FedEx package that was addressed to them.

If you've ever tried to call a company and get through to the CEO, the receptionist will always tell you he's busy. But, if you deliver a package, it will be placed on his desk. This method is so powerful that I've never NOT gotten a response this way. Simply find a company where you'd like to be hired, and do research on the CEO. Does he have a blog? Try to find out what his interests are, then write a courteous, personalized, hand-written letter to him and include a small gift; tape up the package and send. Even if you don't get offered a position, there's no doubt that the person you've tried to reach will be impressed by your moxie. They'll most certainly be willing to help you out in some way, in the form of advice or connections.

Other Popular Work Abroad Options

Physical Labor

Don't laugh. Learning a physical trade is a good way to find work virtually anywhere. If you go to Australia, for instance, you can make a lot of money. I met several friends in South America and Asia who worked in Oz as carpenters, miners, or window skyscraper cleaners... and they all made a lot of money - in the six-figure range. In fact, mining is the #1 highest-paying wage in Australia, according to the Australian Bureau of statistics. The average weekly take-home pay is about \$2,400 a week (May 2012). To find opportunities check out www.miningoilgasjobs.com.au.

These types of jobs are in high-demand. No special skills or diploma required. Oh yeah - and you get a lot of vacation time to travel AND you're flushed with cash... a great opportunity to travel, start a business, pay off debt, or do whatever the heck you want.

WWOOFing / Sustainable Social Enterprise

"Get back to the land and set your soul free."

-Joni Mitchell

WWOOF - World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (wwwoof.net) is a network of organizations that match volunteers with organic farm owners and growers. If you want to break free from the demanding hustle and bustle of the city or are simply in need of a digital detox and a change of pace, then WWOOFing may be for you.

Simply pay \$30 and you'll get access to wwwoof.net's entire online directory of available farmstay arrangements. You can then decide on a few potential locations, and send out messages directly to farm owners. There are literally opportunities for volunteer "WWOOFers" everywhere: China, Spain, Greece, Samoa, Nicaragua... and so on! Pick your own adventure. But bear in mind that farms near major tourist spots are often full, so keep an open mind and try to arrange something weeks or months in advance. When deciding on a length of time, it's always best to suggest a short-term arrangement with the option to renew. That way, if the experience isn't meeting your expectations you won't be locked into a long-term commitment.

WWOOFing is all about adapting to a change of pace, returning to simple living, and self-discovery. You get free accommodation, free meals, the chance to interact and live among locals in foreign countries, and meet all kinds of interesting people from around the world.

I personally have never WWOOFed, but I have several friends who have been involved in WWOOF-type work and they report very positive experiences. My friend Ryder spent a month and a half working in a village called Los Molinos del Rio Aguas, in southern Spain, and he absolutely loved the experience. Working with an organization called Sunseed Desert Technology, he learned about low-impact sustainable living by working and living in an eco-village. He spent days working with a team rebuilding old spanish houses, trails, and stone walls.

After his work at Los Molinos, Ryder spent over a month road tripping around Spain and France. Highlights included cycling around Cordoba (former Moorish capital of Al-

Andalus), attending football finals in Santiago Bernabéu Stadium, jogging and surfing in San Sebastian, rock climbing in Fontainebleau, wine tasting in Champagne, France, and five days of romping around Paris. Ryder told me that all young people coming out of high school or college should get up off the couch, book a ticket, and partake in a program like this. There's so much to learn, he says, and many great experiences and friendships to be made. Check the database at www.db.ecovillage.org to find opportunities.

How to Volunteer Abroad

Volunteering can be a great way to use your skills to provide a tangible difference in people's lives, make a positive difference in the world, and have a rewarding experience immersing yourself in a foreign culture, customs, and community.

When you volunteer abroad, you gain a brand new perspective on the world and learn new ways you can contribute to it. When you help others who are less fortunate, you come to appreciate what you have. You learn not to worry about petty things, and realize that the things we stress over are minuscule when compared to the troubles of most others. Volunteer work teaches you to be more patient with people, more accommodating, and more authentic. You value materialism less and impacting others in a positive way more. It's difficult to find a better way to change your life for the better and improve the world at the same time.

My friend Margaret works as a banker in London, but has been traveling around the world twice a year for the past 13 years, collecting a lifetime's worth of memories. "Mags" loves animals and children and always tries to help out at local shelters and schools when she travels. We first crossed paths in South America, where she was backpacking around the continent for five months.

In the heart of Ecuador's Amazonian rainforest, she spent a month feeding and cleaning abandoned and mistreated animals such as monkeys, rare birds, and cats. Some off-hour highlights included swimming beneath jungle waterfalls, playing football with local children, and scoring a front row seat to witness spectacular rainforest lightning shows. In the Galapagos she volunteered to teach English, in a place where many schoolchildren can't even afford to spend money to buy pencils.

In South Africa, she slept in an open air game reserve and treated endangered bear cubs near Johannesburg. She shared her work commute with giraffes, and spent off-time wrestling with meerkats. In Borneo, Malaysia, Mags spent five weeks building sanctuaries and caring for endangered sunbears. Mags often builds relationships with the animals she cares for. In Borneo, she befriended an old mother bear named “Mamathai.” When I spoke with Mags about her volunteering experiences, her face and voice lighted up with passion and enthusiasm.

Thinking about volunteering? There’s a few things you should know. First: ***not all volunteering options are equal.*** Some volunteering jobs may see you shoveling cow dung or washing dishes - but providing very little benefit to the community. Will you be making good use of your time? To ensure that the experience lives up to your expectations, do a little pre-planning and research first.

There are several “volunteering criteria” that you should ask yourself first when presented with an opportunity to volunteer, such as:

- 1) *Am I making a meaningful, significant contribution? Will my volunteering efforts make an impact in a positive, important way? How?*
- 2) *Will I gain personal, lasting fulfillment in some way?*
- 3) *Is the program owner or director truly committed to the success of the cause? Do they have any ulterior motives, such as making money? Do they provide hard proof of past success and positive impact?*

Ask these questions, both of yourself and of your potential cause, and write down the answers. Ask how and why a particular opportunity meets these criteria. By going through this process beforehand, and vetting volunteering opportunities beforehand, you’re much more likely to have a positive experience.

Finding Volunteering Opportunities

[WorkAway.info](#) - The best way to find volunteering opportunities is to contact the program director or owner directly. If you work with an agency, you could end up spending five times more for the volunteering opportunity! Work Away is a website that

allows you to contact hosts directly. You can also perform background research on the opportunity and find information on volunteering program hosts, and read previous reviews.

The website hosts thousands of listings dedicated specifically to connecting hosts with “workaways.” You can browse thousands of volunteer and work abroad opportunities, and for a small fee, contact the hosts directly. You can also browse by region and country, and read reviews of others who have worked with the host in the past. Help train horses in Normandy. Mind a cafe in Scotland. Work on a ski resort in Hokkaido. Help produce wine in Puglia, Italy. Manage a lodge in the Chilean Andes. There are over 135 countries represented and thousands of opportunities to choose from.

What’s really nice about Work Away is that it is not an agency. You create your profile, and you contact the hosts directly. You are responsible for securing a gig, but you can save a lot of money using this website, and begin looking for opportunities immediately. Once you lock down an opportunity, you are usually given a room and meals in exchange for a few hours of volunteer work a day. Some hosts may charge a very small daily fee. Great way to travel and experience different cultures at very low cost.

Workingabroad.com - One-stop shop with a focus mainly on volunteer opportunities. Great place to get inspired and draw ideas. Care for retired elephants in Northern Thailand (or Namibia). Protect and breed endangered Macaw birds in Costa Rica. Monitor and help preserve coral reef in the Indian Ocean. Teach the arts to children from favelas in Rio. The opportunities are endless.

The site also acts a huge resource answering all of your questions about volunteering, providing volunteer stories, and offering tons of information about things like visas and insurance.

[Habitat for Humanity](http://HabitatforHumanity.org) (habitat.org) - Founded in 1976, Habitat for Humanity is one of the oldest and most reputable volunteer organizations. With a main focus of building (and repairing) safe, livable housing in rural or underprivileged communities; both international and domestic opportunities are available.

Once you find the awesome opportunity that you’ve been looking for, you simply

apply through the website. A placement specialist will then work with you to collect everything you need and submit your application to the program. The prices of different volunteering programs vary and the costs aren't always clear, so that's something to find out upfront.

Which brings me to...

The Risks and Costs of Volunteering

Volunteering isn't cheap. First, there's travel-related costs like airfare, for which you'll have to foot the bill yourself. Then you'll often need to pay a special monthly fee to cover the costs of accommodation, meals, insurance, and the screening and training process. If you look online, you may be surprised to find volunteering packages that cost several thousand dollars to sign up for. Wait, what? Many volunteering projects are difficult and labor-intensive, except you're not getting paid. In fact you may even be paying a small fortune just to work for free. What is one to do?

There's pluses and minuses to signing up for volunteering package deals through an agency. First, many volunteering destinations prefer to screen volunteering candidates. If you simply show up and offer to lend a hand, it could backfire. However, if you bypass the middleman, you can save a lot of money. It's really up to you, your budget, and how you to prefer to go about things.

Fortunately, there are ways you can finance your volunteering trip. Thanks to the internet, you can "crowdfund" your volunteering efforts, and get assistance from friends or family to fund your trip.

How to Crowd-Fund A Volunteer Trip

Volunteer Forever - *Volunteer Forever* is a crowd funding website for those who would be volunteers. In just minutes you can create a profile, set up your campaign, and promote it to raise funds. VF also has a section of "program reviews" where you can find information about good volunteering opportunities, and become inspired to make the leap. There's also a blog section with volunteer accounts, very much worth reading.

Maybe you feel your cause is the worthiest in the world. It's up to you to package and promote it in a way that will make others feel the same. When planning your campaign, come up with a great list of "reasons-why" related to the campaign that you can share with people. Maybe these are interesting facts about the great need for volunteers in the location you've chosen, or something else. These will become your "promotional ammo" to encourage others to contribute to your campaign.

To be successful once your campaign is live, hustle day and night to promote it within your network, and have your friends and family promote your volunteering campaign within their networks. If you're a young adult, you will probably have much better success receiving donations from your parents' friends than your own friends.

Here is a short "cheat-sheet" with some specific tips for a successful volunteer fundraising campaign:

- **Do 90% of the work in advance.** This means crafting all of your status updates for social media, e-mail outreach letters, etc. well beforehand. Create a moving fundraising video. The software Camtasia can record yourself talking into your laptop as well as integrate a slideshow with photos and other important information. Prepare a digital flier in Photoshop (or Word) with a QR code that you can use to promote the campaign and place a QR code in it. You can get a free QR code here: www.the-qr-code-generator.com.
- **Identify top influencers in social media and the blogosphere who can help promote your campaign.** Start building these relationships before the campaign's launch. Twitter is great for building relationships because you can tweet to anyone and they'll receive your message as a notification on their smart phone. Go to the website www.followerwonk.com and click "Search Twitter bios." You can then enter keywords related to your cause and find organizations, businesses, and individuals who would support your effort.
- **Ask for a low minimum donation.** By setting a low barrier of entry you'll encourage more people to donate to your campaign. Most people will donate more, but you want to make it as easy as possible for potential donors to contribute. Volunteer Forever accepts a minimum donation of \$5.
- **Product placement - link to your campaign page.** Include some short information and a link to your campaign page in your e-mail signature.

- **Post a link to your campaign on Google+.** If you use Gmail, your Google+ profile will show alongside any e-mails you send along with your post. This will help you gain extra visibility for your campaign within your e-mail contacts.
- **Don't focus on you and your fundraising needs.** Don't mention anything about funds being tight or talk about you needing money in your description. Focus on the impact that contributors will be able to make by sponsoring the cause. Put the spotlight on the positive aspects and the world-changing potential of your volunteer work.

Here's two campaign descriptions - one was highly successful, raising 63 donations and \$4,295; while the other received only one.

Campaign A:

I'm fundraising for this trip because I know that with the right guidance, children will be amazing leaders. However, they need the opportunities and experiences to guide them. Sports has taught me to have fun, be my best and always think about the bigger picture (teamwork). The kids in Rwanda don't have a lot of opportunities to play sports, let alone the equipment to play (soccer balls). Therefore, providing this experience is invaluable to providing options and knowledge besides what they know from their everyday lives!

Campaign B:

i am trying to raise money to pay for my trip to Tanzania to set up medical camps with my classmates. this is a once in a life time opportunity. Being a poor college student funds are tight. so i am trying to raise the money. by helping me you will be helping poor Tanzanian kids get medical help that otherwise they would not get. The trip is schedule for 2 weeks at the end of July. this would be the best hands on learn experience i could only dream of. thank you for taking the time to read this and thank your for your help. every penny counts!

Can you guess which campaign was successful, and why? The first campaign focuses on the children and the fundraiser's ability to positively impact their future. In the second campaign, the cause is certainly worthy. But the focus is on the individual fundraiser

and the cause of building medical camps is only mentioned in passing, almost as an afterthought. Her motivation is to provide a “once in a life time opportunity” for herself.

- **Be persistent.** Just like a campaign on Kickstarter - share info about your campaign on an almost daily basis until you reach your goal. Don't spam, but use your pre-packaged “ammo” to deliver relevant facts about your campaign and the cause. Remember, your cause is a worthy one, so don't worry that you're annoying people. As the saying goes, “The people who mind don't matter and the ones who matter don't mind.”
- **Reach out to successful fundraisers.** Find the most successful fundraisers on the site and message them. Tell about your plans for a volunteer campaign and ask about their experiences and advice. By helping you, they also take some interest and “ownership” in the success of your campaign. If you build a positive relationship with these other volunteers there's a good chance they will donate or help promote your own campaign once it's launched.

GoGetFunding

Gogetfunding.com - another crowdfunding platform where you can create a campaign and raise money for charitable causes. The types of campaigns launched from GoGetFunding run the gamut - raising money for medical expenses, volunteering trips, or launching a new business. Being wider in scope, the website receives much more visitor traffic than Volunteer Forever. The principles for creating and promoting a campaign are similar to Kickstarter or VF.

Teaching English - A Popular Option to Overseas Employment

Many successful mobile lifestyle designers that I know started out by teaching English overseas. Teaching English is a great way to earn a solid income and experience a different culture over a long-term period. Rolf Potts, famous travel writer and author of "Vagabonding," describes the two years he spent teaching English in Busan, Korea, as one of his fondest travel experiences, ever. For someone who's been traveling for over ten years and over 60 countries, that's saying something. He also parlayed the income saved from that job into three years of international adventures!

Even better, the demand for English teachers is HUGE. In many countries, especially in Asia and parts of Latin America and Europe, there are massive emerging economies that

are starving for native English speakers to teach their young and increasingly educated populations. English is already the de facto second language for much of the world and quickly becoming so everywhere. In countries like India and Nigeria, which contain many ethnic groups and linguistic diversity, English is used as a unifying language. In many Pacific island nations, schooling is conducted entirely in English. My friend Bill Altaffer, who has traveled to more places than any person on the planet (he's in the top 3 of the world's most traveled people regardless of the list you use), showed me photos of his most recent trip to North Korea, which showed classes of hundreds of students studying English. We're talking about **North Korea** here... a rogue state infamous for shunning the outside world.

This all "translates" to a very big opportunity for those who would teach. English teaching jobs are perhaps the surest way to earn an income while living abroad. But if you try to research the topic online - there's so much information out there - where do you start? In this section I'm going to break down what you need to know, and feature a friend of mine who's made a career and a good living out of teaching English in Korea.

A Weekend with Monkeys in Angkor Wat

The best connections are often the ones you make on the road. In the Spring of 2013, I took an overnight bus from Thailand to Siem Reap, Cambodia. A little way into the trip, I noticed a gaggle of Australian girls giggling hysterically behind me. There was a young American bravo entertaining them with his charisma and humor. I had no idea what he was feeding them, but admired his approach. My Thai girlfriend was sitting next to me, and I told her that he was a good example of what Americans are like - outgoing, talkative, and friendly.

Daniel had a big warm smile and approachable persona - and a story of his own - just the kind of person that's great to meet on the road. The next day, he and his father joined us as we explored the awesome ancient spectacle of Angkor Wat. That night as we waited for the sun to set over the ruins, Daniel told us he was on a month-long holiday from teaching English in Bhusan, Korea. After graduating from university, he left Seattle and the recession-prone US to establish a new life in Korea and had no plans to leave.

By Daniel Brenner

Teaching English abroad has become a job choice for many people back home in Western English speaking countries. What was once a fairly uncommon endeavor has now become more popular than ever before, thanks to the growing demand of English speakers in the ever more integrated global markets, where English is used as a lingua franca.

Because of this, I've had experiences as diverse as teaching in Mexico to software engineers who communicate in English to their corporate counterparts in Hyderabad, India, via English, or hanging out with my Costa Rican buddy who is a current graduate student at Korean university in Busan, who uses English to communicate with Chinese students.

That being said, the current climate for teaching English abroad has actually become quite a bit more competitive than it was in the past. The world recession has left many young people coming out of university in the developed world with dire career prospects, and many have flocked overseas to try their hands at teaching English abroad. This has had the unintended consequence of making it more of an employer's market than it was in the past; still, with that being said, there are a tremendous amount of opportunities for those that do their due diligence in researching the better jobs to be had abroad.

It's worth being said that the market is quite global as well: Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East are the principle teaching destinations, with varying degrees of accessibility and cost benefit awards. I'll go into that in a second, but first lets talk qualifications.

BA/BS degree: While not as necessary as it was in the past, a Bachelor's degree is becoming more and more of a requirement by immigration authorities across the world, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. While it is possible to find work in some countries without a BA (for instance, if you have a TEFL certificate and an Associates Degree, you can technically get a job in Taiwan, although its far more competitive there these days). Most immigration departments of certain countries don't make a distinction as to what kind of degree you have, so long as you have one. However, some employers (and even immigration authorities of some countries, like Indonesia) respect a degree in English Writing or Literature more than any other generic BA/BS.

TEFL/TESOL/TESL Certificates: These are generic certificates created that are typically done in person in language institutes around the world. There is no international accreditation body for these certificates, but the unspoken law of the land is that they are at least a month long course, with 100+ classroom hours, and over 6 hours of observed teaching. My course I took in Guadalajara, Mexico, was 140+ classroom hours, and had 10 hours of observed teaching. It also had a stamp on it from the ministry of education, making it well recognized in Mexico. It also was recognized in South Korea, although you do have to prove that it is a legit TEFL certificate.

Online TEFL/TESOL/TESL Certificates: These are far cheaper alternatives to in-person courses, but they are also far less recognized internationally. They don't offer any benefits with most employers, so I often suggest people to avoid them entirely.

CELTA certificate: Very similar to other TEFL/TESOL/TESL certificates, I think this is actually a superior qualification, because it is recognized by an international body with a standardized curriculum (Cambridge University and the British Council in the UK). It has similar costs and duration to other TEFL/TESOL/TESL certificates, but you get more mileage out of it because some employers will regard it, at worst to be the same as a TEFL/TESOL/TESL certificate, but at best will recognize as being superior to those other qualifications. Plus, it can lead one to an even better qualification, the DELTA.

Starting Out and Getting Certified

There are a variety of programs on the web offering TEFL certifications, and many of these “certifications” are simply pieces of paper issued by less than reputable companies out to make a buck. How do you pick one with any degree of certainty? The source of your TEFL certification is much like the university where one acquires a degree - it's important to get one from the best source. As Daniel mentioned, CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), a qualification created by the University of Cambridge, is widely regarded as a top-end certification and is accredited by the Royal Society of Arts in Britain. Meaning, you are very likely to gain employment after completion of the course. If you take some time and look at job vacancies online, you will find requirements for CELTA qualification again and again.

The downside is that the training can be quite difficult and expensive. You may find it better to start out with a TEFL to see how you like teaching English abroad, and then train for a CELTA if you enjoy it and wish to continue. If you have a university degree of

some kind, a TEFL certificate from an English-speaking country, and are well-dressed and well-groomed, you shouldn't have very much trouble finding a teaching job.

Also, as with any work abroad situation, assess opportunities and evaluate them against your criteria.

Teaching English Resources

[New Life ESL](#) - There are many companies offering TEFL certificates, but I know the owner of New Life ESL and these guys are legit. They offer extremely affordable online TEFL certification starting at just \$219, and you can study at your own pace. Derrick and his team also work with teachers to place them at jobs in China for free. If you choose to sign up through my affiliate link, I'd be grateful: <http://bit.ly/1rPkqfL>

[CIEE Teach Abroad \(ciecee.org/teach\)](http://ciecee.org/teach) - A placement organization for US citizens. Include all-inclusive programs to help you get TEFL certified and land job placement opportunities in countries like Chile, South Korea, China, Spain, Thailand, and Vietnam.

[Dave's ESL Cafe \(eslcafe.com\)](http://eslcafe.com) - The ultimate resource for all things related to teaching English. Includes a variety of TEFL certification options, job board, discussion forums, user-submitted content, FAQs, and much more. Used by both those seeking to teach and those looking to hire teachers.

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All the Little Things

"I will not die an unlived life. I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow my living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise."

- Dawna Markova

This chapter is full of useful ideas and tips, large and small, that couldn't quite be categorized into any of the preceding chapters about leading the mobile lifestyle. From your inner game to the fine art of haggling and the secret of language learning, this chapter is packed with both concepts and techniques that can dramatically enrich your lifestyle design pursuits.

It's all the little things that turn you from amateur to rockstar. The end of this chapter also includes a list of lifestyle and travel hacks, and useful apps and websites.

Real Success: Inward and Outward

Whatever your "dream goals" may be, once you live them out, you may come to find that it is not entirely what you expected them to be. Too often, there is a huge gap between the mental images that we conjure up in our heads and the reality when we actually do that which we seek.

Maybe you're eager to immerse yourself in foreign worlds. You want to romp around the Himalayas, ride horseback across the Mongolian steppes, island-hop the Mediterranean, or explore the Amazon. The lure of adventure is strong, and I get it. But before ever setting foot outside of our own home, we must come to appreciate where we are now first. If we're unhappy where we are, then simply changing locations isn't really the answer. It might provide a temporary boost... but before long, we'll be unhappy

again. Once we “arrive” at our dream destination, we can’t assume that suddenly everything will be “fixed” and all problems will be erased. No one is ever free from all of their problems. If you’re unhappy, and you change settings, you’ll simply bring your unhappiness with you. In fact, being in a foreign environment can actually serve to accelerate these feelings.

Lifestyle design involves the most powerful personal transformation you can undertake. Doubts - and second thoughts - are par for the course. There will be many times when you may miss your own bed; when you miss the feeling of being somewhere familiar instead of surrounded by uncertainties. Taking responsibility to design your own life often involves taking on levels of risk that would send a normal person into a fetal position. I’ve had to encounter over and over, on a daily basis, my own insecurities, my fears, my lack of organization/productivity/enthusiasm - you name it. Sometimes I began working towards a dream I’ve had for years then wanted to quit mid-journey.

This is all normal - our imperfections teach us what it means to be human. It is our ability to acknowledge these feelings and flaws and use them to empower rather than sabotage us that will determine our ultimate level of success and happiness. We can’t repress bad emotions, rather, we should appreciate them because they are teaching us important lessons about patience, tolerance, and gratitude. Imperfection paves the way for kindness, compassion, and love. Without pain, there can be no transcendence over it. Doubts, insecurities, and fears teach us how to be stronger, better-rounded individuals - if we acknowledge and appreciate them.

Doing anything innovative, such as designing our own lives, is a roller coaster ride with blistering highs and nerve-wracking lows. By assuming the mantle of lifestyle design, we have to keep a certain pep in our step - we have to know more, master more skills, and be willing to risk everything on a roll of the die. When things bring us down (and it will happen) it’s vital to respond in a way that will serve us rather than sabotage us.

For example, let’s suppose someone is mean to you for no particular reason. Do you feel the impulse to get even? If you’re being honest - then the answer is yes. If something terrible happens to you or someone treats you poorly, take a moment to get away and relax (and be **ESPECIALLY** sure to stay away from your phone, laptop, or any other communication device). Once you’ve calmed a bit, immediately take action in order to

reset the karmic balance. Perform several acts of kindness towards other people. It could just be a warm hello and a pleasant conversation, a gift to a charity, or a small favor for a friend - but it will reset your internal energy from the negative back into the positive.

There are other great ways to respond to negative energy and emotions, such as keeping a journal. Whenever the doubting voice in my head becomes a bit too loud, I know I need to put pen to paper and sort it out. I ask myself the real reason(s) why I'm upset. Are there tangible, physical causes of these frustrations and anxieties? Is there a change I need to make in my life to correct course? By writing it all out, it puts it out of my head and in a place where it can be analyzed and acted upon.

Keeping a daily (or weekly) journal is a good habit for other reasons, as well. For instance, it allows you to measure your own development. You can look back at how you felt at a certain time in your life - and note your anxieties then, and compare that with how everything actually turned out. This provides perspective and feedback that you can use to gauge your own emotional and intellectual reactions to the highs and lows of the roller coaster ride.

The other habit that serves me throughout the roller coaster ride is practicing gratitude.

Gratitude: The Source of Happiness

Psychologists have discovered that expressing gratitude (being thankful) is one of the best ways to increase happiness. 90% of people who practiced expressing gratitude reported that it made them more joyful, 84% said it reduced stress and depression and helped create optimism, 78% said it gave them more energy.

Let me give you a little analogy to illustrate how gratitude works. Bear with me. The sun is the source of all life in our solar system. When sunlight hits plants through the process of photosynthesis, the plant converts the sunlight's energy into chlorophyll. Without this process, and without the sunlight, a plant cannot perform any of its functions.

I would argue that, in a sense, gratitude has an effect upon us much like the sun's rays upon plants. When gratitude is cultivated inside of us, it transforms itself into optimism and enthusiasm, and that energy carries over into all areas of our lives - our

relationships, our work, and everything else.

Whether things are going well or not, try to take a moment during your busy day and allow yourself to be filled with a sense of gratitude. Sometimes I take a little break to just be thankful for the air I breathe and celebrate the fact that I'm alive. If the sun is out and shining, I feel gratitude for that as well.

If you like, you can perform an exercise where you keep a "gratitude journal." Each day, write down three things that you're thankful for. If you keep this up for just ten days, the positive effects will last for months. If you build it into a regular habit, it will boost your self-esteem and your ability to bounce back in the face of difficulties.

In an experiment by Robert Emmons and Michael Mccolough, two UC Davis researchers, a group of people keeping weekly gratitude journals showed significantly better results on a range of psychological and physical well-being measures than people in either of two comparison groups. The group that kept a gratitude journal: exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the future.

Like a plant gathering the sun's rays, let yourself be full of gratitude.

Zen and the Art of Meditation

Meditation is a friend that has helped me many times. I'm from a small beach town in coastal California, and for me living in big cities in foreign countries can be overwhelming. Meditation is the perfect antidote to the travel blues. When I need to gain perspective and make important changes in my life, meditation gives me the clarity to make the right decision.

There are many gifts that meditation offers. Some of these gifts are easily recognizable and others are more subtle. Meditation provides a center - a place of peace that we can return to, irrespective of external circumstances. Meditation boosts our brain's ability to process information and handle big challenges, and answer important questions about our life. Meditation allows our subconscious mind to sort through and absorb things we've learned.

Through meditation, we develop “metacognition,” the power to monitor our own minds and actions in a self-analyzing way. We heighten our ability to learn and process information. By focusing our attention on the internal world of our own minds we can re-wire our brain’s architecture, and change our thoughts, feelings, and actions. This process of internal thought management is called “mindsight.” Through mindsight, we can re-assemble our conscious thoughts.

Many of the actions we complete each day are mechanical - we perform them on auto-pilot. For example, you don’t have to consciously think about walking, brushing your teeth, or driving a car. This is a good thing because we perform thousands of these activities each day. Yet it becomes a problem when we let the automatic pilot run our daily lives. And we let our thoughts run away rather than harnessing and focusing them.

Practicing meditation regularly brings awareness back towards the present moment and allows clear thought and action. What’s unique and special about meditation is that at its core, it’s about simplicity. This allows even a novice to reach the same levels of peace, consciousness, and awareness as a life-long master.

Meditation need not be all woo-woowy or new-agey. It’s just a practical process of introspection. It also doesn’t matter what your religious (or non-religious) inclinations are. What I usually do is perform a few visualization and relaxation techniques. Find a quiet place and focus your attention on something very simple for fifteen minutes. It could be a candle, a flower, or a body of water. Your thoughts may try to race off elsewhere; bring them back. Let all of your thoughts reside solely on this object. Let yourself fully appreciate its existence and allow yourself to absorb its facets and the lessons it has to impart. Fill yourself with gratitude that you exist here, now.

Once, after reaching the top of Bukit Bendera in Penang, Malaysia I completely recharged myself by entering a deep and restful period of meditation. Looking out upon the rolling green hills and sparkling sea below, my experience was heightened by a sense of tremendous joy. It was then that a small centipede crossed my path. By golly, I loved that little guy. In my heart I loved and appreciated that centipede because he was a fellow form of life inhabiting this existence. And in turn, the centipede reminded me of the important lessons about slowness and steady progress.

At that moment I felt completely alive, and connected with the world and the universe in a way I wouldn't have felt otherwise. It is also during meditation that we raise our awareness to notice and appreciate the small things that we take for granted. This appreciation is carried over to our interactions with friends, family, and contributes to a greater sense of joy throughout our life experience.

The Power of Music

"Without music, life would be a mistake." - Friedrich Nietzsche

Learning to play an instrument, in my opinion, is the best way to strengthen our minds and develop clear thinking. Studies prove that music training improves our concentration, and develops our reasoning and motor skills. When we play music, it strengthens several parts of our brain: the cerebellum, sensory cortex, visual cortex, auditory cortex, motor cortex, nucleus accumbens, and several other areas. Med schools understand this well and often look for a musical background in their applicants because music practice develops both the right and left brain.

While living in Chiang Mai, Thailand, I bought a chinese reed instrument called a "Bawu" - basically a flute made out of bamboo. It was the best \$23 I've ever spent. Lightweight, easy to carry, and fun to play. I started out barely knowing how to blow into the thing to produce a sound, and in no time at all was composing long acapellas. Before long, my bamboo flute was both my travel companion and best friend. Playing music was a fantastic meditation, and a great, healthy way to make the most of free time.

There's another reason why the ability to play music is great once you step outside of your neighborhood. Music is a universal form of communication that brings people together regardless of language, circumstances, or ethnicity. It's a wonderful way - maybe the best way - to endear yourself to locals in foreign locales.

This is more significant than you might realize. Remember that there is literally a world of difference between you and your own background and that of someone half a world away. Racial makeup, skin color, income inequality, cultural and family background, language... to name a few. However, if you're able to bond over something as simple as

music, it can transcend the gap that divides two people in a profound way.

Still not convinced? I have a friend who was in the Canary Islands looking to be crewman on a boat crossing the Atlantic. But there was a ton of competition and he didn't have much success at first. Then, one night a captain saw him playing guitar at a party and offered him a free lift to come onboard and provide entertainment for his crew.

While I was backpacking in Asia, my flute enriched the experience in a big way. In Laos, I was invited to perform on stage alongside a jazz trio (much to the delight of my date). In Hanoi, my flute and I made friends at Hoan Kiem lake with a blind musician and we'd spend the afternoons grooving out together. Everywhere I went, locals I encountered got such a kick out of seeing a young white man playing an Asian instrument. Often they would give me a thumbs-up, grin and say "Good!" It was such an easy way to bond - and put a smile on people's faces in a simple and human way.

Life is meant to be enjoyed, and playing an instrument is just damn fun. It's also a great way to relax, or pass the time while waiting for the bus or train to your next destination.

Breath = Life

"If you breathe well, you will live long on Earth." - Sanskrit proverb

Awareness of breath, and managed "mindful breathing" has been advocated throughout the centuries by a variety of cultures. In more recent times, the US military has developed a training program called "Mindfulness-based Mind Fitness Training," or "M-Fit," and an integral component of the program involves teaching soldiers breathing techniques in order to build their resilience to stressful war zone situations.

Research by psychologists notes that conscious, managed breathing techniques strengthen the prefrontal cortex involved in generating positive emotions. Full, free breathing is a key to unlocking optimal health and mental energy. Proper breathing can remove toxins from our bodies, give us energy, improve sleep, increase self-awareness, and dramatically improve our mental and physical state.

The problem is most of us don't breathe correctly; we're simply not getting enough oxygen flowing into our bodies. Nor do we take time to practice managed, healthy breathing exercises.

A few years ago I learned a very powerful breathing exercise from a 30+ year-old Tony Robbins audio program. The title of the CD was "How to Increase your Energy." In it, Tony explains the importance of our breath in a different way. He argues that most of us aren't doing enough to activate our lymphatic systems. He explains that lymph is a fluid that helps transfer nutrients from our blood to our cells and also acts as a waste disposal system. The problem is that since our blood cells are not getting the oxygen they need, our lymphatic system is not being activated, and we feel sluggish and lethargic as a result.

Through the program, he taught me a simple breathing exercise that's easy to use and has worked wonders in my life. You simply find a quiet, comfortable place with plenty of fresh air - preferably outdoors. I usually go to a park or to the beach. Breathe a deep full breath for five seconds and let the air fill your belly (not your lungs, you want the air flowing through your entire system). Now, hold the air in for twenty seconds. Next, slowly exhale all of the air out over the course of ten seconds. Repeat this ten times.

The basic formula for this exercise is this: hold the air in four times longer than your inhale, and exhale twice as slowly as your inhale. I simply choose five seconds of inhalation because that works for me.

Mindful breathing is restorative, and can improve your emotional and intellectual state. I've found that, time and time again, mindful breathing proves itself invaluable during the situation and environment changes that accompany the mobile lifestyle. While living in Bangkok, I performed breathing exercises from the 33rd floor apartment of the high-rise in which I was renting each morning before entering the hectic, polluted city. It centered me, and put me in a great state to seize the day.

Try this exercise, and I guarantee that after only two or three breaths you will start to notice a difference in how you feel. If you take nothing else from this book, simply using this one technique alone can improve your life.

Always Haggle

If you're the type that's socially awkward and shy around other people, then it's time to break out of it. Haggling (and by extension, negotiating), is a critical skill for any savvy person looking to design life on their terms.

I haggle both when I'm at home and when I travel. People are willing to give you a discount more often than you think - but first you have to ask. I remember a few months ago I went on a road trip from Southern California to Canada. The first morning in Vancouver we went to a Mexican fast food chain on a college campus. For a simple bean and cheese burrito they tried to charge me \$12. My head nearly exploded.

So I made a little small chat in Spanish with the employee. Turns out she is from Michoacan. I've never been to Michoacan, but do know that the state is famous within Mexico for its ice cream. A couple minutes later, that \$12 burrito was reduced down to \$2.80 - a discount of over 75%. She either rang it up as a kid's burrito, or a pair of sides. I don't remember. All because I simply made some small chat with the girl, acted friendly, and asked if she could do anything about the price.

This was not an isolated example - I repeated this almost exact scenario a week later in Seattle. If haggling is not a part of your current paradigm, then examples like this occur more often than you may realize. People will often give you what you ask - but first you have to ask for it. Just a little small chat and asking. So many of us - you, me, your fellow humans - are starved for interaction, to meet interesting people, and for others to be interested in us.

Let haggling become ingrained into your daily habits. Haggle whenever you can. I've actually come to expect a discount minimum of at least 15% - 20% off from most purchases I make.

Just treat it like you're asking a favor from a good friend. Be interested in the other person and treat them like a friend. Ask a few friendly, personal questions if you like - where are you from, what's your name? etc. Keep things light and humorous, and don't outright ask for a discount - just softly suggest it. Have a smile on your face; it should be done almost humorously. A lot of times when I ask for a discount or something for free

it seems like it's done in jest, and often causes the other person to giggle.

You know the saying by Marilyn Monroe that "If you can make a woman laugh, you can make her do anything?" That's often the way it works when negotiating a bargain - if the other person likes you, they're more likely to do things for you.

It's not always going to work, but it never hurts to ask. Just make sure to never be a rude jerk while doing it. Think "sweet-talk." It's as simple as saying something like:

"Hmm, I'm still interested in buying this from you guys, but wasn't prepared to pay X. I was expecting something like Y. Is there a chance we could work something out?"

Haggling Tactics and Tricks

Sometimes, being nice alone simply isn't enough to earn a discount. The following are several tactics that can help you become an expert negotiator in minimal time.

Don't back down easily. If you ask "Hmm, is that the best price you can give me for this?" the person will sometimes respond by saying yes, and they can't discount for (fill in the blank) reason. Sometimes the person is simply bluffing, to see if you'll back down. If you cave in at this point, you've lost. Instead, take a moment to pause. Then try to point out holes in the other person's argument for that price. If your counter-argument is sound, and you show that you're serious, there's a good chance your negotiation attempt will be successful.

Notice flaws in the product. I was shopping for shoes at a department store and noticed some minor cosmetic flaws with the pair of shoes I was considering to purchase. The employee at the cash register would not discount the shoes, but I didn't throw in the towel and back down. I told her I liked the shoes but didn't want to have to drive to another branch just to find a pair without the flaws. So a minute later the manager came over, offered a 20% discount and the deal was done.

Make mention of competitor's rates. Or find out the standard going rate for the service or product (or even a similar service). This is easy. Not too long ago I had to make a trip

to the Apple store to fix an issue with my laptop's screen. The "geniuses" at the Apple store couldn't fix the issue, so they referred me to a third-party store about a mile away. I asked them if the repair would be expensive. They said it wouldn't be too bad, perhaps around \$75. So I went to the other store, and they said they could repair it for me, but it would cost just under \$200!

I said that it was important for me to have the laptop fixed quickly, but wasn't expecting to have to pay that much - the Apple store rep had told me \$75. So a few minutes later the gentleman gave me a discount of about \$60. He told me that they never do it for that price, but for me it would be okay. It still wasn't as low as the Apple store rep had suggested, but two minutes of basic negotiating saved me a cool 30% off the repair!

Hide the extent of your interest. Let the vendor "sell you" on the product. Usually, in most negotiating situations between a buyer and a seller, both parties have a mental "link" to either: A) an exact price, or B) a "ballpark range" that they'd either be comfortable selling or spending the good or service for. If you're unsure what that is, you can ask the seller. Say, "Give me a ballpark range of what you're expecting for the price" (If the vendor is not a native English speaker they might not understand the phrase "ballpark range," but you get the idea). If the vendor's "range" aligns with the price you were hoping for, you have wiggle room to make a deal. In my experience this range usually falls somewhere between 10-25% of their ideal (or listed) price of the product.

Sometimes the vendor will say something along the lines of "How much will you give me?" Don't fall for this - it's a trap! Whenever possible, you want the other party to reveal their position first. For example there was a situation once where I had to repair a broken window in my bedroom. I was willing to pay the repairman \$100, but then he quoted me for just \$20! I don't know much about repairing windows, and if I had offered my price first, I'd have paid five times as much.

Praise the product, then withdraw. If all other negotiating options are unavailable, you can simply take a minute or two praising the product or service, but mention that it's simply not within your budget. The cool thing about this technique is that works better the more you praise the product! In response, the vendor may come down to help you out. This trick has saved me quite a bit of money with hotels and guesthouses. You can

use it in a variety of situations.

Say “Yes” to Free Money

In many foreign countries, bargaining is not only strongly recommended but it's also the norm. As anyone who has been on the “Banana Pancake Trail” can attest, when you travel you're likely to be encountered by hordes of hawkers targeting tourists just like you with goods at inflated prices. You'll be laid out on the beach and locals will approach trying to sell you (in no particular order): overpriced coconut waters, jewelry, cocktails, jet ski rides, hair braids, and massages. This is a topic for another time. Just remember that a discerning buyer is a smart buyer, and your negotiating skills will serve you well.

Remember that the worst that could possibly happen when you request a discount is the other person saying “no;” it's extremely rare that an attempt to haggle will sink a transaction entirely. If a vendor disavows professionalism and truly becomes upset then refuses to sell to you because of your attempts at haggling, it's not likely someone whom you want to be spending your money with anyway.

And remember that Benjamin Franklin said that “a penny saved is a penny earned.” Each time you negotiate a discount from haggling, it's like receiving free money!

Make haggling a habit. If haggling is not in your current paradigm, then make a note now to change your attitude and/or reverse any biases against it. There's almost nothing you can't negotiate a discount on: rent, cable and internet bills, credit rates, airline surcharges, clothes, furniture, cars, medical bills, you name it!

The Biggest Language-Learning Secret

This is not a book on linguistics. Most of the language-learning programs and techniques are aimed towards the hardcore polyglot. The problem is that about 96% of people don't have the time, attention, or interest to put in the effort required to really become conversationally fluent in foreign languages.

For the purposes of travel and the mobile lifestyle, you can go very far by studying some basic phrases in the local tongue. Learning a string of basic words and phrases in

any language is not hard to do and you can usually memorize them in less than thirty minutes. It starts with simple things like “Hello” and “How are you?” and then branches into some other commonly used phrases like “Good morning,” “Nice to meet you,” “Where is?” and “I would like / Can you give me (a coffee).” These alone can make a world of difference in your interactions with local people. If you know a handful of phrases in a language, that’s usually good enough to at least have a friendly conversation and make a new friend. It shows a certain degree of interest in a different culture, and people pick up on that.

There are some great apps that help you learn the basics of any language, some covered in detail at the end of this chapter. My favorite tool for learning phrases is the free “Tap and Say” app. It provides support for ten languages. Similar to an electronic phrasebook, you simply press any of the phrases available and it will speak it back to you in that language, and show you both the native characters and letters in English.

The simple reality though, is that if you know English, you’re golden. English is rapidly becoming the world’s second language. It’s being studied in schools in every corner of the globe. I’ve watched Chinese travelers using broken English to order fruit smoothies in Vietnam. I don’t know why this is, but I think a big part of it has to do with the internet. According to Wikipedia, 55% of all of the internet is in English! Coming in at a distant second is Russian... at 6%.

But Danny, I get what you’re saying, but I really DO want to learn another language. Fair enough. The biggest language learning secret, according to “polyglots,” is your own motivation. Why do you want to learn a language? Tucker Max, best-selling author, says that he always asks aspiring authors: Why do you want to be an writer? And he says that 99% of people can’t answer the question. They have superficial reasons to be an author that have nothing to do with the writing.

Same deal applies to language learning. If your interest in the language is shallow, then you’ll fail. If you want to improve your career prospects or impress your friends, you’ll fail. People who are able to learn languages successfully become passionate about the language they study. They become interested in the literature, in movies, in the culture, and in interacting with native speakers. They don’t “study” a language, they try to “live” within that language. They make it fun and interact with native speakers whenever

possible.

Try to make it fun, and if you enjoy the process of learning, you'll be motivated to continue. And push yourself to actually use the language, by interacting with native speakers whenever you can. Don't be embarrassed or worry about mis-pronouncing a word or conjugating something incorrectly. If you're currently in your home country and not able to find native speakers to converse with, you can use Skype. The website Fiverr.com has many native language speakers offering 30-minute conversations and/or lessons for \$5.

With enough motivation, anything is possible. Beyond motivation, the time you'll spend learning another language depends on a few other factors, including: the similarity of the target language to your native language (or other languages you know), the complexity of the language, the number of hours devoted each week to learning, and the language learning resources you use.

The language you choose to learn also impacts whether you can have meaningful conversations within 3 months or 3 years. According to the Foreign Service Institute of the US State Department, the following languages are the easiest to learn for an English speaker: Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Swedish, French, Afrikaans, Italian, Norwegian, and Romanian. Data collected by the institute suggests that the average time needed to achieve proficiency in these languages is 23-24 weeks, and 575 - 600 class hours.

Somewhat difficult languages to learn (for a native English speaker) include: Hindi, Thai, Russian, Serbian, Vietnamese, Greek, Turkish, Hebrew, Polish, Finnish
To achieve proficiency: 44 weeks, and 1,110 class hours.

The most difficult languages to learn? Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Arabic has fewer vowels and is very different from English. The other three have thousands of characters to memorize and are tonal languages, which means that the words could have several different meanings depending on how you say them. The word "Ma" in Chinese, for example, means four different things depending on how you pronounce it: mother, hemp, horse, and scold. You could be calling someone's mother a horse without even knowing it. According to the Foreign Service Institute, these languages on average require 88 weeks (1.69 years) and 2,200 class hours to attain proficiency.

There's a free language-learning app that's been rapidly gaining in popularity. It's called "Duolingo" and it aims to make the experience of learning another language fun by using a video-game style interface. There's plenty of quizzes and challenges, top scores, and higher levels that you can unlock the more you "play." Currently, Duolingo is only available to teach six "Latin" languages: English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, and Portuguese; but they are currently working on adding others to the mix. The Duolingo app is a great way to pass the time during bus or train commutes, or when in the waiting room for an appointment, and it's free, so if you're serious about learning a language you've no reason not to use it!

Lifestyle and Travel Hacks

Planely

If your travel plans involve flying, you can collect information about other people that will be on the same plane as you before you ever arrive at the airport. There is a free website called "Planely" (planely.com) that collects information from social media sites, and you can also fill in a bit of info about yourself and who you're looking to meet. If you have an upcoming flight planned, you simply click the "Add a Flight" button and enter in some basic information such as the date, departure, and arrival destinations. The service will connect you with other Planely members and you can get information about each other through the website. A great way to "pre-network," meet interesting people, and pick up a travel buddy or two. Plus it can make the experience of flying (something many of us dread) that much more enjoyable.

Home Swap

If you have a long-term living situation at home (such as a mortgage), you can save a bunch of money by swapping your home, usually for a period of one to four weeks. Love Home Swap (lovehomeswap.com) is a service that allows you to, for a short time, swap homes with other members in other parts of the world. If you own a home but work remotely, this is fantastic because it allows you to travel basically whenever you want and cut your accommodation fees to virtually nil. Weather not too great in Toronto in the moment? How about swapping your place for a Spanish villa for a few weeks?

The website has a revenue model similar to dating sites like OKCupid or Match.com: you can create a profile and list your home for free, but in order to send messages you need to pay a monthly fee. Memberships fall within the \$ -30 a month range. They also have other package services available, including having a dedicated team that finds home swap matches for you. However, the company reports that the average user reports a savings of \$3133 on holiday accommodation costs!

Another website offering home exchanges is HomeExchange.com. It works basically the same as Love Home Swap - you list your home, search places where you want to travel, exchange messages with other members, and travel. A yearly membership is \$120 (at the time of writing.)

Yerdle

There is a new startup called “Yerdle” (yerdle.com) which expands upon the concept of sharing resources. Rather than swap homes, it’s a site where you can trade or borrow things from friends. From simple items like dresses to DSLR cameras to snowboards to car detailing materials. Maybe you’ve got some junk lying in the garage picking up dust. You never know when a friend might be in need of a left-handed monkey wrench to fix that old leaky water pipe.

Crowdtilt

Awesome “cat-herding” tool for organizing group events or trips. If you’ve ever tried to organize a trip with your friends you know how difficult it can be. Enter Crowdtilt. Super easy to set up a “campaign,” get people on board, and get everyone to make a contribution to overall costs (for campsites, equipment, rental fees, etc.). No one is charged anything until the campaign “tilts,” or reaches its goal.

Aside from raising funds, useful for getting people to “pre-commit” and reduce flaking. You can use it for other things, such as causes and group buys, and limit your campaign to a certain number of people.

Airbnb

Airbnb is an awesome resource for finding accommodation in expensive cities (think: New York, Paris, Rome). There's even a movement by hotel owners in New York City to BAN the use of the website there! But Airbnb is even BETTER if you use it to host other travelers. You can thereby rent out your own place while you travel and subsidize your adventures. I cover Airbnb in detail in the "lifestyle business" section of this book; but for the purposes of supporting the mobile lifestyle, renting out your room or a room in your apartment is a great way to subsidize rent and provide cash for travel.

I have several friends who do exactly that. My friend Daniel has a two bedroom condo in downtown San Diego that costs \$2,500 a month. Each month, he and his roommate rent the condo out at \$250 a night for 10 nights then go traveling themselves, completely offsetting the cost of rent.

Bonus: Traveler's Tool-Set

Before you go...

There are some amazing apps and tools out there that will give you near god-like powers. Here I've listed some of them with descriptions. Just remember to put the phone down every once in a while to interact with the world around you.

Tap and Say

Learn how to say standard common-use phrases like "How much is it?" in up to ten languages. What I like about this app is that it's incredibly accurate. There are too many language apps out there that are buggy and unreliable. If you upgrade, you get access to more phrases, but the most useful phrases are available in the free version. You simply choose the phrase or word that you want to speak from one of the categories and it will both say the phrase to you and provide text. The quality of the audio is very good, also.

Skype / Google Voice

As long as you have a wifi connection, you can make low-cost calls from your phone, tablet, laptop or an iPod touch to anywhere in the world. If you're from the US, you can even call home for free with Google Voice! Also, if you look online, there are many discounts on Skype credit (\$7 for \$10 credit, for example).

Voice Translator (Android) / Translator with Speech (iPhone)

Just as the name says. Turns your phone into a voice translator: speak some words into the microphone and translate it to the language of your choice.

World Lens

Point your phone's camera at any sign or text in a foreign language and this app will translate it for you. Surprisingly accurate, but at the moment only works for languages that use the Latin alphabet.

Trail Wallet

An iOS app for travelers that simplifies budget management. The app also features the ability to track in hundreds of currencies, so its easy to keep track - no need to do conversions in your head.

Free Wi-Fi Finder

These days, finding WiFi anywhere in the world is never too difficult (The only place I've ever struggled to find reliable WiFi? Brazil). This app by JiWire Inc. makes it even easier. It uses your phone's GPS to list WiFi hotspots near you using an interactive map feature. Usable offline. Useful for those times when you've lost yourself in Nepal's Annapurna's mountains and you want to tweet to your friends back home: "Hey, look where I am...!" Just don't drop your phone over that cliff while trying to take a selfie.

iTriage

Catch some weird fungus during your trip? It happens to the best of us. iTriage is there. You can simply type in your symptoms and get Harvard Medical School feedback with a description of the potential illness or injury, symptoms, treatment, images, and more. The app, usable offline, also provides other important information about doctors, facilities, medications and procedures, and more.

Eventful

Uses your phone's GPS to locate nearby events, concerts and shows. Huge time-saver as it has event information for virtually every major city in the world (you can use their website, too). Also has the option to send you e-mail alerts when new events are created. Great for local deals when you're at home, too. I went to an awesome sumo tournament in my hometown that I would have never known about otherwise.

TripAdvisor

The app provides quick access to hotel information, things to do, restaurants, etc. in the area. You can also easily access the local forum if you need to pose a question to knowledgeable area experts.

Camera+

Upgrade your camera phone with a host of professional post-production features. It's like Photoshop Elements for your phone. Sharpen photos, improve exposure, remove red-eye, add filter effects, and more.

That's it. Now get out there.

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

-Mark Twain

I did my best in these chapters to provide you access to all of the tools that you need to go out and create an exciting mobile lifestyle for yourself. The rest is up to you. Get out there and have a blast. Dream, discover, and explore. And then tell me about it. You can e-mail me at: danny@openworldmag.com.

PART III

Build the Ultimate "Freedom vessel"

"If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much."

- Jim Rohn

Laying of Plans

Browse the business section of any book store. There is an over-abundance of books out there on business, marketing, leadership, and startups. It's easy to get lost in them.

When I started my first business I taught myself to speed read, and became a tenacious demon, devouring tomes on business, startups, marketing, sales, and so on. For three years while starting out my first company, a digital advertising firm, I was reading on average 2-3 books a week. I would listen to marketing podcasts while working out.

In addition, I've shelled out multiple thousands on online programs and courses to learn business and marketing strategies for the internet age (I don't care to tell the actual number of dollars I've spent). Everything from how to set up an internet business, to e-commerce, to marketing through e-mail and search engine optimization. And everything in between. Of all business activities, about 80% of my time in the early days was spent on learning.

What I found was that a lot of the advice out there - while great - often wasn't applicable to my situation. For example, Jim Collins has written highly-lauded books such as "Good to Great" which explains how good corporations become great ones. Some concepts, like the "mirror and the window" ethic of great CEOs are nice to know, but very little in the book could be directly applied to my business. I'm just one guy working from home in shorts and vibrams with no employees.

My dad gave me the book "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" when I was 18. It was a great read, but at that point in my life, it was just a read. It fired me up, but I wasn't ready to implement anything from it at that point in my life. Even the example muse businesses provided by the "4 Hour WorkWeek" - such as the French T-Shirt company, provided very little information that I could apply to my own specific muse business.

Why This Book is Different

This section of the book is highly relevant to those who wish to construct a **mobile** location-independent business or a virtual company that supports **their ideal lifestyle**. One that provides them both substantial income and freedom. I've experimented with a hundred different ways to perform every aspect of business: from sales, to marketing, to managing contractors and clients. When I find something good I implement it, and if it works very well, it's kept. Anything that doesn't is discarded. I'm not going to bog you down with a whole bunch of business theories; only things you can take and apply immediately in your own business.

I made the journey from a confused, lost and lonely 23 year-old college graduate to location independent and financially independent boss. My business has given me complete freedom of time and location. I've had substantial passive income deposited automatically into my bank account to fund adventures all around the world; where I was or what I was doing was irrelevant. This didn't happen by accident. It was the location-independent business model I developed that made all of my dreams reality. And I've helped several friends start their own successful online and freelance businesses.

Now I want to take you behind the scenes and share with you the blueprint that makes it all possible.

The methods shared in these chapters are the product of dozens of interviews I've conducted with successful location-independent entrepreneurs. I've picked their brains to discover commonalities for success and the best business secrets. I've talked to hundreds of entrepreneurs and freelancers to understand what they feel the biggest challenges and opportunities are.

These chapters represent a culmination of the best methods, processes, and strategies for building a economically viable business in today's digital market that will realistically sustain **your ideal lifestyle**. Some of these ideas and techniques are actually counter-intuitive. You wouldn't think that they work, but they do. My only criteria is that something is **effective**. If it works and its useful to help us reach our business and

personal goals, then it's kept. Within all of the haystacks of business advice that one could sort through, I've discovered and cherry-picked the best methods.

I know I have to prove myself to you, too.

Before my 30th birthday I did, however, make the list of "Top 30 Adventurers Under 30," a list which I myself

no Musk or Bezos

I'm not the greatest entrepreneur in the world nor am I an academic expert delving deep into the topic of entrepreneurship. I'm not on any Forbes' list of Most Promising CEOs. I'm living an extraordinary lifestyle, but I'm just an ordinary guy - and that's the point. These are simple strategies and techniques that work for the average person; all you have to do is apply them. So if you want to learn how to build your dream business and lifestyle, then read on. I'm not going to bog you down with abstract and impractical concepts. In these pages you'll find nothing but practical and applicable strategies to build a business that allows you live on your own terms.

Choose Your Own Adventure

It is impossible for me to know where you are now, where you want to go, or what your goals are. If you're reading this, I can assume that you are interested in starting your own business. Perhaps you're unhappy with your current job and lifestyle and are looking to leave your job and make money doing what you love.

Where do you start?

Your path will be unique to you. My path is just one path, as are those of all the individuals I've featured in this book. It's pointless to compare yourself to others, because everyone takes different paths to success. But you can and should learn from them so as to become the best version of yourself.

Here are several options available to you, each based on paths my friends have taken:

1. *Develop a solution to a problem that you yourself experience (page 248).*
My friend Andrew struggled with girls in college. He was fed up with losing girls that he liked and set out to find a solution, taking notes on what worked and what didn't.

In time, he began to see results. His friends were struggling also and started

approaching him for advice. It turns out others who were having similar problems were willing to pay for a solution. He had all the makings of his first e-book, which he dubbed “Men’s Book of Knowledge.” Two years later his podcast “Knowledge for Men” nabbed the #1 spot for New and Noteworthy, receiving 70,000 downloads in its first five weeks.

2. Identify a mission or purpose that you feel strongly about and develop the business around it (page 257).

My friend Ryan arrived in NYC with \$700 and a plastic bag full of clothes. He took on stunts as a stock broker, then a realtor, but felt his “dharma” was out of alignment. He realized what he really wanted to do was to help make his friends’ dreams come true.

Ryan created “PureHouse” to bring creative individuals together with the vision of using creativity and innovation in the interest of promoting common good. Through housing initiatives, he created his own collaborative incubator. Many people are now using Airbnb to rent out space, but Ryan has differentiated his activities and appeals to a unique niche. He takes his overall mission and purpose and uses it to differentiate his business in a crowded market (housing). As the saying goes: *if you stand for something, you’ll never stand alone.*

3. Pick a small niche that you can dominate and move product through outbound advertising (page 264).

Outbound advertising is “interruption marketing” - commercials, pay-per-click ads, etc. This was the strategy of the french sailor shirt example used by Sherwood in the “4 Hour Workweek.”

My friend Jeff wanted to create a product but didn’t know what. He didn’t want to enter a large niche where the competition could blow him out, but also didn’t want to choose a niche that was so small that he would struggle to scrape by. The answer? Boutique garden gnomes. Silly? Sure. But through the sales of his gnomes he’s built a very comfortable lifestyle for himself, with enough money and time freedom to travel where he likes and do whatever he wants.

4. Pick a large niche, stay lean, build a superior product, and build brand loyalty through inbound marketing (page 284).

Features of inbound marketing include social media, blogging, and emphasize

relationship building, creating engaging content, and building a brand. When the market is huge, and you sell a recurring product, brand loyalty is key.

My friend Lars entered the enormous supplement market and created a superior quality testosterone boosting product. The biggest factor in his product's success came through free marketing tactics on Facebook. Targeting leaders within the large fitness and nutrition niche, he built personal relationships with other fan page owners, and assembled a huge following of customers in a large niche through social media.

5. *Freelance (page 293).*

Freelancing is not for everyone. You will often not know where the next paycheck is coming from. You'll wonder how to price your services. You may take on clients and jobs that you don't like. But freelancing is also one of the best ways to generate "active income" and earn a profit from day one.

You must be a master of building business relationships, and carefully cultivate a personal brand. If you don't absolutely love to deal with people, then this approach is not for you. But if you've got the charisma and the energy to survive as a freelancer then you could do very well.

My friend Tim is the consummate freelance professional. He's the best I've seen at what he does. He's built a highly lucrative freelance career in a very short time, and lives a lifestyle that turns the rest of us green with envy. He's also a master at marketing and the art of self-promotion, so I asked him to share his strategies and techniques for this book.

6. *Take the "No-Half Measures" approach (page 272).*

For those with a flair for audacity, perhaps spiked with a twinge of insanity. I named this one for my friend Johnny. Coming from a poor single-parent family in Ireland, Johnny wanted to build a better life by any means necessary. After getting a degree in finance, he decided he wanted to take a year off to travel. Raising \$3,000 by participating in medical experiments, Johnny bought a one-way ticket to Thailand and decided he wanted to travel forever. He was willing to do whatever it would take to reconcile his twin desires of travel and making money.

It took years, and there were many detours and much trial and error. But his blog changed his life, and Johnny made his dream a reality. He has traveled to over 100 countries by the age of 30 and is earning more money than he knows what to do with. Thanks to his travel blog, he receives free stays in five-star resorts around the world, from the Maldives to Malta. He's also purchasing his own properties throughout Asia and Europe. *No half-measures. Commit to moving heaven and earth to make it happen, and eventually the world says "Alright, we'll let you have your way."*

7. Go niche and create high-price information products (page 302).

The marriage of information products (ebooks, membership training websites, podcasts, etc) and niche targeting is a match made in heaven. At a time when many digital books are selling for 99 cents on Amazon (or given away for free), my friend Steve is selling e-books to a specific niche for \$300 per unit. Information products targeted to large corporations with a ticket price of \$25,000 are not all that uncommon either. People within specific, well-defined niches are willing to pay high prices for products that will do the best at delivering the result they want.

At the same time, production costs are virtually zero - digitally delivered information products cost nothing to reproduce. There is one caveat - from online keyword research to driving traffic to your website to conversion optimization - your degree of success via this route is directly tied to your marketing savvy.

8. Become a small business consultant (page 309).

My friend Kevin has taught over 10,000 students how to succeed as a consultant offering marketing services to local businesses. The beauty of his model is that it requires very little capital or know-how to get started. By simply doing a little networking, you can pick up your first clients, collect a paycheck, and outsource most of the work.

I owe Kevin a personal "thanks" for something he taught me three years ago: you only need a handful of clients to earn a full-time income. When I heard this, I stopped wasting time with low value clients and leads, and focused on providing more value to the three or four most profitable ones. I built up these relationships, dramatically cut down my work hours by ending the pursuit of new leads, and booked a one-way ticket to Buenos Aires.

All of these entrepreneurs - and the specific strategies and techniques they use - are covered in greater detail in Part 4 of this book.

These are just a few examples of paths you can take. Most of these entrepreneurs are making revenues of **multiple five figures a month, some are making four**. All that matters is that each earns enough to enable their ideal lifestyle. They're all fully-fledged lifestyle designers with the freedom and options to live life on their own terms.

Each of these businesses were bootstrapped (started with the entrepreneur's own money); some for less than \$50. I'm not against borrowing money to fund creation of a product - but strongly feel that first-time entrepreneurs should not borrow, at least until they have some experience with both winning and losing under their belt.

For a "lifestyle business," it's important that you don't borrow money from professional investors dependent on you to turn their investment into 20 times what they gave you. A scenario where you have to take \$10,000 that you borrowed and turn it into \$200,000 will cripple your efforts at freedom before they begin, and the only potential exit is to sell the company in the distant future.

That's not the type of business that we're trying to create. If you need to borrow capital to fund a physical product, or an app, turn first to friends and family. Consider "crowd funding" with a website such as Kickstarter (kickstarter.com), or taking on a well-heeled partner with industry experience who can fund you. You could also license the idea to a large company while you collect paychecks, as outlined in Stephen Key's book "One Simple Idea."

The Company We Keep

Joe Polish is a business and marketing consultant who helps business owners go from being trapped in their business to being liberated by it. In his words, it's about creating a business that's "E.L.F" - Easy, Lucrative, and Fun - not one that's "H.A.L.F." - Hard, Annoying, Lame, and Frustrating.

A fully-functioning, location-independent business that supports your ideal lifestyle should be the first type - easy, lucrative, and fun. In the context of our location-

independent business model, we want to form a business with aspects of the former and few or none of the latter.

Characteristics of an E.L.F Business - a Business that Liberates

- You wake up excited to get to work each day. People you talk to are excited about your business, too, and want to support you.
- You have a vision and/or mission for the company that transcends your own need to make money.
- You have set a few high, reachable, and meaningful goals, and each day make significant progress towards realizing them.
- You have uniquely positioned your company in a way that makes competition irrelevant. Or your competitors become joint-venture partners.
- You develop highly-effective systems to put in place and get the right people to manage them.
- You're able to easily attract talented team members and partners.

Characteristics of a H.A.L.F Business - a Business that Ensnares

- You are overwhelmed.
- You spend your time putting out fires.
- You feel embarrassed to tell people what you do.
- You have to use motivational tricks to get yourself to start working.
- You struggle to attract talented people to your team or retain clientele.
- Your business or product is not unique, but just another commodity.

- You waste way too much time trying to woo new prospects and customers. You chase after unqualified leads. You go to lots of networking events and hand out business cards but nothing ever comes of it.
- You lose bids and proposals to competitors. You loathe your competition for X or Y reason (for undercutting you, charging rip off fees, trying to take your clients, performing low quality work that hurts the industry, and so on).
- You feel trapped by your business. You work 80 hours a week and wish you could work less, but don't know how. You want to earn more money, but don't know how to do that either.

E.L.F. vs. H.A.L.F. in Action: a Cautionary Tale

Siegfried and Roy were two of Las Vegas' most famed entertainers, creating the most-visited show in Vegas. For 13 years, they worked night in and night out, dazzling international at audiences the Mirage Resort and Casino with their performances involving white tigers and white lions.

Unfortunately for the pair, the run came to a tragic end when Roy was critically injured from a tiger bite in 2003 and rushed to a trauma center. The injury forced The Mirage to close the show, and 267 cast and crew members were laid off.

Meanwhile, at the same time Siegfried and Roy were performing with tigers, another popular performance group was appearing just across the street. They were a trio called the Blue Man Group. And they **had a secret** which allowed them to make a great deal of money while working far less than other Vegas entertainers.

What was it? The three original "blue men" set up their performance in a way that allowed them to replace themselves. They created a brand instead of using their personal names, and concealed their identities by covering their faces and bodies with blue paint. The guys who invented the group created a team of over thirty entertainers who could step in and perform in their place whenever they wanted them to. The three original blue men could go on vacation, or do as they like.

We can learn a lot from the Blue Man Group. The idea is clear: If we set up our businesses so that they aren't dependent on us, we'll be a lot better off down the road when it comes time to lessen our workload. We want to set up our business in a way that doesn't require us to work day in and day out for 13 years until a tragic accident cuts our career short. Certainly most of us aren't going to get mauled by any wild animals, but there is a great danger in making your business **focused** on you. For our purposes, we want to set up a business that will allow us to "replace ourselves" and still earn enough money to live as we like.

No one questions the talent or impact of Siegfried and Roy. They literally gave everything to their career and put smiles on the faces of millions. But the question I pose is this: would you rather set up an E.L.F. business like the Blue Man Group or a H.A.L.F. one like Siegfried and Roy?

Rules of Highly-Effective "Lifestyle Entrepreneurs"

I have a few rules which I feel are vital for success as a location-independent entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs come in all shapes, sizes, and personalities. Leadership and management styles vary. But I believe that these rules provide the most leverage for creating the type of business that we want.

Embrace Simplicity.

"A scientific theory should be as simple as possible, but no simpler."

-Albert Einstein

Keep things simple. In many cases, good enough is enough. You will often feel that another person cannot accomplish a task as well as you yourself could. Yet if the task is tedious and time-consuming (but not vital), then you need to have the discipline to let go of the reins.

Free Range Exploration vs. Firing Range Exploration

Simplicity is also about controlling the flow of information that enters into your brain - your "input" so that you can produce effective "output." Don't read the news or watch

it on television. Don't read a bunch of business books just for the sake of learning about business - this is not an effective control over input. This will only overwhelm you and stifle your ability to take the massive action needed to grow a business - and it consumes valuable time. Consulting a business book when you have a time-sensitive and specific task to complete - is an effective control of input. Remember that information that enters your brain but is not acted upon is wasted. It becomes disposed into the grey ether of your cerebral cortex, never to return.

When you require information on a topic but are lacking, practice what's called "firing-range exploration." Know the specific information that you need to find before you seek it. Specify the exact problem that needs to be solved, then consult books and other resources to find the correct answer.

At the same time, minimize the practice of "free-range exploration," such as aimless reading of blogs and books and other inputs that aren't directly relevant to your priorities. Close up all those open browser tabs if they aren't relevant to what you're working on. They consume valuable RAM on your computer and in your brain, too.

One Simple Exercise to Get you Thinking Differently

Here's a simple technique I've created for developing the habit of "firing-range exploration." Take a stack of business and advertising books and put them on a table. Read the title, back cover, inner flaps, and table of contents. Thumb through the pages very quickly and study any highlighted content: items in bold, pictures, diagrams, etc. so you can get a general idea of the contents of the book.

Now take a Post-It note and attach it to the cover. In one-sentence, write what the book is about. Then below that, write down 2 or 3 **specific** things, based upon your quick scan, that you want to take from the book. Then use the table of contents to find those specific things in the book, and you're done. Practice this simple exercise from time to time and you'll soon become an expert at quickly finding the information you need in a world **that's inundated with too much information.**

The Lazy Programmer

Create templates or borrow them from elsewhere and use them. If something is good,

don't reinvent the wheel. Repurpose and reuse it. Take the simplest path to get the job done. Don't waste time and resources to build things from scratch.

The concept of the **lazy programmer** is this: complete **the** task by writing the minimum amount of code that satisfies requirements and passes all tests. Right now, programmers around the world are embracing this philosophy. A powerful "open-source" movement is happening online where programmers are piggybacking off of each other's work to create powerful web experiences - and making the web more accessible to everyone. This is a very good thing. WordPress, an open-sourced web publishing platform, has brought powerful web features that were previously only accessible to corporations with large budgets and high technical expertise. Lazy programmer concept in action.

If you need a website, use themeforest.net to start with a theme. If you need to create business cards, go to graphicriver.net and buy a professional layout for five dollars. If you receive the same questions often, create an FAQ. If you send similar types of emails often, create templates for your e-mails and customize for the recipient.

Robert Greene, in "48 Laws of Power," puts it perfectly: "Use the wisdom, knowledge, and legwork of other people to further your own cause. Not only will such assistance save you valuable time and energy, it will give you a godlike aura of efficiency and speed... Never do yourself what others can do for you."

A "godlike aura of efficiency and speed" is vital for **lifestyle designers** to thrive and prosper.

Results Matter. Everything Else Matters Little.

*"There are in Europe many good generals,
but they see too many things at once."*

- Napoleon

Focus **only** on what's most effective at delivering results. This may seem obvious, but it's easy to forget when you're caught up in the grind of running a business. It is so easy to become completely overwhelmed - but only because we **allow** ourselves to.

The real reason why this happens? We fail to prioritize. We concentrate so hard on building our career at the expense of getting where we sought to be in the first place (if we had such a goal). The means somehow become the end. Rather than completing something meaningful, we leave it open ended because we become addicted to the struggle. We get caught up in the forest and never find our way out.

Don't let this happen to you. Life is too short.

Michael Phelps, the most-decorated Olympian of all time, has only one job: win gold medals. Michael Jackson, when he was alive, had one purpose: create hit records. Tiger Woods became a superstar athlete because he reached the tee to the green in the fewest amount of strokes, and did so better than anyone else. None of these individuals are what you would call "balanced." Phelps' mother, Debbie, said that Michael has always had a terrible case of hyperactive attention deficit disorder: in the classroom, "he couldn't focus on anything," she says.

Again, results are all that matters.

You may find yourself emotionally attached to something that is costing you dearly. People often lose a lot of money when they gamble or invest in stocks because they let emotions override common sense. Sadly, I speak from personal experience. I started my advertising business with a career goal to devote my entire life to becoming the one of the most knowledgeable and effective professionals in the advertising field. I read every book out there, and hoarded information thinking that if I just kept learning, success would come.

While my thirst to be the most knowledgeable in my field was admirable, my business (and life) suffered dearly as a result. It was like going to a buffet trying to eat everything instead of stopping once you are full. My goal was too abstract and I didn't begin with a specific end result in mind. The experience did, however, give me full respect for the concept of "Minimum Effective Dose" - the smallest input needed to produce a desired outcome. For example, if you want to boil water, then increasing the temperature above 212 degrees will just waste resources yet not produce a better result. Once it's boiling, it's boiling. Focus on the minimum amount of work to get the best results and no more.

If something works, keep doing it. Don't try to do everything at once.

If you begin with a clearly defined desired outcome from the start, you can then reverse engineer backwards in order to make it possible. If you find and hire a truly great business coach, this is what they will do: ask where you want to be, and then help you reverse engineer from there the steps that need to make it happen.

Josh Waitzkin, star of the book "In Search of Bobby Fisher," became a "chess prodigy" as a child. A master of "blitz chess," he could easily play - and win - "simuls" matches where he competed with up to 50 players simultaneously. How did a child become so much better than adult players? By reverse engineering from the end. His first teacher, Bruce Pandolfini cleared off the entire chess board during their first lesson except for three pieces: two kings and one pawn. First, he had to know the endgame: how to checkmate the king - and work backwards from there.

The real question is: how will YOU checkmate the market and win in your business? Focus on the endgame and work backwards from there.

Christopher Howard, author of "Turning Your Passions Into Profit," says to clearly imagine yourself at the end step, which he calls "strategic visioning." Imagine the **experience** of that end step, how you feel, and all the sights and sounds occurring in that moment. Let's say, for instance, that as a child you desired to be an astronaut. You probably imagined the feeling of weightlessness while floating around in space, looking down upon the lights of the earth's surface below. Imagine how you will feel once you successfully attained the result you seek, and believe in your ability to get there.

Velocity of Implementation

*"Even if you're on the right track,
you'll get run over if you just sit there." - Will Rogers*

You can't start a fire by rubbing two sticks together **s-l-o-o-o-w-l-y...**

Embracing simplicity and effectiveness is not enough; we must move to quickly implement. The faster we execute, the greater our chances to reach our goals.

Ideas are commonplace; execution is rare. There is no one path to success, and everyone's path is different. Yet speed of implementation is one of the common characteristics that separates highly effective doers from dreamers. To effectively design our lives we must get things done in the present, not develop the habit of deferring things to the future.

The Easy Way is the Hard Way

You will not be able to *create* a successful business that supports your ideal lifestyle by working a few hours a week. If you work hard to build a solid foundation, apply effective principles of management, and build your company so that it liberates you rather than traps you, then you can build it up to the point where it requires a minimal degree of *management* to operate.

I spent a year and half traveling over three continents while working about 10 hours a week (about two hours a day, on average). It was because I worked my butt to get that point, and had assembled all of the necessary pieces in place. I worked to build rock-solid relationships with highly valuable clients, I put the running of operations in good hands of people I trusted, and created processes that optimized all aspects of the business. The two hours that I spent working each day were highly focused, performing high leverage tasks. I was working **on** my business, rather than **in** it. I had created my "High Leverage Performance Chart" (as described in the Productivity chapter), and knew exactly how to align my strengths with the highest priority business activities.

I tell you all of this to drive the point home. The name of the game is not to create some business that you don't care about and let Indian VA's run it for you. When you start any business, you should be willing to devote at least 5 years of your life to it. If you create a half-assed company, you will get half-assed results. By the same token, if you create your business solely to pursue your own interests, you will face an uphill struggle.

If you are lucky, you might get some results at first, but if the foundation is flimsy it simply cannot last. Pretty soon you will need to come up with something else. In the long run, you are never truly free. The easy path turns out to be the most difficult.

I've consulted with several people who have tried to start a business, and a few months later they haven't made enough money. They decided that the business was a bad idea so they began a new one. A few more months pass and they are back in the same place. Nothing's happened.

The more effort you put into your business, the more freedom it will reward you with, so put in the effort to create a business you can be proud of. Think about how you can serve the world and its interests, not just your own. Create something that you would be thrilled to work 80-hours a week on, if necessary. Commit to it for the long-haul. If you plan to start a blog, for example, don't do it just so you can replace your job. Do it because you love writing. It will prove to be far more rewarding.

Validate Your Ideas

It's great to tell people to follow their passion and do what they love. But here's the million dollar question: Can you make money doing it? Or rather, will people pay you for it?

The answer is 100% yes, but only if the answer to this question is yes: ***Is your idea any good?*** Does it have commercial value? Before you find your first 3 million customers, or your first 300 - find your first three. Before you create a product, before you jump on social media, before you set up a website.

What we don't want is to get married to an idea if it's not a particularly good one. In advertising there's a famous saying by David Ogilvy: "Unless your advertising is built upon a BIG idea, it will pass like a ship in the night." The same principle is true when you start your business - if it's is not built on a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night. Too many people waste 10 or 20 years building a business around an idea that wasn't very good in the first place. And so they struggle. They work long hours for many years but the business never really grows beyond themselves. It's a very sad place to be.

When I started my career I joined a "business referral group," where at least half of the members were over 50. Instead of retiring they had to attend these meetings at 7 AM each Thursday so that the lights in their businesses would stay on. They were overworked and burnt out, but dependent on these personal referrals because they

didn't have any good marketing systems in place. H.A.L.F. business in action? **Most definitely!**

Recently I had an idea which I thought was brilliant. It was an idea for a physical product that could combine two other products in a unique way. It was a product that I myself would love to have. I told the guys in my mastermind group about it. I asked a dozen acquaintances who fit the ideal target market: would you be willing to spend \$50 on this? The answer was a resounding yes, and a few people told me that they couldn't believe that no one was already doing it. They also suggested friends of theirs who would buy them too. Now I'm toying with the notion of licensing the idea to an established company while collecting royalty checks from the beach in Bali. Anything is possible.

In that last paragraph I just suggested two outlets for validating your business ideas - start by asking friends and acquaintances who fit the market that the product would be created for. And as soon as you can, create a mastermind group and invite the smartest and most ambitious people you know to join. These masterminds will prove an invaluable breeding ground for business ideas.

There are many other outlets for testing the viability of your idea. Google is a great place to start research. Are there existing companies in the market? What is their price point? Check their websites, and try to get information on their customers: what market do they serve? Can you create a similar product and cater it to a different niche?

There's a common saying marketers throw around that goes like this: "Keep the back-end generic, and **niche** the front-end." What that means is you can take the same product and tailor the marketing and packaging to different niches, thereby (in essence) creating a new product. Marketing author Dan Kennedy offers us the example of dogs. Rather than create a general product aimed at all dogs, create specialized ones catering only to certain breeds of dogs. Those niche products will be far more valuable in the eyes of dog owners.

Another way to research is to use Google Adword's free "Keyword Planner" to see what people are searching for. This will give you an idea whether a market of potential customers exists. Other great websites to perform research include Quora (quora.com) and Yahoo! Answers (answers.yahoo.com). You can enter a keyword or select a topic,

and browse questions that people are asking. If, for example, you wanted to create an e-book teaching an awesome new diet you've developed where you lose weight by eating only blueberries and cashews, you could start browsing common "diet" and "nutrition" topics on Yahoo! Answers. This is one easy way to come face to face with your prospects without spending a dime: these are people facing problems you could solve.

If you're selling a product to a business niche (which is VERY profitable), a great resource is LinkedIn Groups. When I created my WordPress Design Institute, a membership training website, I was targeting graphic and web designers who wanted to learn WordPress, which was a very hot skill at the time. I first created a discussion on the AIGA group, with membership of over 80,000 graphic designers. I asked several questions, such as:

What's your biggest frustration with Wordpress? What have you tried so far that hasn't worked for you? What would you be willing to do to learn a skill like Wordpress: buy a book, take an online course, go back to school, etc? If you could have one question answered about Wordpress what would it be?

Just that one post alone garnered over 40 in-depth responses from my target audience, which allowed me to: confirm market demand, craft the course curriculum, and create a much better product than if I hadn't performed that simple bit of research first. It took me five minutes and cost nothing.

Idea Extraction

This process is called "Idea Extraction," where you go out and ask potential customers what they want so that you can create a winning product for them. Dane Maxwell, founder of "The Foundation" teaches a wonderful and comprehensive course on Idea Extraction. If you visit the website Mixergy (mixergy.com) you can hear Dane performing Idea Extraction with the owner of a pool cleaning company. Within 45 minutes, the pool guy is telling Dane that he would happily pay \$500 a month for a software solution to one of the problems they've identified on the call. The solution turned out to be something pretty simple that could be built in a matter of weeks, which would also be of interest to hundreds of other pool cleaning companies across the country.

In a nutshell, Dane's process goes a little like this: pick a niche, arrange phone interviews with top professionals in that niche, figure out what problems they have that can be solved, and then pick one pain that many seem to be experiencing that you can develop a solution for.

Once you've got the idea, you then go and "pre-sell" it to these professionals in order to validate the commerciality of the idea, create a minimal viable product, launch, and then scale up.

Risks and Pitfalls

"Tenacity is probably the most important attribute in an entrepreneur. It's the person who never gives up - who never accepts "no" for an answer. The world is filled with doubters who say that things can't be done and then pronounce after the fact that they 'knew it all along.'" -Mark Suster

Starting your own business is the ultimate vehicle to freedom. Whatever you want to have or do in life, creating a profitable business is most likely the best way to get it.

But to truly succeed as an entrepreneur will require you to have a firm, unwavering commitment. No matter how long it takes, regardless of what insurmountable obstacles you face. You have to be tenacious.

We fall down so we can learn to pick ourselves back up. And you will fall down again and again and must pick yourself up again and again. You must have something deep inside of you that's driving you onward. Goals become impotent over time but your mission and purpose stay.

Whenever you take the next step to do something new and different, you're going to have to shed layers of your old life. There's no getting around that. Sometimes this is going to come in the way of friends, acquaintances, and coworkers. I'm often very paranoid about who I tell whenever I have some big idea for a new direction I want to take for fear that people will come out and try to discourage me. My father invented the graphite golf shaft and founded the successful company **Aldila**. The company was very

successful, and employs over 1,400 people today.

But way back in 1972 when he had his idea, many people told him it wouldn't work. The cost of his graphite shaft was \$40 per unit, while the cost of a steel shaft was only \$1. What the naysayers didn't realize was that the average golfer would happily shell out an extra \$40 for a lighter shaft that would add 15 yards to their drive. Jim Flood went on to have enormous success with the graphite shaft and several other of his creations, and became known in golf circles as the "Thomas Edison of modern golf."

The naysayers will tell you: "Don't take risks. Be happy with what you have. The timing is not good. Save your money. Wait out the bad economy."

These thoughts are poison, and you must safeguard yourself against them. Discouragement can kill a great idea as sure as sunlight kills vampires. A true entrepreneur possesses a "reality distortion field" so that they see things as better than they are. Be realistic, but cautiously optimistic. Look at things - and people - for their potential. And remember that every challenge carries with it the seed of great opportunity.

Whether you like it or not, starting a business becomes your lifestyle. You will gravitate to other entrepreneurs and may find it hard to be friends with people who aren't entrepreneurs. Those close to you will view you as an anomaly because they don't understand. They can't understand if they haven't become an entrepreneurs themselves. Once you attain the entrepreneurial drive it can be very difficult to "turn it off." You may struggle to sleep many nights.

But in spite of the risks and costs - it's so worth it.

In the next few chapters we'll cover, step-by-step, the strategies and techniques you can use to set up your own successful company.

12

Cultivate Relationships, Make Your First Sale, and Build a Brand

Growing the Roots

Once you've followed the process in the previous chapter to set up your business and create your product, it's time to start hustling! You need to get yourself out there. All businesses are built on relationship building. As you build relationships through your business activities, you can use real-time feedback to tailor your strategy and build a brand around the company.

You have to get out and talk to people, and the best way to start selling your product or business is in-person. Before you invest in any marketing activities you should really understand what people think about your product and business, what motivates them, how you can help them reach their goals or fix their pain, and what they'd be willing to pay for it.

Regardless of the type of business you start, you should always keep one eye focused on your main priority - earning a profit. The first dollar in particular is the most important. Find the most direct path to getting there. If you're not earning money, then you don't have a business, you have a hobby. But the first payment that you receive is the most important. It validates the commerciality of your idea, and gives you positive reinforcement to continue what you're doing.

In the ideal scenario, you should already know people within your network - friends, family, acquaintances who would be willing to become your first customers. Start telling everyone what you do. Do it until it gets old. And keep doing it. You never know what opportunities may come about as a result.

In the early days, I worked a lot out of coffee shops and frequently had friendly conversations with other laptop-toting remote workers. By telling them who I was and what I did, I was able to build a lot of relationships this way. One lady I met at a cafe named Jessica became a great mentor, and referred me to a friend whose family owned a flooring company and a vineyard, and they would go on to become my best and most loyal clients. Another great way to pick up clients is through working out of shared work spaces.

The simple act of sharing with people what you do is also a great way to learn new skills. When I was starting out my digital advertising company, I had to learn a lot of new skills on the fly and bring services to the market quickly. When Google Maps was just kicking off, I learned the mechanics through online webinars and was among the first class of internet marketers to offer Google Maps optimization as a service. My first client was the owner of a pizza restaurant that I frequented. We had a wonderful pre-existing relationship, I told him what I was learning, and offered to try it out with his business. He had no reason to say no.

The work took maybe two hours to perform, and afterwards my confidence in my ability dramatically increased. I had proof that the service I created worked, as my client shot up to the top of Google's map rankings. And I signed up a hundred paying clients after that. After the first few tries, I systematized the process and it became a highly profitable front-end service that helped grow my business.

An Easy Way to Establish Your Client Base

I'm not in the web design and internet marketing business any more. But if I planned to start this type of business again, one of the first things I would do to gain clients quickly at low-cost would be to join a business referral group.

The surest way for a freelancer or small business owner to grow their business at a low customer acquisition cost is through word-of-mouth referrals. The problem is: how can you earn referrals when you don't have clients in the first place? It's a chicken and egg scenario. Fortunately, there are literally thousands of business referral groups all around the world that are welcoming and very easy to join, even if you're just starting out.

Small business owners are incredibly supportive of one another, and joining a referral group is surprisingly easy. You could start by Googling “business referral group” in your city or in your target location. There are also international organizations with chapters around the world, such as BNI (Business Networking International) and LeTip. The beauty of these business referral groups is that it makes **very easy** for you to pick up clients even when you’re just starting out. You don’t need to be an expert in marketing or sales to pick up clients this way, so it’s a great place to turn to if you want to make the leap, file your two-weeks notice, and start your own practice.

How it Works

These referral groups are open to anyone with a business to join, but they generally only allow one member of each business type (though there are sometimes some grey areas). If you’re a back-end web developer, for example, there may be a conflict with a front-end programmer already in the group because the other members don’t know the difference between a front-end programmer (HTML, CSS, Photoshop), and a back-end programmer (PHP, JS, etc.). On the other hand, it’s not uncommon for a referral group to have six members in marketing-related fields.

Do a little research on groups and chapters online, and find 4 or 5 viable options that work for you. Each group will have its own administrative board made up of members, usually including a president, vice-president, and a membership person. Check the website of the group for contact information and shoot a friendly e-mail over to one of these individuals, briefly describing yourself and expressing an interest in more information about the group. A phone call is sometimes better, because one of these individuals will “sponsor” you at your first meeting, so it’s a good idea to build a degree of rapport with him or her beforehand.

Regardless of the group you look into joining, each of these groups function in basically the same way. Once a week at the same time, all members meet for breakfast or lunch at a restaurant. Each person introduces themselves, mentions what they do, and shares any personal referrals they have for other members that week. Each week, one or two members will give a more in-depth presentation about their business and that person becomes the “target” whom all the other members are encouraged to refer or help in some way.

Joining a business referral group is one of the fastest ways for you to pick up clients immediately. It's certainly not a stretch to say that you'll be approached by other members interested in doing business with you after your very first meeting. If the first meeting goes well and your business specialty does not conflict with that of any other member, you'll have the option to join as a regular member. Membership fees are usually in the range of a few hundred dollars a year, which includes the price of food at the restaurant. Some groups also allow you to sign up on a quarterly-basis (three months) and pay fees in smaller installments.

Okay, that's all great, but you may be thinking: why join a business referral group that you have to attend each week if you're after the goal of location-independence? Because everyone starts somewhere, and establishing your client base through personal relationships is the easiest and most cost-effective approach to use in the beginning. A business referral group is also a far better approach to networking than going to general "for everyone" networking events, or even networking events catered to your industry. I was an active member in a club for advertising professionals for two years and never got one single client from it. You'll be much more likely to pick up clients in a group that's specifically oriented towards sending you business referrals.

Once you get your first set of clients, you're well on your way to achieving freedom. All you have to do now is take these clients and nurture the relationship for the long-term. If you prove yourself indispensable, and if you develop back-end services to offer existing customers over the long-term, you can establish a rock-solid client base within your country that will continue to support you and your business regardless of your location. International groups such as BNI and LeTip also allow you to transfer to different chapters in other cities. If you join a BNI group in Boston for 6 months and decide to relocate to Bangkok, there are a number of BNI chapters that you can contact in Thailand before you ever leave home. If you decide to make a big move, this can give you extra peace of mind because you can access an additional pool of potential clients and a supportive network even if you relocate halfway across the world.

You must focus on **active income** before **passive income**. That means getting out there, meeting people, building relationships, and providing so much value that you become indispensable.

Finding Clients Through Social Media

Real-life, face-to-face relationships are a great place to begin building a client base. As you gain experience and expertise, you can also begin to build your brand online.

As it turns out, Facebook can be an excellent place to pick up freelance clientele. There are millions of private and public “Facebook Groups” within various niches that you can provide services and products to. For example, when I began travel blogging, I joined several travel blogger groups.

Time and again, these bloggers kept posting questions about WordPress. Since I had worked in WordPress for several years, I knew the answers to the questions and began providing advice and support to anyone who needed it. There were often common problems that surfaced. For example many of these bloggers complained about the slow loading time of their site.

I easily picked up a number of clients through these Facebook groups, and as they noticed their websites loading much faster, they began to vouch for me within these same groups. More and more people contacted me for work, and they would send me more referrals than I could handle.

There are a number of these groups for virtually any niche imaginable. The beauty of Facebook groups is that they are an under-utilized source of leads. Just like clients you meet through real-life connections, you have virtually exclusive access to these pools of potential leads without a lot of competitors butting in. Think of what type of niche might be a profitable client for you and a valuable service you can provide to them. Don't overtly promote yourself or advertise within these groups - just be helpful, tout your expertise, and many of them will come to you outright and ask if they can hire you.

There are other social media and Web 2.0 outlets (such as LinkedIn) where you can apply the same strategy. But Facebook is the kingpin of them all, because it's the place where people spend the most time when they're online. It's important to invest your time in places where you'll get the biggest return, so I advise you stick to Facebook when applying this strategy.

Brand Building

"Stand for something and you'll never stand alone."

-Gary Bencivenga

Derek Halpern, the popular blogger from "Social Triggers," says that you need to keep repeating your message: who you are, and what you help people to do, over and over again, until you get sick of it. You have to consciously shape what people think about you and what you are known for, and burn it into people's minds. It is the only way to cut through the clutter.

But on a deeper level: too few of us know ourselves exactly what we stand for. What I mean is, most of us don't put too much thought into how we want to position ourselves or the type of brand that we want to represent.

To create a great brand for your business, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What do your ideal prospects want?
2. What's the main problem they have that you can solve?
3. What's your method for solving that problem?
4. What is your biggest strength?

Come up with the answers to these, and be super specific. Then combine them into a short message, no more than 2 or 3 sentences. You're now well on your way to creating a strong brand that will cut through the clutter and resonate with the types of people you want to attract. And you now have a personal mission for your business. Everything you do going forward, in a marketing sense, should be aligned with this mission.

13

Closing the Deal

How to Be a Highly Persuasive Entrepreneur

You have to sell something in order to have a business, even if it's just selling yourself. You have to be able to persuade people, to win them over to your cause, or to try your product. If you can't - or won't - then before long you will have to scramble back to corporate America seeking re-employment. So much for giving them the bird.

Selling doesn't have to be hard. And you don't need to buy a bunch of notecards to memorize techniques or repeat a bunch of affirmations. I believe that selling goes hand in hand with ***being an influential and persuasive person***. Don't think of selling as something that ***you do***. It's something that's integrated into who you are - ***especially*** for an entrepreneur. Persuasion is a skill that's completely learnable - if you make a conscious effort towards ***becoming a persuasive person***.

Donald Trump, Tony Robbins, Richard Branson, Steve Jobs - they all have one thing in common, they're all masters at persuasion. It's who ***they are***. The best actors don't "play a role." They ***become*** their character. Therefore sales ability is not so much about learning sales "gimmicks" but becoming the type of person that ***doesn't need to try***.

Persuasion is not about manipulating people, it's about empowering people to arrive at a positive outcome. You aren't out to take money, you're delivering value. Shift your focus to reflect this belief. Maintain a positive inner dialogue. Default to liking people. Forgive those who have wronged you in the past. Don't view the world as a kill-or-be-killed place. Believe that people are good. And even good people do bad things sometimes for reasons we don't understand.

If you integrate these principles into your character and provide abundant value to people, winning others over to your position and closing deals becomes easy. There's no limit to the heights that a persuasive, charismatic entrepreneur can reach! Of course, it also helps to know the psychology behind persuasion, which I'll go over now.

Techniques to Become More Persuasive

Get People to Open Up

Imagine that you're speaking face to face with a potential client. What do you think is most interesting to him? Do you think it's you, your company, your product, or something else? Nope. The other person is most interested in himself. And so right from the start of any conversation, your focus should be on the other person and getting him to open up. And the easiest way to get him to open up is to ***show an active interest in him.***

Whenever you reach out to someone to set up a face-to-face meeting, record a podcast, or anything else, spend at least one or two hours researching and reading up on everything you can about that person and their business. Knowing so much about the other person before you even meet them gives you tremendous leverage to enchant and delight them. People who start the conversation off cool and indifferent to you and your company can completely open up over the course of the conversation and become trusted confidantes, mentors, or clientele.

There's a saying that a person "doesn't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." Too many people don't really care, or listen. They wait quietly for their turn to speak. Leil Lowndes, a master communications expert and author of "How to Instantly Connect With Anyone," believes that there is one critical factor that separates a successful CEO from a man of similar ability who struggles to get by. The successful person effortlessly builds strong, stable relationships through "emotional prediction" - the ability to be able to anticipate another person's feelings by placing himself in their shoes.

Persuasion dynamics that apply to face-to-face interaction apply to marketing through media, too. In your website or advertising, focus from the get-go on your prospect and his or her needs. Don't fill your header with a huge logo and YOUR information. Start

the conversation off the right way by focusing on the visitor and what you can do for them. Remember - there's a real person behind that iPad screen.

"Like" - the Magic Word that Built an Online Empire

A couple of years ago my ex-girlfriend wanted to bring me out to a club for her friend's birthday. I was to meet several of her friends for the first time, but I was tired and wasn't feeling particularly social that evening. So I planned in advance to keep things simple: I told each person I talked to that I **liked** them. It was as simple as listening to them talk, and saying: "You know what, you're pretty neat, I like you." A few days later my girlfriend told me what a "hit" I was, and how her girlfriends were gushing with nice things to say about me.

What do you think people are after every time they post an update to their Facebook page? For "Likes!" I know several friends who deliberately write over-the-top posts each time they update their Facebook network so that they can garner more "likes" on the social media site. The desire to be loved, accepted, and liked is a lot stronger than most of us realize. For many of us, it's a core fundamental principle that drives everything we do.

Asking the Right Questions

Liking people applies to business interactions, too - because businesses are run by **people**, too. Invite others to tell you about themselves and their life. These are called "Feel Good Questions" because they lead the other person into a conversation that makes them feel good, and they'll associate those good feelings with you.

Again, all it takes is an active interest in them and their business. You can ask questions like: "How did you get started in such-and-such business? What do you enjoy the most about what you do?"

Rarely do people ask good, thoughtful, questions. We all too often default to over-used phrases such as **"How are you?"** A phrase uttered in so many situations where the person asking doesn't really care how you are. How many times has a grocery clerk asked you **"Did you find everything okay?"**

We've become numb to the senseless redundancy of boring, bad questions. Forcing bad questions at someone is more akin to an interrogation than a genuine two-way conversation. When you make the effort to ask good questions, it's always appreciated.

How to Get Anyone to Agree With You - The "Yes Ladder"

Persuasion comes down to one thing: getting others to say "yes," or better still: "Hell, yeah!" to a proposal, an idea, or a request. So if you want to become persuasive, it's obvious right? Practice getting people to say "yes!" Asking questions is a powerful way to get people to open up.

But a powerful persuasion technique involves consciously structuring statements and questions in a way that makes the other person agree with you. When Steve Jobs declared to an audience that the Macintosh was "Insanely great!" who would dare disagree with him? I have a friend named Peter who is one of the most persuasive people I have ever seen. One of the reasons why is because he often ends his statements with: "Would you agree?" The other person is almost always inclined to respond with "yes."

Expert car salesmen understand the power of the word "yes." They thrive on it. They use it on unwitting buyers as soon as they walk into the showroom. They'll start their prospects on what's called a "Yes ladder," by asking questions that are impossible to say no to, such as: "It sure is lovely weather today, isn't it?" Each "yes" the person gives leads to a bigger "yes," and before long they're agreeing to take a test drive. Massive rapport building happens, and before long they ask a "closing question" and the prospect agrees to a "puppy-dog close," where they drive the car home to try for a while without any risk.

Solicitors outside of grocery stores often apply this technique too: instead of saying, "Would you like to donate to such and such organization?" they start by saying "Do you think climate change is a threat?" If the person agrees, they then ask two or three other questions, each a bit more bold than the last.

If you want to get someone to say "Yes" to a large request, such as making a donation, it's far more effective to gradually work your way up to that point. Start with a small, ambiguous question and structure each subsequent question in a way that makes it easy for them to agree. Then when someone does say "yes," reward them. This creates a

“positive feedback loop” and reinforces the behavior.

Here is how the cycle works:

1. You prompt the person to answer
2. They say “yes”
3. You appreciate their agreement and use it as your reason for moving the relationship further (towards a desired outcome)
4. Repeat steps 1-3 with subsequent questions

Because they’ve responded yes to three or four of your previous questions, you and the other person have arrived at a state of near-total consensus. This is the art of rapport building. You’ve also established the law of **commitment and consistency** - a so-called “weapon of influence” - which observes that people act consistently with the things they commit to, as breaking commitments is considered a social taboo. You are now in a position to ask a closing question - and get the “Yes” that you have been working towards.

Stand for Something

One of the most best ways to become a persuasive person is to have big dreams and goals. To reach a really big audacious goal requires a lot of support from other people - if you share these goals openly, you’ll find that people will usually help you out. But don’t be boastful; be humble. Say - “This is my dream to do such and such. I’m excited, but I’m a bit nervous as well. And even if I don’t accomplish such and such, I just want to make sure I give it my absolute best.” And then tell people ways that they can help you make this dream come true. Let them know that whatever they decide to do is fine, but if they lend support it would really help you out.

People are drawn to follow and support others who have a mission, something that’s driving them. If you have a “why” that is very compelling, or a drive built from a strong conviction, then others can’t help but be drawn to your cause. Too many of us follow safe paths in life, adopt the status quo, and don’t rock the boat. So, on a core level, think about what your biggest, most audacious goals are and strive ceaselessly for them - you’ll attract believers along the way.

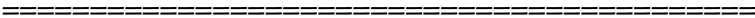
Every Sale is the Same

In the past I've trained graphic designers and photographers on how to close deals with clients. Many of them resent dealing with clients and would probably prefer avoiding them entirely to stick to what they do best. Designers want to design graphics. Photographers want to take photographs. They feel as though the work in their portfolio should speak for itself so that they don't have to.

The most common struggle is that the individual simply doesn't know how to close deals consistently. They can promote themselves well, they can do great work, they can create a great portfolio, but they lack the understanding of how to actually close the deal. Without the close, you have nothing.

Jordan Belfort, the infamous penny stock broker from the "Wolf of Wall Street," is an authority when it comes to closing sales. He explains that there is a "straight-line" between the open and the close. During a sales interaction between you and a potential prospect, the conversation will often wander all over the place, deviating from that line. Once it gets too far from the straight-line, the conversation goes "out of bounds" and you've lost the deal. It's your job to bring the conversation back and keep the interaction moving forward on the straight-line towards the close.

Out of bounds



Open ----- **Close**



Out of bounds

Reaching the "close" during a sales conversation starts with knowing the outcome - knowing exactly what you hope to achieve before you begin. You must then control the direction of the conversation. The prospect will try to go off of this line during the interaction, but you have to bring him back.

What moves the interaction forward on this line? Two things: you ask the right questions and build a strong relationship by creating massive rapport. As long as the conversation stays within the boundaries, you are in control of the sale. But if the conversation veers off the line, the sales interaction veers out of control and you lose the deal. You will have a good chance to close the deal if they love your product and love you, and trust you and your company.

On occasion, people can love you and your product and still remain “on the fence” where they are hesitant to take action. Should you pursue these deals or not? It depends on you. It’s perfectly fine to offer product but not pursue a hesitant lead - it saves time. Do you have a stable client base already? If not, then you should be persistent, patient, and tactfully overcome any remaining obstacles or objections to help the prospect take action to improve their situation.

Manage Objections, Close the Deal

Managing Objections

One of the biggest mistakes that my graphic designer friends made is, at the first sign of sales (or price) resistance, they would get defensive. They didn’t extricate their ego from their work, and took rejection personally. Because they viewed objections the wrong way, they often lost potential deals.

My friend, who is a very funny guy, likes to think that all women want him. And because he **believes** this way, it often becomes true, even when it wasn’t true in the beginning. Women will throw out **tests** at a man to see if he is “real.” If a guy believes in his product (himself) and has the right attitude, he can overcome these tests. Sales interactions work the same way: if you have a great product, **believe** that the prospect already wants it and it will improve their life for the better. Believe as my friend does. If you have confidence in yourself and the product and a positive attitude, you can break down sales resistance. A prospect will throw out **tests** in the form of objections, but if you believe in the product and have the right attitude, you can overcome these objections.

Don’t treat objections as sign of disinterest and give up. Instead, treat objections as a question, as a request for more information. The best way to handle an objection is to

compliment it. Listen and respect the objection. Say, “That’s a great question, I’m glad you brought it up.” Then answer the question with a question of your own. The goal is to understand the **real reason** behind their resistance to buying so that you can satisfy the issue to their satisfaction.

If they object to the price, for instance, find out the reason why they can’t afford it. Say, “That’s a great question. Does it seem to cost more than you expected to pay?” The better you understand their situation, the stronger your negotiating position. By asking them to voice the objection, you can choose to act in a way that satisfies this objection. You can structure a deal that addresses the needs of the client: such as creating a deferred payment-plan where they pay in affordable installments, or the “puppy dog” close - try the product before you buy. If the product delivers, and you provide excellent service after the sale, the client will recognize the value and be glad they purchased from you.

If, in another scenario, a prospect is unsure about your ability to deliver on the service, you could offer to provide a testimonial letter. Even if they don’t need it the fact that you are willing to offer it can get them over the fence. Many smart businesspeople send what’s called a “shock and awe package” which positions themselves as an authority, allaying any doubts about the salesperson. Using the power of association (which we’ll cover later in this chapter) is another potent way to overcome resistance.

Sometimes your potential client will have an objection but they won’t tell you. If you encounter resistance but are unsure of the reason, you could ask. In a friendly manner, say: “Excuse me John, there seems to be some **question in your mind** that’s causing you to hesitate about going ahead right now. Do you mind if I ask what it is?”

When you treat an objection as a question, you should then respond with a question of your own that moves the interaction further down the “straight line” until all objections are satisfied and you are ready to ask a “closing question.” To ask a closing question, first respect and acknowledge their objections, and then assure them that you understand and appreciate how they feel. The structure of a closing question is as follows: “Mr. Prospect, it’s always important that you get your money’s worth. If I could assure you that you would completely satisfied with this product, would you be prepared to go ahead with this?”

Follow-Up

It's not uncommon for a sales cycle to take several months. Some relationships are nurtured for years until the relationship blossoms into a legitimate business prospect. Following up properly - and in a way that moves the interaction further down the "straight-line" and not "out of bounds" - is extremely important. Yet so few people follow up, why? We give up easily, and we don't know how to properly advance the discussion down the "straight line," so we get stuck.

If you meet with a potential client but fail to close, you can follow-up by thanking the person for their time and interest and ask questions to keep the dialogue moving forward: "Does everything make sense to you so far?" or "Do you have any questions or concerns that I haven't covered?"

Despite your best efforts, some deals will be lost. There are often outside factors that are beyond your control. It's still a great idea to keep in contact regularly and "touch" people with communication several times a year - just to say hello and wish them well. It's always nice when someone cares enough to keep in contact. A little note or a call every now and then to let someone know that you're thinking of them is always appreciated. It may lead to opportunities, but whether it does or not doesn't matter. It's simply about being human. And humans appreciate a little warmth, a little empathy, a little note every now and then to know that someone cares and is thinking about them.

Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement

There is both good and bad to being too dependent on the success (and the income) of your business. If your entire livelihood depends on the welfare of your business, then it will light a fire of urgency to succeed at any cost. This is the strategy Cortez and his conquistadores followed when they burned their ships upon landing in Mexico. The only options are conquest or defeat. On the other hand, placing all of your eggs in one basket puts you in a weak position from a negotiating standpoint.

In any negotiation, the party who cares the least wins. And the key to caring less is having options. So if you are too dependent on landing one or two deals that will make or break your success - chances are you will lose them. You must plan for contingencies

and figure out what other alternatives are available should a deal fail to be reached. This is known as **BATNA - best alternative to a negotiated agreement**. Not only does having a backup plan give you a safety net, it also gives you greater leverage when negotiating with a client. If you have options, then you can be prepared to walk away. If you have none, then you'll be forced to accept what you get. You'll end up taking on jobs and clients that you don't like instead of getting the ones that you deserve.

If you're a freelancer, for example, you may get lots of leads but no guarantee that they will hire you - and if your contracts are large, it can be a long time until a deal closes, and even after all that time it may fall through anyway. The career trajectory of a freelancer is called "feast or famine" for good reason! Think about what alternative options you can take if the deals you're counting on fall through. Before you start applying yourself to the sales process for your business and begin courting customers, take a moment first to write down a list of potential backup options.

Do you have junk in the garage you can sell to help keep you afloat for a few months? Can you work out a remote work arrangement with your old boss until business picks up? Can you borrow money from a friend? Can you rent out your space on Airbnb? Lease out your car on GetAround.com? Simply knowing that you have access to options can eliminate much of the stress of being an entrepreneur and help you sleep better at night.

In a few chapters, we'll learn the process through which we can make BATNA all but irrelevant. But when you're starting out and first establishing a client base, it can be a while before you earn enough to quit your job.

How to Create High Value Offers That Persuade People to Act

Perhaps the most important thing that will determine whether your business endeavors fly high or flop depends on how well you create compelling offers. Getting people to take action is very tough. And getting people to open their wallet and hand you their hard-earned cash **is the single most difficult thing for a business to do**. Everything depends upon the offers that you create, and the value you present. In this chapter I'll teach you the best secrets I've discovered to create killer offers so that you can sell your products profitably. In fact, you may even begin to enjoy the process, as I do!

Cheese or Whiskers?

Psychologically, none of us want to feel that someone is trying to **take** something from us. If you take this approach, like you're out to "get something" from people, it will backfire. Think of a cat trying to catch a mouse. The mouse goes out looking for cheese. But the instant it detects a cat's whiskers, it panics!

Your customers are looking for cheese, too, because they have wants and needs just like everyone else. But the moment they detect that you're trying to take their money instead of providing them what they're looking for, they run away! Never show your "whiskers." If you communicate that you're more focused on your own wants and needs, then your offer is destined to fail. It does not matter if you have a great product that can really help them. You can't sell your products profitably this way. What matters to your customer are his own interests, and we need to offer value that serves our client's interests so well that they can't possibly refuse us.

So this is the right mindset to take instead, and will set the stage for everything that is to follow. This is one of the biggest - and most profitable - secrets I have ever learned in business.

Make the customer feel like they're pulling one over on you.

Huh? Read that one again.

This is the single easiest "technique" to sell anything. Whenever you offer value that far exceeds a fair price, you've hit the sweet spot. That's where you start. Always try to create situations where the customer wins. If presented with a choice, take the customer's side. Set things up so that you receive the short end of the stick. It's profitable for customers, and it's profitable for you. The good deeds you do will come back to you in waves of appreciation and loyalty.

Practice the habit of adding value to people's lives. Open doors for strangers, help the busboy to clean up the table, call up friends you haven't talked to in a while to check in and ask them about their lives. Become the type of person that adds value and improves other people's lives without the expectation of anything in return. This will ultimately shape the way you see the world, and before long creating valuable offers will become second nature.

Help Others, Help Yourself

Claude C. Hopkins, one of the pioneers of modern advertising and author of the classic "Scientific Advertising," attributes most of his success (and that of business at large) to **servicing other people's interests**. Hopkins worked under Albert Lasker, another leading figure in the days of early advertising, and owner of Lord & Thomas agency, for 17 years.

During their relationship, Hopkins never failed to put Lasker's interests before his own. Hopkins volunteered his time to train other copywriters in the agency, and held meetings to provide advice and direction with their problems. He also wrote standardized guidebooks for the agency as a whole. Since Hopkins agreed to work solely on commissions and received no salary, the extra effort he volunteered in no way served himself, because he received no pay. When Lasker left for Washington D.C.

to serve under the President Harding, Hopkins took over duties as president of the agency and received no wages. Lasker trusted Hopkins implicitly, letting him write his own contracts. His trust in Hopkins was so strong that he often signed them without reading.

In his autobiography he writes:

"That was one great factor in my career - the confidence I engendered. At one time Mr. Lasker made me a trustee under his will. Again and again I refused to accept from him more than I felt I earned. About the only disagreements I had with Mr. Lasker referred to his desire to overpay me.

That attitude I consider a vital factor in success. An absolutely fair division. One on the crest of the wave may over-play his hand for a little time, but not for long. Business is money-making, and associates will find a way to eliminate anyone who claims too large a share."

Make Your Offers More Valuable: Offer Bonuses

The easiest way to increase the value of your offers is to include bonuses.

Example #1

It can be as simple as including certain things for free that other providers would charge for. For an example, look at Southwest Airlines: they built an entire advertising campaign around the offer, "Bags fly free!"

When you create your offers this way it provides real value to customers and positions you, the seller, as someone who puts the customer's wants and needs before your own. Let's say a well-known entrepreneur is starting a new business and has hired me to perform a variety of services for him: designing a website, creating a logo, business cards, landing pages, search engine optimization, etc. There are a whole bunch of "little" things within the project scope that my company could offer him for free. I could host his website for free, or include free email list set up. Such things cost very little in time or money, but it's far more valuable to me and my client to offer these services at no charge than to charge a petty additional amount for them.

The willingness to help people, without any expectation of reward or gain, is a tremendous **asset**. It's what began turning the wheels of my advertising business when I was just starting out, and was one of the biggest reasons for my success. And I know it can be for you too.

Example #2

Here's an intriguing idea: what if we could convince people that even the free bonuses we offer are worth more than the price we charge? That's right - no crappy freebies thrown in. No free coffee mug or T-shirt that gets turned into a rag later. What do your customers really want? What would be really useful to them?

The easiest way to offer valuable bonuses is through information products. For example, if you sell a course for \$49, you could include two bonus programs valued at \$75 each.

You have to do this right or it will backfire. Useless bonuses that are only thrown in for the purpose of making a sale will only frustrate your customer. But if the bonuses provide real value that caters to your customer's wants and needs, then you're on to something.

Risk-Reversal Offers

If your offer seems too good to be true, then you should answer the customer's objection plainly and directly. It can be as simple as saying, "I really want to do my best to try to show you that this is the best product on the market." Most of us know the value of including a guarantee to counter a customer's skepticism. Here's the thing that most people don't realize: a strong guarantee can be used to create a very compelling, self-containing offer in and of itself.

Let me give you an example. I often used to host speaking engagements teaching techniques that we used in my digital advertising business, from how to create websites to how to rank a company in search engines. I love doing these live speaking engagements, and meeting students face to face.

The trouble is, events are commonplace. We're constantly bombarded with invitations

to new events that pop up each week. With all these competing events lobbying for our time, people don't like to make commitments and it's hard to get people to turn out. And yet, every time I taught a workshop or seminar, we would completely pack the room and more chairs always needed to be brought in. What was my secret to getting these turnouts?

It all came down to how I packaged the value of the events and how I used a risk-reversal offer to sell them out. Most workshop hosts might create a flier with some general information on the event, such as who, what, where, and when. But this approach is weak because the offer is usually weak and the host doesn't translate the value in terms people can understand. I took things much further. I created fliers with compelling headlines that demonstrated powerful benefits. Here's a few of the actual names of my workshops:

Title: "How to Dominate Search Engines and Make Money - Danny Flood Shows You His 7-Step System"

Subtitle: "An Insider's Method to Getting Ranked in Search Engines Fast"

Title: "How to Create Your Own Professional Website in a Day"

Subtitle: "WordPress is the #2 Overall Skill in Demand, According to Elance's Online Employment Report"

Title: "Cheat Codes for Life"

Subtitle: "How I Built a Successful Online Advertising Business While Traveling the World for Two Years"

Each bullet point used in the flier listed out a specific benefit that the attendee would gain. And I would include all kinds of valuable bonuses for attendees, such as free handbooks, guides, manuals, and WordPress plugin packs.

Another technique I used to influence turnout involved creating "decoy offers." I believe that it's far easier to promote a paid workshop than a free one, because of two reasons. First, the perceived value of a workshop, sadly, is inextricably linked to the price of the workshop. A free workshop is not perceived to be very valuable. So I would always create a "decoy price" by offering the workshop for free to the students at the university I was

presenting; but list a high admission price for non-students. This decoy price served no other purpose other than increasing the perceived value of the workshop to the students themselves.

Second, by pretending to charge an admission price, it gave me the option to add a risk-reversal, and even use the risk-reversal to incentivize attendance. Here's how. I back the course with a guarantee and improve the value of my offer by saying something like the following:

“If you're not completely, 200% satisfied after attending this workshop... just come talk to me after, and I'll give you a free refund, no questions asked, and you can keep all of the extra bonuses as a gift.”

Do you see what a good risk-reversal does? It's about creating a **win-win** offer (I told you this stuff could be fun) that makes it impossible for the customer to lose. The customer profits even if the product fails. A risk-reversal like this can become a very compelling offer to convince people to try your product.

Plus, you can use this “decoy offer” approach to dramatically increase the perceived value of any free webinar, seminar, or any other type of event that you want to host. The formula is simple: make the event free ONLY for a select group of people, and attach a high price to anyone who is NOT in the group.

HOW TO **DOMINATE** SEARCH ENGINES AND MAKE MONEY **DANNY FLOOD** **SHOWS YOU HIS 7 STEP** SYSTEM

An Insider's Method to Getting Ranked in Search Engines Fast

For one-night only, get an insider look at the system and techniques used to consistently deliver top search engine rankings on Google, Bing, and Yahoo... And most importantly, how to monetize the system to make money and earn a recurring income.



A bit of what you'll learn:

- ▶ Break down and *de-mystify* the process by which search engines display results.
- ▶ Implement successful **link-bait** campaigns
- ▶ Get found in search, gain real traffic to your website and make sales
- ▶ *Accurately* assess competition and **win**
- ▶ Perform SEO services for businesses, *earn a recurring income, live anywhere*
- ▶ *And much, much more...*

Free Bonuses:

7 STEP SYSTEM
SEO HANDBOOK

SEO PLUGIN PACK
FOR WORDPRESS

6 STEP CUSTOMER
SEO CARE MANUAL

WHEN: MONDAY, APRIL 16th, 2012

6pm - 7:30pm at SDSU Ad Club

PSFA Building Room 325 / Drinks & Coffee Provided

FREE with Valid Student ID, \$75 for Non-Students

Please RSVP: facebook.com/SDSUadclub

Example event flier with headline, benefits, bonuses, and decoy pricing.

Do you like what you're reading so far? I hope so, because I'm giving away some of my most powerful stuff here. I've seen these techniques work beautifully in execution. But we needn't end this chapter now. Continue reading as I hand off a number of different additional ways to increase the perceived value of your offers.

How to Increase Perceived Value

Human beings do not innately know how to value things. So we must translate the value for them, and there are a variety of ways to do this both directly and indirectly. I would suggest that you explore every possible way to increase the value of your offers (see the methods outlined below) and deploy as many as you are able.

How to Indirectly Communicate Value

Consumer psychology depends on subtle clues. We use clues to generalize and make snap judgments - we have to, otherwise we'd be overwhelmed by all the decisions we have to make. Sometimes we just require a quick and simple assurance that our decision to buy was a good one. The book "Influence: How and Why People Agree to Things" by Robert Cialdini covers these subtle clues in great detail. According to Cialdini, there are six key "weapons of influence" that can subconsciously persuade people. The four listed below can be used to "dress up" an offer to increase its perceived value.

Scarcity: Today, aluminum is everywhere, and deployed in a variety of commonplace uses. It is cheap and can be bought at the store for next to nothing. But during the 19th century, pure aluminum was **more valuable than gold!** This was simply because the process of extracting ore at the time was incredibly difficult. The value had nothing to do with the actual qualities of the metal. It was simply due to **scarcity**. If something is made to be scarce, it is perceived to be more valuable.

If you create a great product but only offer it in limited quantities, or for only a short time, your case for immediate action from the consumer is much stronger. One company that is doing this exceptionally well at the time of this writing is Xiaomi. Xiaomi is a tiny Chinese startup that is rapidly scooping up market share of the mobile phone market from Apple and Samsung. They are selling phones faster than they can produce them - and that's a big part of their strategy. During their most recent launch

(at the time I'm writing this) in Malaysia, they sold out 4,000 units in just 17 minutes. If someone missed out this time, you can join a waiting list for the opportunity to purchase from them during the next launch.

You can also use scarcity when it comes to price. For example, you can reduce the price of a product for 48 hours only to create artificial scarcity. To make your offers more compelling, think of different ways to create scarcity so you can sell more products.

Social Proof: Success breeds success, because people instinctively do what they see other people doing. A dentist with an office in a brand new mall was having trouble getting clients to show up for their appointments. A renowned consultant was brought in, and he made one small suggestion: have the employees park their cars in front of the office instead of behind the building. Cancellations soon dropped, and the office became booked solid.

In another example (which I will discuss some more in a few chapters), infomercial marketers discovered that if they said "If lines are busy, please call back," instead of saying "Please call us now!" it increased their response by 30%. Find a way to make your product seem like a hot commodity.

Authority: The buyer's perception of the seller is very important. For instance, whether you choose to heed any of the advice in this book matters a great deal upon your perception of me. Do I walk the walk?

Humans look to authority figures to help them make decisions. This is a natural element of our psychology. Therefore, the perceived value of a product depends, in large part, on the buyer's perception of the source providing it. It's important to create "**credibility indicators**" that will engender confidence in you and your product. For example, I heard of a chiropractor who was able to increase his patient's confidence in his authority simply by wearing a doctor's white jacket and stethoscope, despite the fact that a chiropractor has no use for such items. Actors who play doctors on television have been used to promote medicine, despite the fact that they have no real medical background or training.

In both cases, simple cues were used to create "credibility indicators" to increase

confidence despite the fact that there was nothing real backing them.

Some other ways to provide proof of credibility include:

- Third-party validation (from authoritative sources - press, blogs, etc.)
- Association (associating with brands and figures people recognize)
- Sales records (facts and figures proving customer satisfaction)
- Commendations of users (testimonials, reviews)
- Official recognition (awards, distinctions, honors)
- Guarantees (willingness to let the quality of the product speak for itself)
- Background of the provider (reputation and successful history)

How to Directly Communicate Value

Victor Schwab wrote an outstanding book called “How to Write a Good Advertisement.” The original version was written in 1942 and comprised only 60 pages, but each page is solid gold. In the first chapter he discusses the difference between good and bad headlines. Headlines are the first piece of writing seen within an ad. In general, Schwab explains that headlines that speak to people’s specific wants and needs work the best.

So what do people want? Here’s a short list:

Better health, more money, greater popularity, improved appearance, praise from others, more comfort, more leisure, pride of accomplishment, business advancement, social advancement, and increased enjoyment from life.

They also want to:

Be good parents, have influence over others, express their personality, resist domination by others, receive insider information, satisfy their curiosity, be up-to-date, emulate their heroes, appreciate beauty, be proud, be creative, be cared for, be efficient, be loved, finish (or start) something first, and feel they are making progress.

And they want to save themselves:

Money, time, worry, discomfort, doubts, risks, embarrassment, offense to others,

boredom, personal respect, prestige.

Your offer becomes valuable when it addresses these basic human desires. If it doesn't, then it's becomes infinitely more difficult to make the offer desirable.

Offer People Time and Money

Some other powerful ways to directly translate the value of an offer involve implicitly stating the time or money to be saved or gained with the product or service. If you're a consultant, you could say: "My hourly rate is \$300 an hour. But if you can't afford that, then you can buy my book and get access to all of the best training and expert knowledge for one-tenth of the price. It's a very good deal."

Simple, right? This goal of the direct approach is to make the value so easy to understand that no additional explanation is required. How about time saved? You could say: "I spent 20 years learning everything there is to know about XYZ business. I've logged over 30,000 hours directly dealing in such-and-such service. You're getting access to all of my expertise, all the shortcuts I've learned over the last two decades, in a short two-day weekend seminar."

Another way you could demonstrate high value could involve bundling several different products into a package, and stacking the benefits together within your offer. If the combined retail value of five products stands at \$1,400 and you're offering a limited number of packages for \$150, the inherent value is very easy to understand and doesn't require a whole lot of explaining.

When you take the direct approach to communicating value, the key is to be specific. Don't tell people that they'll have a better life if they buy a product. Tell them the specific benefits that they'll receive. Chris Guillebeau, on his sales page for his "Frequent Flyer Master" e-book offers an eloquent guarantee: if someone uses the techniques he teaches in the book, he guarantees they will earn enough miles for one free plane ticket - or their money back. When your offers speak directly to specific benefits this way, they can be very, very compelling.

Remember, a typical customer isn't as familiar with your product or industry as well as

you are. They often don't know how to perceive your value versus your competitors, or other options (such as doing something themselves, or doing nothing). So a big part of your job lies in presenting the value of what you have to offer.

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Make the Competition Irrelevant

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect."

-Mark Twain

Whenever possible, you must avoid "herd behavior." In many cases in both business and life, the masses of people follow patterns of action that are extraordinarily inefficient. For instance, if you ever find yourself in Southern California, you'll find it extraordinarily difficult to commute during the rush hours of 7:30 - 8:30 AM, or between 4:30 - 6:00PM, because the freeways get clogged with wage slaves commuting to nine-to-fives. I always arrange my day to avoid those times. By the same token, I'll avoid making a visit to the bank or post office on a Friday.

It's important to take note of these things and work your life around them, so as to save yourself time and money. But business people also follow this same type of "herd behavior" in all kinds of less obvious ways. This chapter will teach you how to avoid the mediocre majority and stand out so that you can build a very powerful network and brand for yourself. For instance, you'll learn the strategy Tim Ferriss used to stand out from the herd and build a business relationship with Jack Canfield, long before anyone knew who Tim was. You'll also learn how my friend Andrew went from being a no-name Target check-out clerk to starting a podcast that was downloaded 70,000 times in its first few weeks and hit #1 in iTunes' New and Noteworthy. They used the very techniques outlined here in this chapter. You'll also learn a "secret trick" I use to game Google (100% legal) and easily find the people I want to connect with.

Association - the X Factor

Credibility is killer when you start and grow your business. It's killer because it can be your best asset, or the lack of credibility can kill you. At the very least you'll struggle to swim upstream.

Lack of name recognition is a pit that any new business can fall into. When people come into contact with you or your business, they want to know who you are. They immediately look to certain indicators to see if you can be trusted. While they may have never heard of you or your company before, you might be able to piggyback off of a name that they have heard of. This immediately increases your prestige and perceived value. Perceived value determines a lot with the people you and your business interact with. And the easiest way to establish perceived value is through associations that you create.

From the get-go, you should think about how your business can become associated with known brands, or well-known people. The simple act of attaching your name (and that of your business) to theirs, will open the path of prosperity and fortune to you. You can literally go from no-name scrub struggling to gain clients to well-respected industry leader overnight!

Let me give you a brief example. During the US presidential campaign in the fall of 2012 I volunteered as a door-to-door canvasser in Nevada. Over the course of that weekend I collected more signed supporter cards than anyone else in the state. In a few cases, people were literally closing the door on me. But before it closed completely, I got them to open it back up again, and eventually got them to sign a pledge of support. What was my secret? How did I collect so many signed supporter cards when other canvassers struggled to get 1 or 2?

Association. Before we hit the streets we were given sales materials and scripts to memorize. I found a couple of ways to improve upon it to get the result I wanted. First - the script told us to open by saying "Hello, I'm here on behalf of Organizing for America." The first adjustment I made was to say instead: "Hello, I'm here on behalf of President Obama." Nobody knows who or what "Organizing for America" is, but every living soul in the world knows who President Obama is. And - since I'm here on his behalf, it must be pretty important! Name dropping the president was the first "key" to having people to listen to me. Once they started listening to me, I began building

massive rapport and asked great questions. To them I may have been a nobody, but through association I strengthened my position so that I could open the interaction and they would listen to what I had to say.

I used the power of association to close these interactions, too. Instead of asking them to sign a card to receive updates, I simply told them that the president was coming to Las Vegas next week and if they signed up for updates they'd automatically be eligible for a chance to receive free tickets to the event. Nobody wants to receive more spam in their e-mail. But a chance to see the president live was compelling enough that people gladly signed their names.

Do you understand the way this game works yet? Association is basically a way for you to cut in front of the line. There are a variety of ways you can use association to your advantage, and it's not hard.

Example A. One of the easiest ways to establish the power of association is to perform free work for a really well-known author or celebrity. That's what Ryan Holliday did when he offered his services to Tucker Max. Thanks to that early association, and through the skills he learned from Tucker, Ryan has gone on to become a best-selling author and well-respected thought leader in the public relations field. He's landed a gig as director of marketing for American Apparel, and become a public relations consultant to other famous authors such as James Altucher, Robert Greene, Neil Strauss, Tim Ferriss, and more.

Now imagine if you were a photographer. If you had the opportunity to perform free work for Lady Gaga, would you take it? Of course you would! Sure it's free work, but if you became known as "Lady Gaga's photographer," you would quickly reach the heights of the photography industry in minimal time.

Example B. My friend Andrew kicked off his highly successful podcast, "Knowledge for Men," by targeting best-selling authors to interview. His first was Robert Greene, author of "48 Laws of Power" and other influential books. After Greene, Andrew says, getting other authors onboard was easy. Further, his association to these established authors dramatically increased his subscriber base. He didn't start with any connections to these authors - he began as a disgruntled employee at Target. He simply reached out to them

through Twitter, and over time more and more came onboard. The Podcast got 70,000 downloads within the first 5 weeks, and went on to become #1 in iTunes' New and Noteworthy, in the top 3 categories Business, Health and Education. Knowledge for Men was also recently ranked #27 podcast of all podcasts in the world above 60 minutes, NBC News and HBO's Real Time with Bill Maher. Not too bad for a former Target check-out aisle employee!

Example C. Professional associations. Name dropping an established organization is a great way to gain authority when you have no name for yourself yet. That's how Tim Ferriss met Jack Canfield, author of "Chicken Soup for the Soul." Just as Jack was leaving the stage after a speech, Tim jumped in front of him, blurting out that he belonged to the Silicon Valley Association of Start-up Entrepreneurs (a non-profit), and that he wanted to invite Canfield to an event they were running. Would he be interested? Jack gave Tim his e-mail address, and a couple of months later attended his event. And they've been close associates ever since, all because of Tim's masterful use of the association principle.

How to Connect With Anyone

A big part of success in life is directly tied to our ability to reach out to other people. To be an effective entrepreneur, one has to be proactive, and develop the habit of making the first move. Most people are passive. They simply sit on the sidelines and wait for others to make a move. And often the best that they can hope for is to take what life offers. In most cases that is not much.

We could be waiting a very long time for that serendipitous moment when good things just "happen" to us without action on our part. You are unique and have something of worth to offer to the world. There are people out there who can use and benefit from what you have to offer. It is your job - not theirs - to get out there in front of them! There are also many people out there right now who can provide the advice, connections, and resources that can dramatically improve your situation. But you **need to reach out to them** - otherwise they will not realize you exist!

People who know me often ask about my secret for building connections with talented and successful people. I never go to networking events and I'm actually a bit introverted

most of the time. But I've successfully built up an extensive network of partners, mentors, and colleagues just by using my laptop's keyboard. And all it takes is a few minutes a day.

Unfortunately, reaching out to others through the internet (e-mail, Twitter, etc.) seems to be widely misunderstood, and is often done incorrectly. Most messages are poorly written, completely miss their mark, and don't evoke the desired response from the recipient. Yet we live in a unique time in history - and at this very moment - connecting with *anyone* has never been easier!

When I reach out to a new contact, perhaps someone more successful than myself, I've found it to be an uphill struggle to appeal to them through logic and reason. These messages all too often go ignored and filed into one's spam folder. Some would argue to appeal to the other person's self-interests; but this too is flawed. It's difficult to truly know exactly what the other person values, and you'd be wasting too much time and energy trying to align your request to their interests.

There is a much better way, a "shortcut" to getting a response from people and your ideas: try to make the other person smile when they receive your message! When you reach out to them, make them feel good. It's a basic human urge to want to be acknowledged, loved, and appreciated. For successful people, this often manifests itself through their work. Their work becomes their identity; and by appreciating their work you also appreciate them. And people really appreciate that!

Let's say there's someone you wish to talk to. You just read an article featuring an entrepreneur in Inc. Magazine, and you'd love to get in contact with them. Take a few moments to scan the article, or read posts from their blog. You can get a great idea of how they think and what topics are on their mind. Then when you write to them, congratulate them on their success and talk about how their work has influenced you. Everyone loves to receive e-mails like these! All of us love to hear how our work is making a difference. Remember to keep it short, two or three short paragraphs at the max.

When writing to another, be conscious of how the words are going to make the other person feel. At the same time, in your message, edit out as many "I's" and "me's" as

possible. Don't mention yourself too often, or you risk coming across as narcissistic and too out for yourself.

Practice the art of making others feel good, and they'll respond positively to your proposals.

If you're a geek like me, then you may be interested in the psychology behind this approach. Our goal is to create what NLP-practitioners call a "positive anchor." NLP stands for "Neuro Linguistic Processing" and its methods have been used on us by advertisers for years. Marketers try to create brands that evoke positive feelings from consumers. You and I are brands, too. Each time that we communicate with someone, we are evoking either a positive, neutral, or negative feeling from them. We want to create a "trigger" that will elicit a positive response from someone when they receive our message. One way to do this is to utilize overwhelmingly positive or especially interesting subject lines.

Here's are some examples of positive subject lines:

- *"Thank you for your help!"*
- *"Thanks for being awesome!"*
- *"Loved your book!"*
- *"Great party!"*
- *"Great event!"*

Personalizing the subject line to include the recipient's name can improve it, as well. Everyone's favorite word is their own name.

Alternatively, be careful that your subject line isn't misconstrued to foreshadow something negative. Your recipient will automatically and subconsciously anchor your name to unpleasantness.

Here's some examples of negative subject lines:

- *"URGENT message for..."*
- *"Small Mistake"*
- *"Accident"*
- *"We need to talk..."*

Can you imagine how these subject lines would evoke a groan from the other person? Or make them roll their eyes?

And a neutral one:

- *"Meeting today"*
could be changed to... *"Look forward to our meeting today!"*

Are you getting the hang of this?

Then, after the subject line, we could continue the positive anchoring within the opening lines of the e-mail. "[Name], I just read your blog post about [such and such], what a great idea! I really learnt a lot from the post and wanted to say thanks."

An e-mail from you then becomes a positive "trigger" that elicits a favorable response. If you use enough of these positive triggers on a regular basis, it will form a pattern. The net effect of creating positive anchors is to make the other person welcome correspondence from you, instead of resenting it. The worst possible outcome is to be ignored.

Do you think many people reach out this way via electronic messages? No, they often do the opposite. They don't give enough thought to the actual flesh and blood human at the other end. When most people contact someone new, they don't personalize the e-mail, they don't form positive anchors, and usually launch into a one-sided soliloquy about themselves and their own needs. Often they'll include a link to their own website or a portfolio sample of their work. These messages get tuned out, and if the person bothers to reply at all, it will usually be to curtly and unapologetically reject the sender. Worse still, these types of messages create strong negative anchors to avoid said person! Not the outcome that we want at all. And yet, probably 98% of all the "outreach email" that I get - personally - is done this way.

Do you ever tense up with fearful anticipation whenever your inbox loads - wondering what "evil surprises" await within? On the other hand, I know if I got a message from an unexpected source that makes me feel good, it could make my whole day!

Consciously develop the habit of making people feel good. Provide good news and deliver warmth to people that you come into contact with. With practice it will come to you naturally. People will start to open doors for you, and the things you want to manifest in this world will come within reach.

Further, when making a request, be mindful of the other person's time. If your initial request involves a minimal commitment of time on the other person, you're much more likely to receive a favorable response. Instead of sending them ten questions, send one or two. If you go on too long, you may also convey that you have too much time on your hands. Of course - this is a generalization - but it's always good to edit your e-mail at least once and remove anything that isn't necessary.

Be certain your sentences read plainly and directly. Use sentence structures like "The boy ran into the house," not "The house was run into by the boy." If contacting customers, make the action you want them to take as simple and easy as possible.

And finally, be someone worth connecting with. Be humble, but if you have a high sense of self-respect and self-worth, you should *indirectly* communicate that. By indirect - I mean, don't talk about yourself, just subtly hint that you're someone interesting and ambitious. Someone who knows where they are going in life. Someone with a purpose.

Drop small hints that are brief but intriguing. Usually the person you reach out to will pick up on these clues and determine that they'd benefit from an association with you. Social proof often works wonders - if its clear that you command the respect of other people, your new acquaintance will regard you highly as well.

Often times, when I first contact an extremely successful CEO or entrepreneur, my request will simply be to invite them to be a guest during our monthly mastermind session on Google Hangout. I briefly describe the members and purpose of the group, and tell them that they can come on for as little or long as they like. By mentioning that I've created a mastermind group of ambitious young entrepreneurs, they can sense a "feeling of high self-worth" being conveyed without it being shoved in their face.

From best-selling authors to entrepreneurs featured on the covers of business magazines, I've been able to build many great relationships with mentors just this way.

Some have, over time, become close friends.

On the following page are a few examples of some real, successful outreach e-mails that I've sent. Personal details and names have been edited out.

As a result of e-mails like these, I've been the fortunate recipient of much advice, resources, and connections from the person I reached out to. Note how I indirectly communicated high value without rambling on about myself. Each of these "cold e-mails" have established strong and very mutually beneficial relationships. All as a result of the ten minutes I took to send a well-thought out, personalized e-mail!

Can it really be that easy?

Yes, it can! There is almost no one that can't be reached.

The bottom line is that communication has its roots in many subtle and unconscious cues. If you use them correctly, your chances of success go up dramatically. The individuals who understand all of these cues will be able to succeed in their interactions in ways that others who don't understand them won't. Additionally, as a result of positive feedback loops, you will gain in confidence and become an even more skilled communicator.

How to Find People Worth Connecting With

All well and good, but how do you find the right people to reach in the first place? Popular media is a great place to start - individuals featured in articles, and the reporters who write them, are surprisingly accessible. I was able to establish a relationship with a mentor who has been a very close friend for the last 3 years. How did I find him? He was featured on the cover of Inc. magazine. If you just start looking around, and keep your eyes and ears open to what's going on in your industry - it's very easy to discover the movers and shakers.

There is another awesome "trick" I like to use which helps me find people fast. Light-speed fast: .002873 seconds to be exact (number is approximate). It's a search string I like to plug into google - "related:[website]." When you use the "related:" search before

a web address, Google will automatically go to work finding websites that are exactly like the one you just entered. The potential is huge! You can search and discover entire industries in mere moments.

Another excellent tool for connecting with people is Twitter. But don't use Twitter's built-in search engine, use "Follower Wonk" (yes, that's really the name): www.followerwonk.com.

Follower Wonk allows you to search Twitter profiles by keyword or location, and it will display a list with detailed information about each user: number of tweets, followers, and so on. If someone is an active user, you can send them a tweet and often get a response.

How to Create a Killer Body of Work

In the long-term, your focus should be on building your network and your body of work. What you've done in the past will help you gain opportunities tomorrow. For people like Andrew and Ryan a body of work may show itself in the form of the authors they've worked with or interviewed. For many companies, such as software firms, it can come in the form of public relations, industry awards, and so on. Those in service-oriented fields create "case studies." For those of us in advertising, marketing, programming, and production related fields, we showcase a "portfolio."

Here too, we can deploy another simple strategy to put the power of association to work. There's a common misconception plaguing freelancers that the most important factor in your portfolio is the quality of work. In your portfolio, the most critical factor is to showcase known **brands**.

If you want to pick up first-class clients, you're not going to land them by showcasing your past work for Joe's Crab Shack or Bob's Carpet Cleaning - regardless of how great your work is. What's more impressive is if you have a portfolio showcasing work for companies like Apple, Samsung, Coca-Cola, BMW, Nike, and so on. These companies hire thousands of contractors every year. You don't need to actually have one as a client to put the power of association to work, however.

There's a simple shortcut: create portfolio pieces called "brand studies."

Artists use the word "study" when they experiment with different ways to render a subject. Leonardo da Vinci's "study of embryos" is an example. You can use a similar technique of creating "brand studies" to juice up your portfolio.

- 1) Pick a handful of multinational brands
- 2) Draft up a creative brief for each of your chosen brands
- 3) Execute the work.
- 4) Reap the benefits of association by piggybacking alongside these known brands and land the type of clients that you deserve.

Remember that a portfolio - or your body of work - is nothing more than a sales tool to help convert clients. If we want to be successful, we need to be a bit detached from our own work and remove our own ego from the equation. Remember the principle of the "Lazy Programmer?" It's critical that we find the simplest, most direct route to achieving our goals.

If you take nothing else from this chapter, take this mindset: you CAN do this. You CAN use the power of association to catapult your business from the pits of obscurity to the stratosphere of atmospheric success. Looking back on the past several years of my entrepreneurial career, each time I "jumped up to the next level" of success, it was due to the principle of association.

A Simple Question to Assess Opportunities

As your business activities gain momentum, you will begin to come into contact with all sorts of different opportunities. Not all opportunities are the same. You must assess the potential partner or client behind the opportunity: Who are they, and what have they done?

After years of trial and frustrating error, and far too much time chasing unqualified leads, I've learned a "golden rule" when it comes to client prospecting. If someone comes to me looking to hire my business, I take a look at the client's company and ask: "Does this person have full-time employees who are dependent upon the company for their

livelihood?”

If the answer is no, the chances of that person being a profitable client for you are slim to none. The chances of them wanting you to do free work for them in exchange for promises of future work later on are very high. You can help them, but only offer the kind of help that places a limited demand upon your time - such as answering a question or passing a referral. If the answer is yes, and they do have employees who are dependent upon them, then there's a great chance that you have caught a "golden trout" client. All it takes is a handful of these clients and you're making a full-time income.

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Succeed by Doing Less: The Underachiever Method

Ready for some really good news? To enable your dream lifestyle, you don't need to devote all of your waking hours to the blind accumulation of material wealth, contrary to what most of the world would have you believe. If you want to island hop in the Maldives, you don't need to build a \$10 million / year business. It's not even necessary for you to build a \$100,000 / year business. While these pretty numbers sound nice, they are completely arbitrary with no real significance attached to them. Plus it can be quite harmful if we allow the blind pursuit of arbitrary income goals to steer us towards the path of senseless wage slavery. So let's remove ourselves from this game and play a new one. To be a true master of lifestyle design, we only want to play in a game where we can write the rules and easily win.

If I can point to one single point in the life of my business that enabled me to start living life on my own terms, it was the realization that I only needed a tiny handful of clients to earn a full-time living. This was the biggest "AHA" moment for me. When I started my business, my impulse was simply to grow things to be as big as possible - that's what seemed natural at the time. I quickly became shackled down because I was constantly chasing after new clientele and having my time taken up by low-profit, high-maintenance customers. I was chasing a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow that could never actually be reached. And all along that rainbow path, moles would rear their ugly heads everywhere, and I wore myself out whacking them. Clients I'd designed websites for years ago would want changes to their menu. Or their logo. Or they broke something and *urgently* needed me to fix it.

But here's the thing: the secret to creating freedom for yourself through your business lies in applying the principle of minimalism. Not trying to do more, but reducing down to only what is essential. Taking on the fewest number of clients needed to reach your

goal. Focusing only on your core business model and not getting distracted by things that have nothing to do with growing your business (I'll provide you with a framework for simplifying things in the next chapter). Since most professionals neither understand nor apply this principle, they trap themselves into a never-ending cycle of overwork in their career or business.

Think of a statue. It is not created by continuously adding more stone. It can be only created by chipping away at it, piece by piece, reducing it down only to what is essential. Anything that is not necessary is discarded. This is the same approach that you need to take if you want your business to create freedom for yourself.

Take the most direct path to the end you want. The simplest solution is always best. Let's say that you're a freelancer or a consultant - someone who sells their skills as a service. You **only need** a mere handful of clients to achieve lifestyle freedom.

Example A: The Service Route

Consider this scenario: let's assume you are a web designer, as I was for a while. And the average annual income for an American citizen, statistically, is about \$50,000. For the purpose of this example, let's set an income target of \$48,000. To reach that \$48,000 goal as a web designer, you would need to create 32 different websites for \$1,500 each - just under 3 websites a month.

As someone with several years of experience creating websites, I can tell you that this scenario is all but impossible. Even if your services are selling like hotcakes to the point where you can get 32 clients in a single year, there are far too many variables. Clients are people, not robots. And people are picky. They don't understand the web design process. And they sometimes take a very long time to get around to doing something - like signing a contract. This scenario doesn't factor in all of these variables, such as the long lead-nurturing process. Not to mention, most web designers would need to go out and meet all 32 of these people, or at least **personally** establish a relationship with each client so that they feel comfortable buying from them.

To accomplish the goal of \$48,000 using this approach would require an enormous demand of time in the area of prospecting and fulfillment on the part of our would-be

hero. Not the most desirable scenario.

Does this example seem a little far-fetched? It should. ***But this is the way that most freelance web designers operate!*** Some web designers understand the concept of recurring income vs. one-time income, so they offer small “website management fees.” But these fees are basically nothing - something like \$10/month. It’s a step in the right direction, but it would take a lot of clients to make that service worthwhile - far more than we would want to manage!

On the other hand, if a web designer could learn a valuable and in-demand skill that compliments their web design service (which clients could hire them for on a regular basis), he or she could dramatically simplify their business and life.

If a web designer could convince just FOUR of her clients to pay her \$1,000 / month on a recurring basis, she could earn that same \$48,000 with a minimum amount of work. What are some in-demand skills that could compliment web design? How about marketing that website? A website without visitors is essentially useless, so it’s pretty easy to find a client who will pay \$1,000 a month for search engine optimization, Pay-Per-Click, content marketing, or other such services. In many cases \$1,000 a month is actually considered quite low.

When I discovered this concept of business minimalism, I took my roster of 14-15 clients and reduced it to five, four of which paid me a monthly retainer. I took a month or two to court my clients and future-proof my relationships with each client. Each client was a friend as well as business partner, and I spent a fair bit of time with each in a social context. Shortly after I bought a one-way ticket to South America, and my life has read like an Indiana Jones novel ever since.

Marketing for new customers is the most difficult, expensive, and time-consuming endeavor for entrepreneurs and owners of small businesses. It is the one thing that will kill your attempts at creating freedom through your business before they even start. If you can create new products to serve existing customers (more on that later), and regularly serve only a few high-profit clients, you can systemize your operation, delegate most of the work, and develop a business that requires only 10 hours a week to manage.

Example B: The Product Route

If you are someone who creates a product - such as an artist, author, musician, or videographer - or even a blogger or podcaster - then the same principle of “minimum effectiveness” applies. You don’t need to hit the best-seller list to make a living as an author, or make the list of “Top 10 blogs” in your niche to make a living as a blogger. You can aim instead for what Kevin Kelly, founding editor of Wired magazine, calls **1,000 True Fans**.

Let’s say you’re working at a 9 to 5 that you hate right now, but always wanted to write books. By aiming simply for **1,000 True Fans**, you can take your lifelong dream of being an author and turn it into a far more manageable path to follow.

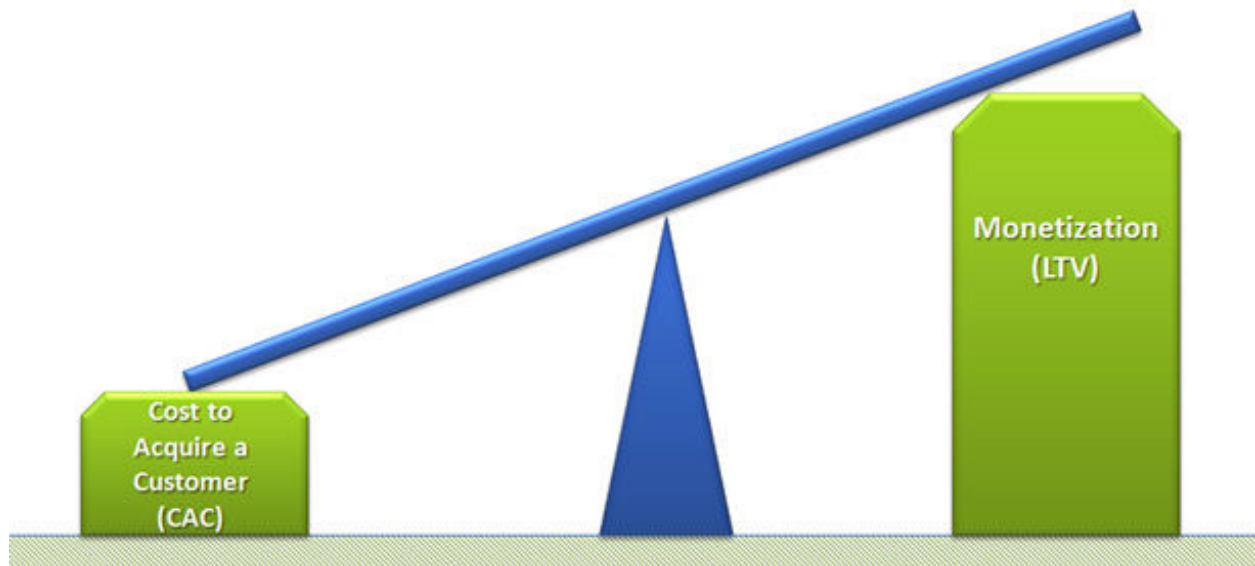
For instance, when I started writing this book, I didn’t set a goal to turn the book into a bestseller. I was a first-time author with a limited pre-existing audience and no experience in publishing. I knew, however, that a goal of **1,000 True Fans** would be in reach if I could target influencers within the “lifestyle design” niche and tap their networks. By focusing on a goal of **1,000 True Fans**, the task of writing and marketing a book became much less daunting for me. Ironically, many more authors would do better for themselves if they focused on achieving the realistic goal of creating **1,000 True Fans** instead of setting impossibly unrealistic goals for the sales of their books.

This same principle applies to anyone who tries to set up a business within a large niche. If you’re selling supplements, for example, all you need is 1,000 loyal customers. Same thing if you’re selling software as a service (SaaS). There are many small tech companies offering CRM and task management related SaaS products to other companies. The market is so huge, that all they need to do is focus on a goal of **1,000 True Fans** to be profitable.

Low Acquisition Cost, High Value

The key to making either of the above scenarios work is to minimize customer acquisition cost (CAC) by acquiring fewer, but better customers, and maximize lifetime value (LTV) of each customer. For our efforts at self-employment to succeed, we need to monetize customers at a significantly higher level than our cost of acquiring them.

A well balanced business model



To increase LTV for each customer, focus on creating new products to serve existing customers - instead of seeking new customers to sell existing products. Attract new prospects for sure, but don't direct your efforts on chasing them. Instead, actively court your existing and previous customers: someone who bought something from you once is very likely to buy from you again. To make this model work, focus on metrics such as: reducing churn rates, increasing customer satisfaction, developing recurring revenue, creating different pricing plans, offering cross-sells, and expanding your product line.

Reasons Why We Fail

As we've just noted, customer acquisition is the most time consuming and costly aspect of running a business. Customer retention, on the other hand, can be very lucrative and easy, and the path to creating freedom for ourselves in our business. This approach sets the basis for a sound monetization strategy.

The next obstacle - or opportunity - that you need to figure out is pricing. Pricing successfully is an enormous part of the game. How you price - and the monetization strategy you follow, can very well determine whether your business activities succeed or fail. As a business owner, you write your own paycheck. And yours probably deserves to

be bigger. You are no doubt worth much more than you currently see yourself. Your life can be better, and easier.

The fees you charge and how much you pay yourself starts with your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes toward money. Most people under-value themselves and their own self-worth. This translates into a lack of confidence that keeps people from earning the kind of money that they want.

Unfortunately, most business owners, freelancers, bloggers, authors, and so on - however successful they may seem from the outside, are barely treading water. An attractive headshot on someone's Twitter profile can mask a very ugly reality. The vast majority of businesses - and entrepreneurs - struggle or fail while a few standouts thrive. The first cause for failure is our own limiting beliefs. The next is that most entrepreneurs lack any kind of strategy for proper pricing and monetization of their products and services. I can't help with any limiting beliefs you may have, but I can help you set up an effective price strategy.

If you go to ten different business owners and ask them what their pricing and monetization strategies are, nine times out of ten, you will probably get a blank stare. It may be so deceptively simple that it seems obvious. But most business owners never question if the model can be improved upon. And many bloggers don't know how to monetize their blogs. The problem is, they look around at what other people in the industry are doing, and think that must be the right way to do it. But again, in every single category most businesses struggle while a few standouts thrive. The biggest reason they fail is because they fail to think creatively when it comes to pricing and monetizing their services.

To be fair, it's not just small business people who make mistakes when it comes to building a sound monetization model. Ever heard of Hotmail? Initially, Hotmail's strategy was to market their e-mail service with ad campaigns and billboards, until an investor pointed out that it was a bad idea to pay money to acquire customers for a free product. Facebook has built an enormous base of over 1 billion users but never had a monetization plan in place, and is now still struggling to come up with one. Google, on the other hand, built profit into their model from day one and the company is now printing money faster than it can spend it.

Pricing by Target Rate of Return

When pondering the prices to charge for products and services, there are a number of options available to you. You could make a wild guess, or study others within the industry. You could ask customers what they'd be willing to pay, or factor in all of your fixed costs and add in your desired profit. However, each of these options are short-sighted because they fail to factor in what your ultimate goal is. What are you trying to get from your business? For our purposes, these options will not work very well towards building the lifestyle-sustaining “ELF” business that we want.

Before you come up with any sort of pricing model, you should strongly consider what your goals are and determine what your return on investment needs to be to reach them. “Target rate of return pricing” is the name of the method that corporations use to price their offerings in a way that satisfies company objectives. The company determines its costs, capital, and desired profit, and prices accordingly. The reason this model works is that it begins with the end in mind, and if we want to price our services appropriately, it's what we should do as well.

The premise behind target return pricing is simple: if your goal is to make \$100,000 in revenue and you have 1,000 units for sale, pricing them at \$100 each will enable you to hit the target you want.

There are a number of market realities to consider, so the price you arrive at shouldn't be taken too literally. You can also build in cross-sells, subscriptions, and so on into the model if the price you arrive is unrealistic. The point is that you should reverse-engineer backwards from the income you want and set up a plan for pricing that can get you there. Most business owners don't do this. And they remain completely at the mercy of their customers and competitors to dictate their earnings.

The most successful entrepreneurs know their numbers thoroughly, and carefully plan their pricing and monetization strategies. By performing this exercise of target return pricing, you are forced to determine whether your pricing model can or can't sustain the income you want. If it can't, then its time to get to work.

To Attract the Right Price, Attract the Right Customer

The solution to getting the price you want for a product is simple: choose the right audience. Consider this story. In the spring of 2013 I was wrapping up a 2-month long motorcycle trip across Vietnam. I had the time of my life, and now it was time to head back “home” to Thailand. One thing still to do: sell the motorbike which had carried me across the country. Two months before I had bought the bike from a CouchSurfing member for the equivalent of about \$270 USD.

At first, I posted the bike for sale on “The New Hanoian,” an expat forum. I registered for a new account and everything. Then I created a post on the local CouchSurfing page. The bike wasn’t fast or flashy, but it was in good condition and reliable. It also happened to be a “Chonda,” a Chinese imitation of a Honda product (the name on the bike said HDNDA - cleverly disguised to look similar to the original).

Prospect #1

It wasn’t long before I was contacted by an American expat interested in the bike. When we met, he looked it over thoroughly. He picked the bike apart, wanting to know all of the details. After, he told me he would let me know. That evening, I get an e-mail from him offering half of my asking price for the bike. “It needs a lot of work,” he said.

Prospect #2

Meanwhile, through the CouchSurfing post I met with a Vietnamese local who said his brother would be interested in the bike. We met in the center of Ha Noi, at the edge of Hoan Kiem lake. I followed him and we rode for an hour to a suburb on the outskirts of the city. We drove down bumpy dirt roads. Eventually, we reached his brother’s shop. The brother took one look at the bike and said he wasn’t interested. The reason was simple: he would not buy anything made in China. Oops.

Prospect #3 - The Ideal Prospect

By this point I was getting pretty frustrated. I didn’t want to take the half price offered by the expat. So I changed my approach, designed a simple flier ad for the motorbike with photos and information, and began posting them at all of the backpacker’s hostels. I went down to Ngo Huyen street (backpacker alley) and a backpacker in one hostel lobby heard about what I was doing. He referred me to an acquaintance, a very tall

gentleman from Holland, who had incidentally mentioned earlier that he was on the hunt for a motorbike. Thirty minutes later, we drove to the ATM, he withdrew cash and paid the price I asked for. No hassle, no questions asked.

The backpacker from Holland had very different reasons for purchasing than the local and the expat. What he wanted from the purchase of the bike was very different. He simply wanted a solid bike that could carry him across the country, as I had. After the deal was done, he was ecstatic, the euphoria of the adventure he was about to take setting in. I was ecstatic too, happy to finally sell the bike at the price I'd hoped for, and recoup my entire investment.

The lesson is this: different people have different reasons for buying. Their value drivers are different. For some, price is not an issue and other factors are more important. Some are urgently looking to buy and others are just window shopping. When you find the right client at the right price, everyone is happy with the transaction and everyone wins. If you struggle to attract the right clients willing to pay the price you want, the first thing to change may be where you look.

What is Information Worth?

To give you another example of how to use this philosophy to charge premium prices, let's look at the information product business. Information is everywhere. Newspapers sell for a dollar, blogs give away content for free. The web is full of free articles and videos. Many authors even give away whole versions of their books for free in hopes of attracting readers. Information is cheap and readily available, and for the most part we give it a relatively low value.

A couple of years ago I set out to create a membership website featuring a set of video tutorials. I knew I could create the best product in the market, but in the highly-saturated information product business, quality matters little when it comes to determining price. If someone encounters two identical-looking products, that are packaged exactly the same, they will instinctively go with the cheaper option.

People don't inherently know how to value information so we must clearly communicate the value to them. And the easiest way to package a product or service in a way to

increase the perceived value is to clearly and specifically state WHO it is for.

In this example, I created about two dozen videos teaching how to build and design WordPress websites. I was entering a crowded market long suffering from price erosion. So I called it “The Web’s Largest Single Source of WordPress Training for Graphic Designers, Web Designers, and Creatives.” Since I was the first person to create a product specifically serving this market, and by focusing on the design aspect, I was able to charge \$200 - 300 (testing several different prices and payment plans) in a space where countless others were offering free WordPress tutorials on YouTube.

If you can combine two or more niche markets, industries, or subcultures, then you can position yourself as the *only* provider serving those groups of people. By positioning my course directly for the graphic and web designer market, and creating a product specifically for them, I was able to increase the value of my program. I also called the website the “WordPress Design Institute,” adding in the word “institute” and offering a certification to increase the perceived value.

A friend of mine has created information products in such a unique niche that he’s able to charge any price he wants to. His website teaches how anyone can start a marijuana dispensary business. He prices his products between \$200 - 500, and gets it. This type of pricing is not as uncommon as you might think. There are many, many B2B companies that offer information products and research to corporations. These prices can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands. A little time spent consciously selecting your niche, and orienting your product to provide high value to that niche, can go a long way.

How Businesses Go From \$4,000 a Month to \$40,000 a Month

Your Ultimate Marketing Framework

If you've read this far, then you now have all of the pieces in place to start building a profitable, yet easy to manage business that will allow you to create your dream lifestyle. Now what?

It's time to take a step back and develop a framework for guiding business decisions going forward. Without a framework in place, your attention will always be spread out into too many different places. You will have no structure to simplify decision-making. When business owners are unsure where to direct their attention it creates chaos, confusion, and waste. Every week you will be chasing after some new idea, or beginning some new project.

For example, you may decide you need to build an email list. So you put up a form on your website and only one person subscribes - you. Of course, since you only spent one week on setting up the list and then moved on to the next task, it will never go anywhere, and you may give up on building a list altogether. Without a proper framework in place, its too easy to fall prey to the 'shiny object syndrome' where we needlessly chase one new idea after another without making any real progress.

Plus, you will not be able to grow your business beyond yourself unless you can pause, remove yourself from the equation and step back to steer the overall direction of the business. We need a straight-forward process for tracking, measuring, and implementing new ideas and initiatives. Fortunately, I'm about to hand you off a simple

framework to do exactly this, which you can take and apply to your business. I learned this framework from Juan Martitegui, the co-founder of Mindvalley Hispano, who used it to grow his company from \$6,500 a month in revenue to \$60,000 a month within its first year. This simple framework is the secret ingredient that can get you to multiple five-figures in income each month: truly, there is no limit to what you can accomplish.

If you develop and apply this framework, it will free you in ways you can't imagine. It will give you clarity to make good decisions and help keep your business healthy. If you run all of your decision-making through the filters that this framework provides, you can easily increase the results of your business over time.

By setting up a structured plan, you have a clear view of the important metrics of your business and guard yourself from spending time on things that don't bring you any closer to your goal. This structure allows you to make the shift from working **in** your business to **on** it. Within this framework, three things happen: first you create a blueprint, measure key areas, and then tweak to improve in these areas. By developing this framework and focusing on these few key areas, you'll be able to make enormous breakthroughs in your business because it will allow you to channel your energy and creativity.

The Power of Four

To create your blueprint, pick four of the most vital areas of your business to track and measure. For our example, let's assume that we pick the following four profit centers to focus on to grow our business operation:

- 1. Increase Number of Prospects**
- 2. Increase Number of Customers**
- 3. Increase Profit per Transaction**
- 4. Increase Purchase Frequency**

On a weekly or monthly basis, study these four metrics so that you know them inside and out. To improve each in the short term, you might ask: How can I improve in this area by 20%?

There are four weeks in a month, and you can devote one week each month to improving in a different area. If you improve on each area by just 20%, then by the end of the month your profit has increased substantially.

For example, let's say you get 5,000 visitors a month to a website. In week one, think of how you can increase that number to 6,000. And of those 5,000 visitors, perhaps 40% opt-in to your mailing list and 10% of those convert to customers. For week two, ask: what can we do to increase the opt-in rate to 50% or increase the conversion rate to 12%? For week three, ask: can we increase the price from \$100 to \$120 and still convert the same number of customers, or can we offer a higher priced package? Then in week four, ask: can we increase the lifetime value of each customer by expanding or improving our product line, or can we increase transaction frequency by offering a direct up-sell immediately after purchase?

The point is that you have this framework in place so that you can measure the profitability of your business and tweak in different ways to improve upon it. For instance, if you didn't follow this process, how would you know whether you could increase your price by 20% and still convert the same number of customers? Most business owners don't test different prices, they simply set a static price and forget about it. But this framework holds you accountable so that you can test, test, and test, and see your metrics improve over time.

Make Time Your Ally

This is what a typical month might look like:

Week 1 will be focused on getting more people to your website

Week 2 get better conversions of visitors to prospects.

Week 3 test different price points and payment plans.

Week 4 work to improve sales page conversions.

In week one, you'll look at different ideas for increasing traffic to your website by 20%. For instance, you could start experimenting with different media channels. You can test driving traffic with Facebook, Yahoo!, YouTube, and so on. If you're doing Adwords, you could test different keyword groups that are related to your main keywords. For example, if you currently target "personal therapy" related keywords, you can also try

“art therapy,” “music therapy,” and so on. This is called expanding laterally.

In week two, you focus on increasing the number of prospects to leads by measuring the conversion rate of your web pages. You can buy a couple of cheap landing page themes on a website like themeforest.com, or sign up for a membership on unbounce.com. Then you would test both landing pages to see which converts better. You can test different themes, headlines, layouts, calls to action, offers, images, colors, logos, and testimonials. This is called multivariate testing. Try and only test one variable at a time - for example, if you have two different landing page designs, keep the copy (the written content) the same on each.

To find ideas to improve landing page conversions, check and see what the big, successful companies do. Companies like Google and Amazon have put a lot of money into market research - Google, for example, tested 16 different shades of blue for their boxes!

In week three, you can focus on getting leads to your sales page more often. You might do this by testing different follow-up emails then check how many people opened the email, or how many people clicked through to the website.

You could also make your email follow up sequence longer. You can create more sales pages, different offers, packages, promotions, or just excuses to contact them. For example - you can run a holiday sale, or say: “I’m turning 29 and want to offer a 29% discount.” Or even “My taxes just came, I’m screwed, and I’m out of money. But now you have the chance to buy this at wholesale.”

In week four, you try different things to improve sales conversions. For instance, infomercial marketers learned that saying “If lines are busy, please call back,” instead of “Please call us,” increased their conversions by 30%. One simple change in the phrase is all it took. In another example, you could test the text on the order button: “Try it Now,” “Order Now,” or “Inquire Now.” Simply changing the text can increase conversions 50%! One simple change can equal free money. And that’s the name of the game when it comes to conversion optimization of your sales pages.

Another tactic that can increase conversion on sales pages is called “decoy pricing.”

The way it works is simple: you create an intentionally bad offer to encourage people to take up the offer that you want them to take. For example, let's say you want to sell a CD version of a product for \$197. But you also offer a \$97 digital version of the product. So you create two offers: one option where they can get just the CD version for \$197, or both the CD and digital versions for the same price. you get both the digital and the CD version. You intentionally create a decoy offer to make your offer seem more valuable.

Tactics like these are deployed all the time by marketers in order to increase the perceived value of products and improve conversion rates. Marketing tactics are well-documented, which is why I don't devote much space to covering tactics in this book. You can find new marketing ideas from infomercials, or from books or blogs you read. The beauty is that, when you use this framework, you can take tactics like these from anywhere, and test them in your marketing to see how they affect your conversion rate.

Track and Measure

Start wherever you are. If you're at 0, then knock on some doors and earn your first \$100. If your blog is new and has only received 500 visitors in the last 30 days, then next month increase that number by 20% to 600. Invite a few guest bloggers to post, or try some advertising. And keep track of these numbers. Have Analytics reports sent to your e-mail at the first of each month. Then test different tactics in all four areas, and keep increasing: traffic, conversions, purchases, and buying frequency. If you stay focused like this, within three months you'll be well on your way. Within twelve months, you will have a vibrant, healthy, and highly profitable business in your hands.

Depending on your business, there are other metrics you can measure. The four listed above as examples are tailored to a business that sells a product through a website. If you run a service business, you can still use this framework - just pick four of the most important metrics as they apply to your business to track and measure. For instance, you can measure things such as prospects, close rate, referral rate, and increasing deal value, for example. The key is to focus on just few things at a time. There's real power in focusing all of your efforts only on your most important metrics. So pick the four metrics that matter, and just get started. None of these ideas will work unless you apply them.

Master the Chaos - Salvation Through Systems

"I thought, this is going to be a problem, my clients aren't going to like this, I'm going to end up losing clients. I'm out in Shanghai. 'Where's Mark?', 'Oh, he's off in Shanghai.' 'Well, enjoy your holiday.' That's what people usually say.

And the reverse happened, exactly the reverse happened. We ended up picking up more clients. And what I learned from that experience was that, people, clients, didn't give two hoots where I was sitting, as long as the work got done."

- Mark Brooks, Systems Engineer

It had gotten out of control. "Why are you working on Christmas?" the barista asked in amazement. "Why are YOU working on Christmas?" I retorted. A good comeback, to be sure, but she was only there because she had to be. I was there because I was paranoid.

It was December 25, 2010, Christmas morning, and there I was, nose buried in Photoshop, pushing around pixels. Strictly speaking, I didn't need to work, but I was working anyway. In my life, at that time, I didn't know anything else. Because I had no knowledge of how to work exclusively on the business instead of in it, I managed every single aspect of the company myself. I allowed myself to become a slave. It was senseless. Nights, weekends, holidays, none of them meant a thing any more. I was determined to get ahead and that was all that mattered. I saw my struggle as a fight that I had to win. Martyrdom had become my ethos and every other good thing that I could have allowed into my life was seen as useless and burned at the funeral pyre of my work ethic.

I was a young and cocky hothead, out to prove my work ethic, to show the world what

I was made of. And the horrific thing is - I'd somehow come to enjoy my workaholism, and if you'd known me then I would have defended the lifestyle. After all, I did great work, and my clients were very happy. But if I took a day off, so did my business. If I took two weeks off, the work would not get done, my clients would abandon me, and my mission to succeed as an entrepreneur would come unraveled. I'd be forced back into my parent's house - a fate I was determined to avoid at all costs.

It's only when the wool is removed from one's eyes that we gain the ability to see things a different way. We become stuck performing certain routines and we continue doing them, without even realizing that there could be a better way.

I could have easily continued down that sad, lonely path for a very long time if I hadn't made a conscious effort to break free with a two-month trip to Mexico. It was just a test - a test to see if life could still continue, if the world would still turn if I left behind the usual scene. Why Mexico? Because it was only a short drive away - and I was comforted by the fact that even if everything went wrong and my business fell apart, I could easily drive home and rebuild. I didn't realize it at the time, but that trip started me on the path to turning things around. It allowed me to break free from the usual routine, the way of doing things that I had entrenched myself in. Gradually, eventually, I was able to create a newer and better way of doing things.

The System is the Salvation

Whether you realize it or not, there is a system for every single thing in your business. These systems either run themselves by accident, or they can be purposely created and managed. You can have a successful business without consciously creating these systems, but it's probably going to be very chaotic. You'll never be able to extricate yourself from the inner workings of the machine. You'll have to constantly remember everything in your head - which means things will become forgotten. This reflects poorly on your business, and scrambles your productivity and effectiveness. It's far better to create processes that work reliably and predictably.

When you start out, you're very likely to have a hand in running every aspect of your company. This is not wrong - managing things yourself allows you to acquire a great deal of technical expertise, operational experience, and a strong sense of what works

and what doesn't.

Eventually you will arrive at the point where you want to create highly efficient “systems” to standardize and streamline your business. It's time to develop a plan to outsource certain activities and eliminate others. Free yourself up from the low-leverage, time-consuming activities to focus on more high-leverage, lucrative ones.

If you choose, you could replace yourself and remove yourself from the equation entirely. I did this for 2 years throughout 3 continents, working 10-hours a week from my laptop. I'd work 2 hours a day, then close up the laptop to have some fun - emphasis on the word *fun*. Depending on where I am, I might swim under waterfalls, ride across the desert in a dune buggy, swim with whale sharks, or just parasail on the beach.

And still - you are probably uncomfortable with the idea of replacing yourself and handing off responsibilities to a stranger. I get it. But you've got to get over it. I take a great deal of pride in my work, and I'm sure you do too. It's very important to me that my company delivers high-quality products on a consistent basis. But there's still a lot of processes that should be streamlined to reduce our workload, or outsourced altogether. Whether or not you're comfortable with the idea of “replacing yourself,” it's still necessary to create systems and delegate so that you can gain greater leverage to gather your focus and creative energy.

How to Create Systems

*“Using people to leverage a refined process multiplies production;
But a poor process multiplies problems.” - Tim Ferriss*

At its core, systemizing is simply a two-part process: first, you need to take all of the steps, tasks, and procedures that you use regularly out of your head and document them. Second, you need to deploy, tweak, and automate the systems that you've created.

Each recurring process in your business, from fulfillment to handling invoices to customer service, should follow a set structure, outlined within a “working procedure.” A **working procedure** is a document which describes the objective of a given task or process in the company and outlines - in very clear terms - the best way to complete

the process. This document can be created for you alone, even if you have no team, as a substitute for memory.

The working procedure is very simple. It begins with a **strategic objective** - a short introduction to the process and its desired goal. It then lists a step-by-step process, in chronological order, on how to complete the process. There could be five steps in the process or fifty; however, each step should be descriptive and specific enough so that any person you hire can complete the process easily and produce the expected result.

You should also create a set of “general operating principles” which set the expectations that you expect your contractors and team members to follow - such as sending a Friday status report each week, for example. **General operating principles** are general guidelines which empower people to make their own decisions and clearly set expectations going forward. General operating principles can and often do encompass all operations of a business in the form of company values, or “core values.”

The final component of systems which I recommend you create are “project wikis.” More on these in the section below.

Why Systemize? 13 Reasons.

There are a number of reasons why you should systemize the processes of your business if you're really serious about running a successful business. Here's thirteen of them.

1. Inevitably, if you don't systemize, you'll forget things. This reflects poorly on you, your team, and your business.
2. Systems deliver an excellent result **consistently**.
3. Without a system, the entire company will be thrown into chaos every time someone new joins or someone experienced leaves your team.
4. Systems impress clients because you can anticipate their needs and concerns in advance and deliver on them before they come up.
5. To earn more money! Each time a process is repeated, you and your team become more proficient and efficient at it. You can complete the task in less time and accomplish far more.
6. Good systems simplify decision-making. Making decisions about what to do and

what not to do is the most time-consuming activity of a business. Automated systems that streamline decision-making add tremendous efficiency and speed to the business.

7. It encourages and empowers team members because you provide them the support they need to be successful.

8. Systems free you to relax and focus on what you do best. You don't have to spend all of your time putting out fires and managing all the details. Instead you can focus on high-leverage activities such as engaging your creative brain and building relationships.

9. Without systems, the business shuts down once you've left the building. It's not really a business. It's a job you can't quit - and you're stuck working for a crazy person.

10. When you create systems it forces you to **narrow your focus** and make tough decisions. There are certain things that can't be systemized easily. Perform an 80/20 analysis of which activities offer the greatest return on time investment, which activities deliver progress to your goals, and so on. You can identify which activities are worth handling personally, which can be run by systems, and which need to be discarded.

11. It takes time to learn everything that you know. By systemizing it and handing it off to someone else, you're providing that person a valuable shortcut to do what you do without going through the same time-consuming trial and error.

12. Systemizing allows you to repeat a process and avoid all of the problems you encountered the first time.

13. So you can take a break!

You should systemize even if you're a solo-preneur, working alone. Often you'll come up with great ideas but don't have an outlet in place for them. With systems, you have a structure in place to capture these great ideas and implement them.

Building great systems to run your business requires some work up-front. There's no getting around it. A lot of people start out thinking that developing systems requires too much work, and bypass them, or procrastinate in creating them. This is a mistake. You should start creating systems now - even if they're basic. Just start by creating a folder on your desktop called "SYSTEMS," and as you do certain tasks, document the steps. Once you start creating systems and see the value and the efficiency that they add, you will become a fan.

Project Wikis

One more important reason to document your processes is so that you can create project wikis. You need to institutionalize the memory of your organization, and create a forum for communication within the team. A project wiki is a place where you and your team share everything you've learned, and where you can store training or process-related documents. These can be used to educate clients or new contractors.

Project wikis are a tremendous asset to have. Let me give you an example why they're so important. I used to create a lot of WordPress websites - for myself and for clients. Still do. Wordpress sites are a popular target for hackers - and I can rarely think of one single period in our first three years of business where we didn't have at least one site breached. Often we would have several that needed to be fixed. Each time I hired an IT person on oDesk, I required them to tell me exactly what the problem was, provide screenshots, and explain how they fixed it. I would collect these and add them to our wiki. By doing so, our organization now had a very good idea of how our websites were getting hacked into and how we could fix them in case similar issues were to happen in the future.

Furthermore, from the information gathered, I learned a number of ways to prevent hackers from breaching our sites. I learned that WordPress websites are frequently targeted through their back-door "WP-ADMIN" login screens. We set certain standards to reduce this risk. One was to never use the handle "ADMIN" as a username. We set standards for making passwords more difficult. We began installing the plugin "Hide my WP" on every site we managed in order to make our login screens more difficult for hackers to target.

Ready to Begin?

*"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."
-Aristotle*

The advice in this section may not come easily to you if you're not used to thinking in terms of systems and processes. But even your daily life follows certain processes, too. The things we do today are very similar to what we did yesterday, and what will we do tomorrow. If you start thinking of your day this way (as a recurring process), you can tweak it to improve it. You can create certain habits and discard others.

For instance, I've learned that my most valuable working hours are roughly between the hours of 10 am and 1pm. This is when I'm most "in the zone." It is during this window that I work on all of my most important tasks, usually creative work. So I won't schedule any calls, e-mails, or meetings during this 3-hour window. Other activities that I need to do that require less of my brain's output are done before, or after. Further, I also realized that a big deterrent to peak productivity for me was hunger. After eating lunch, I would find it very difficult to start myself up and be productive again. So I began to bring food with me when I work (fruit, veggies, nuts, etc.) so that when I'm at my most productive I could continue working longer if needed, and forego lunch until later. Finally, one of the best productivity "hacks" I discovered was simply eating the same food for lunch each day of the week. Before I would spend too much time thinking about what I wanted to eat for lunch, and it distracted me from focusing on more important things.

I have a friend who actually records a personal notebook called: "Dear Dumb Ass." At the end of each day, he sets aside 10 - 20 minutes to rate his day. And he writes it all down. Did it suck? OK, what made it suck? Here's all the things that sucked. Often he just vents. He keeps a little list of all the things to fix in his life, and he swears that his daily "process" keeps getting better. I too find that a "book of bitching" can be a very useful tool whenever I need to vent and get frustration out of my head.

The point is, these are examples of personal habits that combine to form a daily process that can be managed. You can begin thinking like a systems engineer if you look at things this way, and tweak your daily habits to improve them.

Escape Velocity

In physics, there is a term called "escape velocity." It is the speed needed to "break free" from the gravitational attraction of a massive body (such as the earth), without further propulsion. When a rocket ship takes off, it requires massive propulsion to achieve escape velocity. 90% of the inertia encountered during takeoff occurs as the rocket breaks the gravity barrier. Once it has broken free, the forward flight of the rocket becomes almost effortless.

Our minds have their own barriers. We're programmed to resist change, especially if it's uncomfortable. If you need to do something but it's difficult at first, stick with it. With time and effort you'll overcome your own inertia. Before long, repeating the same

process successfully becomes almost effortless.

Systems do require some additional effort to assemble. 90% of the effort goes into creating, documenting, tweaking, and perfecting the system. Once a system is mastered, it can be automated and run almost effortlessly.

Q&A: Questions and Answers

What should I systemize?

Begin with the most frequent, core functions of your business. What type of service does your business deliver? If you perform Google Adwords services, start building a step-by-step system for that, then identify which steps can be outsourced. If your Adwords campaigns serve local clients within a specific niche and location, you can repeat the same process over and over for other businesses within that niche in a different location. If you run a blog, create a system for delivering high quality content consistently and lay out operating principles: note which posts do the best, and observe the reasons why. Did this headline work better? Why? Did this photo get more clicks? Why? You could also look elsewhere: observe leaders in industries that are similar to yours and take note of what they are doing.

Start by documenting the processes that you already know well, and then build other systems as different processes become a regular part of your business. Also, whenever you read a book or a blog and discover a new tactic, plug that into your existing systems to make them better.

My business depends on me personally handling the work. What good will systems do me?

Get your head out of your rear. Sorry. But no, really. This mindset is both counterproductive and short-sighted. If the owner of a restaurant wants to grow his business, he can't do so if he's the one to personally put the parsley on every plate (try saying that 5 times fast: "personally put the parsley on every plate"). The next time you're at the office at 10:00PM trying to do something that someone else should be doing, be honest with yourself.

As entrepreneurs, we all too often embrace workaholism as a badge of honor. We are tempted by the impulse to work harder than everyone else so that we can get ahead.

Recall the concept of the “lazy programmer.” The simplest solution is always best - if a task can be outsourced to someone else with a two-minute e-mail, then it’s vain to try to spend two hours doing it yourself.

What if I hand things off to someone and they screw it up?

If mistakes happen, and they most certainly will - it’s your responsibility to own up to them. You gave a task to someone expecting it to be done in two days and two weeks later you still haven’t heard any word from them? Oops - that’s your fault if you didn’t clearly define your expectations for communication. Or maybe you did, and they still didn’t communicate with you? Time to set up a task management and accountability system (see the next section: **Tools and Tricks**).

The 5 Whys Technique

If an issue arises, consider it a cue to mean that something in the process can be improved. Don’t blame others, look instead to yourself and consider how you can improve the process. When you encounter a problem, practice the “5 Whys Technique.” Ask the question “Why?” until you reach the root cause of the problem.

Example:

Problem - We lost the proposal.

- 1. Why?** The salesperson didn’t show up to the meeting on time.
- 2. Why?** He had another meeting on the other side of town. The meetings were scheduled 15 minutes apart but it took 45 to get to one location from the other.
- 3. Why?** Our secretary scheduled the two meetings without realizing the distance between locations.
- 4. Why?** We don’t have a working procedure in place for scheduling meetings; if we do, we forgot to add in the step of checking distance between locations while scheduling.
- 5. Why?** We hadn’t encountered this problem before so we didn’t plan for it. But we’ll learn from the mistake and add it in so that it doesn’t happen again.

The “5 Whys” technique was originally developed by Sakichi Toyoda, the founder of Toyota, and was used within the corporation during the evolution of its manufacturing methodologies. The number of “Whys” you ask is irrelevant. What matters is that you assume nothing - ask why until the answer is clear and there are no more questions left.

Tools and Tricks

You can start building systems without any fancy tools or special software. All you really need is a keyboard and a word processor, and you’ve got all the pieces in place. There are, however, a number of tools (listed below) that you can use to leverage your systems, increase your productivity, and gain an unfair advantage.

Google Sites (<http://sites.google.com>) - Google Sites has become my de-facto tool for managing my business systems. It’s a free drag-and-drop tool that you can use to build basic web pages. You can control the privacy on them, and easily create a company intranet to manage your systems. You can also store internal documents and create project wikis, which you can use for training or hiring contractors. With Google Sites, every single training document you create is stored in the Google site and becomes **directly searchable**. Awesome free tool for systemizing and managing a remote team.

Text Expander/Texter - Typing shortcut utility. Create frequently-used “snippets” that you can re-use quickly. If you have documents or e-mails that you use often, you can deploy them again and again with only a few clicks. Avoid typing the same things over and over or searching your desktop for documents. Text Expander works for Mac, iPhone, and iPad. Texter is the version for Windows.

Intervals (<http://www.myintervals.com>) - Low cost task management and accountability system. Creating reports for clients is time-consuming; with **Intervals** you can give clients access to log in and see what they’re getting for their money, they can log in and see progress. It also includes built-in timers for keeping your workers accountable and on task - and you can prioritize tasks with red, yellow, and green labels in order of importance.

Task Anyone (<http://www.taskanyone.com>) - A great, simple, low cost (\$9.95 per month) task management tool. Lacks some of the advanced features of Intervals but easier to

get started with. You can manage recurring tasks, create and archive templates, and manage communication and accountability across multiple projects with multiple team members.

Google Calendar (<https://www.google.com/calendar>) - Free online calendar tool.

Whenever you and other parties agree to a set meeting time, you can plug the event in, add their e-mail addresses and the service will send automated notification and e-mail reminders to everyone. You can also sync your calendar with third parties and use the “Find a Time” feature to eliminate scheduling back-and-forth and arrive at a time when everyone is available.

Adobe EchoSign (<https://www.echosign.adobe.com>) - Allows clients and vendors to sign contracts electronically on EchoSign instead of printing them and signing them manually. \$14.95 per month for single-user license.

FreshBooks (<http://www.freshbooks.com>) - Online accounting tool. You can schedule automatic invoices to go out on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. A basic account allows you to manage up to 25 clients for \$19.95 per month.

How to Outsource like a Boss

When I first read about virtual assistants, I felt like a 9 year-old who just discovered a new cheat code for his favorite video game. I was so excited that I started shaking. Throughout grade school I'd always wished for a clone of myself that I could hand off homework assignments and exams to. Now someone was telling me I could pass along my job to someone in Bangalore for \$4 an hour while I chill on the beach in Bali? This was heavy stuff, dude!

Unfortunately, it doesn't work exactly like this in the real world. To effectively outsource things to virtual assistants like a true professional, takes some skill, training, and practice. You can't simply hand off important projects to a \$2 an hour worker, and expect to remain in business for very long. Outsourcing effectively also takes a thorough knowledge of your field, and use of the right tools and techniques.

With that said, outsourcing is the secret weapon for entrepreneurs seeking freedom because it allows you to accelerate your business and take back your time. It's possible to have the productivity of an entire workforce without having a single employee. At this moment, you can access a huge international pool of highly-skilled, experienced, hard-working talent for rock-bottom fees.

There are many activities you know well, but simply don't enjoy doing. Either they are extraordinarily time-consuming, dull, or don't pay well. For these, we can create simple systems with operating principles and working procedures that anyone can follow - whether they're working from Philadelphia, or the Philippines.

Return to the "High Leverage Performance Chart" in chapter four of this book to find a few examples of these activities. For example, I used to make a lot of money performing SEO services for US clients. However, writing original content for clients' blogs was

incredibly time-consuming, I wasn't very good at it, and I didn't enjoy it. I found an incredible American writer from Florida living in Thailand who was a godsend. He wrote for me for years for only \$7 an article. Plus he was a true pro at his craft, and performed the work far better and more efficiently than I ever could have.

Over the last several years I've mastered the art of delegating tasks to remote workers. I've created a set of simple guidelines for success in this area.

Speak the language.

Don't outsource something if you don't understand it. Ask the advice of a few experts first, read up and acquire a general knowledge of what needs to be done. Do a Google search and research some basic information. You should never ever give your contractor the idea that you don't know what you're doing.

If you're not an expert, then you can't expect great results from your remote worker. I never outsource something unless I know it well. The exception is when I need audio or video work done. I know very little when it comes to the technical side of audio and video editing, but I know enough to understand what constitutes a good product. I'm also no expert when it comes to IT-related issues, but I can at least speak the language, which is very, very important. If my website is saying it's broken because of XYZ error, I can Google the XYZ problem and quickly gain some conversational fluency before messaging an IT person. You need to be able to speak the language.

Delegate tasks that are small in scope and specific.

By "small in scope," I mean: don't just hire some virtual assistant to "market your website." Are there several specific areas that need to be managed to market your website? Let's say that you need article writing done for a blog. Do you know what a good, engaging, SEO-optimized article looks like? If not, you should learn a bit about it first before hiring someone, because you could be simply throwing away your money. While small in scope, these tasks should also be labor-intensive and time-consuming.

Give instructions that are descriptive and easy to understand.

Being unclear on instructions is an incredibly common mistake that people make when asking of a request from a contractor. The person you hire is not going to be as close to your company, website, or product as you are. You can't assume that they will

understand the context of what you're talking about from the start. Assume that they know nothing. If you are able to speak the language, and clearly communicate backstory, objective, problem, and desired solution in terms that are easy to understand, your assistants' success rates will increase dramatically. On the other hand, don't overload them with information. Numbered or bulleted lists can help break things down.

Hiring a long-term assistant

There are a variety of routes to take to find a rockstar assistant that works for you long-term. My friend Justin does survey interviews using SurveyMonkey and Skype where he'll qualify, and then interview hundreds of potential workers in one round. My hiring process is not that intense. The strategy that I've found works best for me involves starting people off with small jobs in the beginning to see how they perform. There's a saying: "Slow to hire, quick to fire." Those who perform the best, communicate well, and work well with me and my process I keep around and employ on a regular basis.

It's up to you to determine what type of relationship you'll need for the work you want done by your outsourcer. Perhaps you'll only want someone on an "as-needed" basis. Though there's huge potential upside in investing in someone for the long-term, too. You can share training materials and instructional ebooks with them, and trust them with access to your e-mail and hosting accounts. The more you give them access, the easier your life becomes. It's about making your life easier. Also, a long-term virtual assistant cares about your business, they are interested in seeing your business succeed, and they will work hard for you.

If you wish to employ an assistant for the long term, give them recurring tasks and empower them to figure things out. Don't give them new assignments every week or you'll just become a bottleneck. My first full-time virtual assistant worked for me part-time 4 days a week for about \$180 USD a month. If you can't afford to hire someone full-time, you could consider splitting a worker with a friend.

In the next section I'll outline the specific steps for finding and hiring contractors.

Finding and Hiring Contractors Instantly

You can start hiring contractors to outsource things to, right now! You can create an

account and post a job within five minutes after reading this section, and within an hour or two you can have a highly-qualified and inexpensive contractor working for you.

My favorite website for employing remote contractors is oDesk. For me, oDesk's system is the easiest to use. Also, oDesk's support is outstanding and they take a very professional approach to resolving disputes. Finally, they boast an impressive pool of professional and highly qualified talent. You will often receive a very diverse range of applicants, from Dallas to Dubai.

That said, I wouldn't advise browsing and contacting contractors. It's too tedious. I prefer to post a job and let the contractors come to me. Far more efficient. Simply post a little information about the job you need done, submit the posting, and within a couple hours you'll have dozens of candidates applying for the task. Then you can "shortlist" the best candidates, pick one, and hire him. Send the file or information he needs to begin working, and then go off to have lunch with a friend, practice your painting, or ride a motorcycle across a country!

If you've never used oDesk before, it's very straightforward and doesn't require much explaining. Simply register as an employer and you can begin outsourcing. Click the big link that says "Recruit" and then "Post a Job" and you're ready to begin. You'll be taken to a screen where you fill in some basic information about what you need done.

If you REALLY want to be lazy, you can click the link that says "Browse Jobs" and look at contracts that other employers have posted. You can browse the categories, or enter a keyword to search. You can then copy another job description, customize it based on your needs, and deploy it as your own. I'm not ashamed to say I've done this from time to time. I found another job that gave a great description of expectations for a finished product for an audio editing project, and merely had to change one or two of the lines.

Also, checking out similar projects is useful if you're unsure what to offer as compensation. As you gain experience, you'll learn to trust your gut. Estimate how many hours will be required for the work you need done, know what you're willing to pay, and post what you believe to be a fair price.

The contractor you hire may very well be from a developing country with an average

income 1/10th of your own. With that said, don't try to lowball your workers. Be generous based on the context of where they live and what their expectations are. They're real people just like you or I trying to make a living to support their basic needs. If someone does a great job for you or does a little extra work, it's a wonderful idea to include a little bonus, and they will love you for it. Good karma is good for business, you'll feel better about yourself, and your posture will improve a little bit.

I like to use oDesk for a lot of reasons. First, you can set contracts as low as \$5 for small tasks. It's great training wheels if you're new to outsourcing because you can get some practice with a very minimal barrier to entry.

Delegating Properly

Once you've hired someone, clearly communicate the expectations and guidelines to follow. Make sure they understand your general operating principles and working procedures. One incredibly useful tool that will give you an awesome edge is Jing (jingproject.com). Jing is a free screen capture and screen recording software, and it's a total game-changer. You can record videos of your computer screen and talk into them. Then you can quickly upload them to the Jing's server with one click, and a URL will be copied to your clipboard with the video you just created. You can then paste the link to your video in an e-mail or instant message, dramatically simplifying the communication process.

You can also simply take a screen capture image, and draw in arrows, boxes, or write in text over the image. That way, you can point out specific things and communicate ideas clearly to your virtual assistant. You can also record audio instructions using Jing. Just click over a tiny area and make a video, and talk into it. This is a great replacement for an actual call.

Jing has many awesome uses when it comes to communication, and it's also great for communicating with clients or partners. It's also an impressive follow-up tool to use with new leads. Its uses are limited only by your imagination. Since Jing is a free product, the videos are limited to five minutes in length. You can, however, upgrade to Camtasia which is the same product by the same parent company with no limits

and more features. Camtasia costs a one-time fee of \$99. Camtasia is great if you want to create full-length tutorials and information or coaching products. This neat little product is covered in greater detail in the “information product” section of this book.

By this point, you’ve provided your worker with the general operating principles, the objective, working procedures, and even provided clear directions using Jing. If your worker is a good one, then they should not require anything else. Unless they require legitimate assistance with a bottle-necked issue that only you can resolve, empower them to figure things out on their own.

Payment Options

Many outsourcing services like oDesk, Fiverr, Freelancer.com, Guru.com, and eLance have their own payment systems built in. However, if you want to enlist your own overseas virtual employees, it's best to use your options rather than go through these websites, because the entire process can be slower and more cumbersome. For example, if you are using oDesk, you would have to create a new project, invite your worker to apply for a contract, and then hire him again every time you want to send a payment. Paypal is an obvious alternative, but experiences with Paypal's support can be extremely frustrating. My favorite service to use for paying overseas workers is Xoom.com.

Xoom is a global money transfer service. You simply enter in your payment details and you can send money right away. Currently you can send money to 30 countries using the service. What's so cool about Xoom is that in countries like the Philippines, they will physically deliver money to your worker's home, and it only takes a couple of days! I love services like these because it bolsters the perceived size and importance of your company to your outsourced virtual assistant. There are also options to provide cash pickup and direct bank deposit services. Finally, the service remembers who you sent money to and the amount so that you can quickly re-send it. For convenience, exchange rates are updated frequently.

PART IV

Declaring Independence: Examples and Case Studies

*"Look at people who are doing what you really want to do
and ask: "If they're doing that, why can't I?"*

-Laurie Beth Jones

The New Subculture

"You have to find something that you love enough to be able to take risks, jump over the hurdles and break through the brick walls that are always going to be placed in front of you. If you don't have that kind of feeling for what it is you are doing, you will stop at the first giant hurdle."

- George Lucas

The individuals you're about to read about are fiercely independent. They are action-takers. They are laptop-toting "lifestyle entrepreneurs" who took their ideas and turned them into revenue-generating products and services.

This section of the book isn't a collection of get rich quick schemes. You'll get to know real people who've started successful businesses, making real money - from all over the world. They encountered enormous obstacles and resistance to their efforts. Most were dead-broke when they started out. But they kept their minds open to the possibilities, rolled up their sleeves, and made it happen through sheer will and determination.

Consider some of the realities our heroes faced when they started out:

- My friend Steve was living in a 6 x 10 trailer, earning a couple hundred dollars a week at a miserable telemarketing job when he finally found freedom.
- Kevin Wilke totaled his car on the freeway while working a minimum wage job, losing the last form of income he had left.
- Andrew Ferebee was an underpaid, overworked check-out clerk at Target who almost himself drove off a bridge in frustration.
- Ryan Fix arrived in NYC with nothing but \$700 and a plastic bag
- Johnny Ward underwent extreme medical experiments to ditch a career path in finance and to raise funds for his dream of perpetual travel

Most people read about success stories but they don't realize all the failures and heartache that accompanied the journey. Here, you'll get to know each person, hear their story, what they've done, and learn from them. They will teach you exactly how they've built up their businesses, what worked and what didn't.

Their stories are meant to inspire you, to fill you with creative ideas so that you can start a successful location-independent business and live the life that you deserve. Each feature is filled with a ton of tactics and practical strategies for how to successfully market and operate each type of business. I've devoted an entire chapter on each person to really delve into their business and provide real substance and actionable insights that you can apply to your own endeavors. They present real strategies to land clients, create a product, uniquely position your business, create viral content, market your business, build a mailing list, and so much more. Each of these businesses are virtual - they are marketed and managed online, and deploy the most cutting-edge, up-to-date practices.

So while there are many articles and books out there that feature the success stories of successful entrepreneurs; they fall short of showing you HOW they actually got to that point. The stories you typically see are chock-full of attractive soundbites and catchy headlines, but provide very little substance to the reader. They present the notion that starting your own business is some pie-in-the-sky, "if you build it they will come" path to milk, honey, and golden unicorns. The reality, as you'll see in these chapters, is often very different.

I purposely chose different business types that run the gamut to show you that the possibilities for making money on your own are endless. There is no one path that you have to stick to, or that you need to feel compelled to take. You never need to compare yourself to others. It's about choosing what resonates with you, and finding a business that aligns with your core values and the mission that you want to take. To truly succeed in business requires an investment of at least 2-3 years, minimum - so it's important that you start a business that you're passionate about, one that you can devote yourself to, one where you can commit to doing whatever it takes to make it successful.

Each person featured here has a BIG WHY - a strong conviction driving them. They

can't settle for the status quo, so they don't. It is not enough for them to make a living or earn money - they want to make a difference and help themselves, their families, their employees and customers succeed. They want more and they apply themselves. They get outside of their comfort zones, teach themselves new skills, work like crazy, make mistakes, fail often, but never give up.

I sat down and interviewed each of these individuals for at least 90 minutes or more. I really wanted to delve deep: describe their stories in detail, learn about the obstacles and doubts they had, and hear how they turned things around. I wanted to find out what was going on under the surface that made their business successful. My goal wasn't to just produce soundbites or attractive short features that make for sexy reading. I really wanted to create a comprehensive step-by-step guide from each interview that you can use.

Once you read these stories and feel inspired, start taking action. None of the information or ideas presented here will work if you don't apply them. So pay close attention for clues and ideas you can implement in your own business journey. But most importantly - observe these ordinary people and get to know them, and integrate the mindset and outlook they have. Learn from their mistakes as you pursue your own dreams. You'll soon write a success story of your own.

How to Build an Online Publishing Empire

Start a Business That Fixes a Need

Starting at age eighteen, Andrew Ferebee began searching around online for a website for men that delivered good content. What he found was that publications like Maxim, FHM, and AskMen are really just dumbed-down versions of Playboy. Too much stuff catered to men is little more than tabloid-style content that treats men like they are cavemen. Catchy headlines and fluff designed to titillate, but no real substance that men can use to improve their situation. They don't address many of the needs and challenges that face men or help them to overcome these challenges.

Yet Andrew realized that a lot of men share the same frustrations. They *want* to improve their lives, and they *want* to be surrounded by like-minded people. Andrew saw an opportunity to provide men who are looking for answers with real substance to address their common challenges.

KnowledgeForMen.com, a men's personal development and lifestyle website, was born and the rest is history. Andrew began a blog with no technical experience, and eventually wrote a number of articles that went viral, with several drawing over 100,000+ views each. He also wrote a two-part e-book for men under the name "Anthony Davis" and published them on Amazon.

Then he took things to the next level with the "Knowledge for Men Podcast." The podcast went on to become #1 in iTunes New and Noteworthy, in the top 3 for the categories of Business, Health and Education. And it was recently ranked #27 podcast of all podcasts in the world above 60 minutes, NBC News and HBO's Real Time with Bill Maher.

Andrew's Story: From Disgruntled Target Employee to #1 Ranked Podcast in iTunes' New and Noteworthy

Andrew had created his own “lifestyle business” and became master of his own destiny. But things weren't always this way. He explains his past in his own words:

“4:30 am. The alarm goes off. It's dark and cold. It was no time for any human to start their day. I sit and stare at the wall eating my bland cereal, which promises to lower my cholesterol. I had that going for me. I ate it with honey because I read it's healthier this way. I'm sipping coffee and no amount of caffeine seems to be able to open up my eyes.

I shower. It's scalding hot. My skin turns dark red yet I can't feel it because I'm still dreaming. I towel-dry and approach the mirror. The figurative and literal fog I am in, obscures my vision. I create a small patch of clarity, enough to see in the bathroom mirror. I shave and cut myself under the chin a few times but don't care because it's just too damn early and I'm not too excited about what the next 12 hours are going to look like.

As I drive closer to my work I notice the big sign on the storefront and begin to cringe at the thought of all the drama I'm about to deal with. Nothing ever goes as planned and the funniest part is that my biggest challenge today isn't making revenue, converting more guests into happy guests, or building relationships with vendors. It's getting my employees to show up to work.

You see, I work a job I have no passion for. I exchange my time for a paycheck so that I can buy nice things and look “normal” in society. This sucks. At my core, I know I'm an entrepreneur, an artist, a hustler. This wasn't me and it was killing me from the inside out.

I wanted to die. I was confused, lost and lonely. I remember driving feeling severely depressed on the Coronado Bridge. It was like a physical pain in my stomach that spread throughout my entire body. My life was in a rut and a knife was in my gut. The pain was horrific and for a split second I thought, “What would happen if I drive off this bridge?”

How to Bust Through Fear, Rejection, and Failure to Get the Success You Want

Everything Andrew has achieved is due to the fact that he is a true go-getter. He

consistently takes massive action to go after what he wants in life, despite the fact that he repeatedly encounters the prospects of rejection and failure. I asked Andrew: what's the biggest thing that differentiates people like him who get behind the wheel versus most others who would rather take a passive role in life? How can someone develop that key trait that separates the "doers" from the "talkers?"

Andrew believes that to get anywhere, taking massive action in the direction you want to go is key. You have to overwhelm your mind, that little thinking voice inside of your head, with thoughts and impulses of action. The main obstacle to success is the internal resistance within yourself. Overcoming your fear and internal resistance is going to help you take action and be okay with failure, and understand that it's all just a part of the process. Pain motivators are also a very powerful way for getting you to push through and take action. Think about what you DON'T want in your life, and it will drive you to take the action you need to take.

In his case, Andrew didn't want to spend his entire life getting dumped by girls that he liked. So he forced himself out of his comfort zone and usual way of doing things. He took on a personal challenge that made a huge difference in his perspective. He called it "**The 30 Day Challenge to Smash Fear in the Face**" where he approached and tried to collect numbers of 300 women in a month: ten women per day. Such a challenge is transformational, he says, because afterwards you'll never be hurt by rejection again. If you perform a challenge like this and look at it as funny, adventurous, and not take the rejection personally, then you can do almost anything.

Most people fear public speaking, so it's one of the best ways to break out of your comfort zone. Challenging yourself helps build your confidence as you become comfortable in your own skin and in your ability to open up to others.

How to Write Viral Content

After he began his blog, Andrew began to rigorously study the process of "viral writing." The first viral article Andrew wrote was ***The 13 Lessons You Need to Learn in Your 20s to Discover Yourself***. He spent a week just working on this one post and completely put his heart into it. The day after Andrew published the post, he got so much traffic that the

website crashed. That first viral article drew 30,000 visitors at a time when his entire blog was only getting 100 views per month. The post has gone on to generate over 150,000 page views.

Andrew thought he got lucky. He had no strategy at the time, he was just writing. So he tried to figure out what worked and what didn't. He soon followed up his first viral post with several other articles that also went viral. As people were drawn to his site and read one article, they would view the other articles and share those as well, cultivating in a massive chain reaction. Within just a couple of months, Knowledge for Men as a whole shot up from 100 page views a month to 100,000 a month.

The most popular posts on KnowledgeForMen.com have titles such as:

The 13 Lessons You Need to Learn in Your 20s to Discover Yourself
The 10 Reasons Why No One Knows What They're Doing in Their 20s
The 21 Things to Let Go Of to Become the Happiest Person in the World
Trash Your Porn, Quit Masturbating and Crush Life

Andrew's posts tend to be quite long. When he started out he heard that a good blog post should only be 600-800 words. However, he often writes articles that are longer than 2,500 words - some are over 5,000. The reason is simple: he wants to actually solve the problem. He doesn't call his posts "articles" - he considers them as guides. Whereas a lot of other resources put a band-aid on the problem, avoid it, or simply address it with humor, Andrew takes it upon himself to help guys solve the root of the problem.

What are some of the common elements shared by each of his viral articles? First, as he said earlier, the articles have to be really good. Instead of spending your time trying to post 2 or 3 new articles each day, take that same time and write one really good post per week. Andrew spent weeks to write some of his blog posts. Priority #1 is creating good, new content. You have to do your research, find good information, and support it. You should also find really vivid, engaging images to accompany the articles. Andrew uses 5 or 6 really eye-catching photos in each of his articles. Next, the headlines have to be excellent. The headline can make or break an article, because it's the first thing people see and it's what they click on.

Andrew recommends the book "Ca\$hvertising" by Drew Whitman as an excellent guide for creating great headlines. Selecting the right words and the right language in your headline to ensure that people will view your content is critical. Next, Andrew says that most of his viral articles are all numbered lists. He explains that numbered lists work because people engage with them easily. Andrew's headlines often follow a very simple formula where he creates a numbered list and establishes a target for the content: **"13 Lessons..."** and **"...To Learn In your 20's..."** Because Andrew establishes who the article is for within the headline, the article becomes very compelling to anyone within that demographic. Even people in their 30's will wonder: "What didn't I learn in my 20's?" Headline like these really engage people and encourage them to read the article to discover it for themselves.

Andrew says that quotes work really well, too. All of his articles contain quotes. Good content, good images, great headlines, good quotes, are all some of the things that Andrew says comprise the bare minimum guidelines for a viral article to follow.

How to Generate Great Ideas

I asked Andrew about his method for coming up with great ideas to write about in the first place. I suggested that the best pieces of content cater to some basic human need: love, money, and success. Andrew agrees, and says that the book "Ca\$hvertising" addresses many of the elements that trigger human emotion. These include relationships, life advice, health and fitness, and so on. These are things that people are always interested in, and the book teaches how to use words that trigger a person's emotional drives. Andrew writes his articles based on suggestions from the book.

When you write, Andrew says, be authentic. People want to know who you are. Don't be afraid to share your insecurities and imperfections - warts and all. People love authenticity. Say what you want to say; disregard all academic writing. What's really important when people come to your blog is to really get them to connect with you. Forget about "academic writing" - forget about whether something makes sense, and disregard theories and figures. Just focus on what you're thinking and write it - chances are good that people can connect and engage with your thought process. Don't be afraid to say things that may offend people. You might ruffle some feathers, but people who can relate to you will love you that much more.

Andrew's style of writing is very "me to you," as though he were having a one-on-one conversation with someone over coffee. I asked Andrew how he found "his voice" when writing. He started out as a Target employee with no literary degree or background in writing. You learn how to write by just writing, he says. Before he ever created his first viral post, Andrew had been regularly posting to his blog for a year and a half. But the articles weren't really going anywhere. Nothing he was doing was working during that time. It took a while. However, reading other people's successful blogs, such as Tim Ferriss, Leo Babauta, Scott Dinsmore, helped Andrew to develop his own voice.

When you have a life-altering event that drives your writing, that becomes very compelling too. Andrew had quit his job, broke up with his girlfriend, and just finished college. He committed to writing full-time, and put all of his passion and energy into his writing. He was completely taken by surprise by the success of his first article - his life literally changed within one week. The success of his new articles and the traffic they attracted allowed him to build his own mailing list. Andrew now focus on improving and expanding his line of products and optimizing his opt-in pages - one of which he says has reached a 69% conversion rate. To hit that number, he gives away a lot of value for free. Andrew gives away a complete toolkit complete with four guides that teach financial freedom, finding your passion, health, and a video lesson on dating.

How to Make an Extra \$500 - \$1,000 Per Month With Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing

Andrew actually created his first digital product a few years before his blog, while still in college, called the "Men's Book of Knowledge." This book developed from his efforts to understand the female mind and the notes he took based on experiences with different women. One day a friend came to him seeking advice and offered to buy his notes. It was then Andrew realized that he had something he could sell, and created two 50 page e-books from his notes.

The two books have been selling ever since. He still sells between 50-100 books a month. He started out charging \$0.99 for each book, but increased the price in increments over time. He now charges \$8.99 and, interestingly enough, with the exact same product sells more books at the higher price. He asked, what would people be willing to pay? As he

raised the price, people's perceived value of the product increased with it.

Andrew loves the opportunity presented by self-publishing and plans to write and publish more books. I asked Andrew what the elements of successful self-publishing were. One, he says, you should start by creating a great product. Marketing can't compensate for a mediocre product. Next, how well you do all really comes down to rankings. If you focus on getting reviews and consistently get reviews, your rankings will increase. The higher you go, the more people will find you naturally. So if you're just starting out, leverage your existing network. Both Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg leveraged their friends and family when they were getting started. Send your book to friends and family and ask them to write you a review. Within a couple of months you can have 15 reviews, and by that point people will start finding and reviewing the book naturally. If you build a mailing list of subscribers you can leverage them too.

Amazon's review system is ripe for gaming, and it's not uncommon for authors to sometimes offer compensation in exchange for reviews. You could do that, but it's better to focus on creating a great product and encourage people to write real reviews. Andrew says that the initial collection of reviews that his friends and family wrote helped build enough leverage to get a steady flow of book sales coming in, and they have been providing recurring income for Andrew ever since.

Andrew says that when it comes to self-publishing, the more specific and in-depth you go on a single topic, the better. He says that you'll get more sales with four books each dedicated to a specific topic than you would with one large book with four different parts to it. The intrinsic value of four separate, shorter books is greater than if they were all combined into one big book.

How to Build a Successful Podcast

The biggest thing that made his success with the podcast, Andrew says, was "not caring." Learning how to be able to handle rejection - and the possibility of failure - is so powerful, he says. He has sent e-mails to everyone he's wanted to interview without caring whether he got rejected or not. He's even sent interview requests to people like Justin Bieber and former president Bill Clinton, just for fun. He can't always reach them directly, so sometimes Andrew sends interview requests in the form of Tweets,

or e-mails an assistant. If you want to reach someone, just Google the person's name followed by "contact." He was able to get Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, to agree to an interview this way through a cold e-mail.

Andrew was able to get all of these interviewees just by using a simple template interview, featuring who he is, what he does, how many viewers he gets, and the type of people he's interviewed. The template is short and sweet, but value-giving. He says that his show seems big, but little does anyone know he's running it all from his bedroom. When he first started doing interviews, the podcast wasn't live, so it was pretty challenging for Andrew to set up these interviews at first. Once he got a few key people to record interviews with him, he was able to leverage those names to get other big people on the podcast.

One time, Andrew was at a traffic and conversion summit and wanted to interview Kevin Harrington, one of the keynote speakers. Kevin was a former judge on ABC's television show ***Shark Tank***. After his speech Andrew waited in the hallway for him to come out. Kevin was surrounded by at least fifty people, but Andrew climbed his way through the crowd and literally shouted in Kevin's direction, telling him about his podcast and saying that he could send him a ton of traffic if they did an interview together. Andrew would take care of all the logistics, all Kevin had to do was show up. Kevin said he was interested, and passed along his business card. Unlike everyone else in the crowd, Andrew says, he was offering value to Kevin rather than trying to take value, and it worked.

Andrew feels incredibly blessed by the relationships he's been able to build with his podcast. He's had the opportunity to interview some of his favorite authors and business leaders, such as Robert Greene, Tony Hsieh, T Harv Eker, and others and been able to build relationships with many of them. He's learned just how small this world is. And the whole ride has been an incredible learning experience. Every day Andrew wakes up feeling blessed and thankful to be an entrepreneur.

Important Life Lessons from Martial Arts

Andrew has trained in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu for three years and says that martial arts can teach one a lot about life. The first is to be humble. Accept where you are, and be patient.

In Jiu-Jitsu, it's not always the most aggressive or strongest guy who wins. It's the guy who understands where he is, who understands the art of jiu-jitsu. New fighters often lose to smaller, but more experienced fighters.

You quickly learn that your physical might and strength doesn't help you win - the one who is patient wins. Mastery of Jiu-jitsu is a long journey, and you keep getting beat up again and again. Even when you're promoted to a higher belt, you'll continue to be beat up. Eventually you'll reach a height where new guys will come in and really look up to you.

Jiu-Jitsu is a metaphor for life and business too. A successful event in your life is like a belt promotion. It doesn't signify the end - you may have graduated to a higher level, but you'll continue to face challenges and get beat up. But if you stay patient with the process, enjoy where you are, and keep learning, you'll make progress and become better and better. The guy who stays in the ring, keeps practicing, keeps moving forward and never gives up comes out on top. Commit yourself to being a lifelong student.

Keys to the City

A Childhood Dream and Personal Mission

Starting at age 14, Ryan Fix knew what he wanted to be when he grew up. Whenever any of his friends needed help with an idea, they always came to him for help. Eventually, he came to understand that he was really good at making ideas happen, and loved the feeling of being able to help his friends. These early experiences instilled in him a strong desire and personal mission to help make his friends' dreams come true. He realized that to do that he would need a lot of money, so he started chasing after the money.

Moving to New York in 1998 with \$700 and a bag, Ryan was determined to make it work. First he served a stint as a stockbroker on Wall Street. Then got into real estate. And while both of those careers were lucrative and he was able to work as his own boss, they didn't provide him with much fulfillment. They weren't aligned with his true purpose.

Making a living is nice, but it just wasn't enough. So in his mid-20's Ryan decided that he wasn't willing to wait until the end of his life to start pursuing his passions. So he did what many of us would do: take some time off for a sabbatical. He stepped away from everything, did a lot of reading and writing, and began digging deep to start exploring his passions.

Ryan returned to New York afterwards and started a new venture called "Pure Project." Created in 2007, Pure Project was a co-working / incubator space developed before this type of thing existed. He believes that when people connect around shared passions that the ultimate outcome produces a common good for all, and so he created it with this underlying intention. Filling the space with lots of entrepreneurs, creative types, and artistic misfits, new and innovative ideas were encourage and promoted.

In alignment with his mission, Ryan began to do a bunch of workshops, classes, speak-easy events, and invited artists to come in and transform the space. They also had a retail facade focused on sustainable products and conscious consumption. It was a place where customers could vote with their dollars and be conscious of their consumption habits. Big brands such as Pepsi would come to Pure Project - asking to convey certain values through an “experiential store.” They became a production community for these experiences.

How to Generate Tens of Thousands Each Month Through Rentals

From Pure Project came PureHouse, which promotes the mission of creative collaboration. Physically, PureHouse makes up a network of spaces in New York that Ryan manages and uses for a variety of different purposes: primarily housing, but also commercial and public events. He focuses primarily on large spaces - a combination of 3, 4, and 5 bedroom apartments, many of which also have retail storefronts.

He rents out the housing through websites such as Airbnb (Airbnb.com), but takes things much further than the average host by serving a select niche market and offering things catering to their interests, such as opportunities for networking and creative collaboration. Vacationers aren't Ryan's primary demographic. Ryan focuses on digital nomads, creative misfits, storytellers, social entrepreneurs, artists, scientists. Individuals that are working at the forefront of innovation. People who are coming to the city to work on something interesting - not to just party and hang out.

He earns a nice profit through rentals, but centers it all around his mission to connect likeminded individuals around shared interests.

Operations

At the moment, Ryan has a team of five people who manage the housing operation. Currently they rent seven units in New York and generate hundreds of thousands of recurring income annually. He also employs a cleaning staff and a few freelancers that work with him on creative writing projects, and a salesperson that works independently as well.

Three of the units are together in the same building - in another building he runs two units and is looking to expand into the other four. Controlling multiple units within the same building is a big advantage, he says.

Ryan meets with landlords to setup partnerships where he takes over the lease, puts a host in the apartment, and then rents out the rooms to people primarily for the short-term. The hosts are usually friends and Ryan gives them a discount on the rent in exchange for managing the property. The hosts are keen to the idea and what he's doing, enjoy hosting people and share the same values. They are also interesting and connected people who provide value and information to Ryan's guests. They do whatever they can to make the guests' experiences as positive as possible. Ryan differentiates himself from most hosts because he offers his guests so much more than a simple a bed to crash on. He provides them with additional value that can improve their stay, connections, and opportunities.

In Ryan's business model, he focuses primarily on large apartments - ideally four or five bedrooms. By focusing on large spaces, he's able to provide some of the only spaces able to accommodate large groups, accommodating an underserved segment of the market. Managing large spaces also gives him opportunity to scale up the operation.

Airbnb is just one of several platforms he uses for filling the spaces. Because of the large amount of value he provides, a good deal of business comes through referrals and repeat customers. Ryan becomes their go-to guy whenever they visit New York. Ryan also utilizes a mix of other third-party platforms to generate leads: Airbnb being one of the prominent ones, but also several others, including Flipkey, Room-a-Rama, Vrbo, and Home Away.

Average stays tend to be about one week, though Ryan sometimes accepts longer-term stays. Many social innovation institutes and incubator programs come to Ryan looking to rent out his spaces for their programs. One of these groups is called "The Do School," a German non-profit that has an incubator / accelerator program for young social entrepreneurs. The Do School contacted Ryan with a large contract to rent out two of his units for eighteen students over a period of ten weeks.

The supply of private rentals through websites like Airbnb has exploded in recent years. To succeed in such a large market, one has to avoid apples-to-apples comparisons. Ryan's success lies in the fact that he has carefully built his brand around his mission and that he has selectively serving an underserved segment and niche within the market. This is a great example of differentiation and competitive advantage that can be applied to any number of businesses. The way that Ryan packages his product really resonates with his audience, which makes competition far less relevant. And the fact that Ryan offers units that can accommodate large groups is very important, as few of his competitors can match that.

Many people travel, and many hosts offer rooms and couches for them. But there are very few entrepreneurs like Ryan who focus on a niche and take things several steps further by offering more than just a roof to sleep under. Another advantage is that Ryan doesn't often accept bookings made far in advance. Most people who come to New York on vacation usually book far in advance. People who come for business and startup projects need to put things together last-minute, and so that's a sweet spot for Ryan. Further, they don't have much leverage to negotiate on rates, because they have to lock something in.

Ryan's monthly overhead is well over \$100,000, and holding inventory is not something that a lot of Ryan's competitors can do. Many would consider an overhead of \$100,000 as risky - but Ryan believes that risk comes down to how well he understands all of the variables about what he's doing. He understands what the areas of risks are, knows how to manage those risks, and is able to build protection against them.

Ryan's company is growing quick. He's putting profits back into the business, getting more properties, adding staff, and continuing to innovate. He's got a team of software developers building a technology platform to take the operation to the next level. And of course, he's having a blast the entire time. He loves his work, and virtually all of the operations are outsourced and automated. He's able to travel whenever he wants to, dividing his time between New York and Brazil.

Replicating the Model

Ryan believes that money can be made through rentals in many other cities other

than New York, if they meet certain criteria. He believes they need to be what he calls “innovation corridors.” Places like San Francisco, London, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong. The “sweet spot” he says, is areas where there’s limited amount of property and a certain area where everyone wants to live. In these cities, everyone wants to live in a relatively small geographic area. A city that’s spread out over a network of different communities, such as Los Angeles, is not really ideal.

Most of the cities Ryan targets are also expensive - and even though he’s paying more for these properties, there’s also higher demand. These also happen to be in places where alternatives tend to be very expensive. In cities like New York and Paris, hotel rooms are extremely expensive. A location that features limited supply and a high demand for short-term accommodation is the sweet spot. A city like Berlin, on the other hand, might seem attractive but there’s far too much available real estate and most of it is fairly cheap.

Again, Ryan is able to succeed because he makes it about more than just housing. He’s created a mission to push the envelope at the intersection of social innovation and creativity. He plans to manage even larger buildings, that can accommodate hundreds of people, and expand opportunities for large-scale creative collaboration. He views his job as creating a sort of hotel-incubator experience for creative innovators.

“Keys” to Success

Ryan says that to succeed, discipline is key. He’s also come to understand something counter-intuitive: the more responsibility and accountability that he takes on, the more freedom he’s found. This insight provided a real shift for him. He thought he didn’t want to lay any roots, wanted to remain mobile, and not have to handle a whole bunch of responsibility.

Right now, he has a series of leases and a team of people whose livelihoods are dependent upon the income of the business. While it’s a lot of responsibility, at the same time, his team is extremely committed and handles all aspects of the business. Having a great team frees him to do what he does best.

Part of the equation is finding good people. But he also believes that everyone has good

inside of them, and that you need to be able to focus on what's good in a person and help grow that. If we see someone as a criminal, they'll become a criminal. If we see potential within someone they can grow into that potential. You must be good at seeing potential within people.

Optimism is a big part of being successful as an entrepreneur. Ryan also believes his happiness - and gratitude is an essential component of success. The more he allows himself to be grateful and at peace, the more successful he's been. He feels that the more he practices gratitude, the more he has to be grateful for. Receive anything that happens - good or bad - as something positive and an opportunity to grow. For example if someone treats you badly, look at it as a blessing and a chance to grow: they are offering you the opportunity to learn important values such as patience and tolerance. Create these behavioral patterns and integrate them into your thinking and being.

Again, Ryan says, discipline and implementing good habits is key to being successful. Getting up early, exercising, eating healthy, getting enough sleep, doing things you enjoy, surrounding yourself with people that bring joy and peace into your life. Being selective of the energy that you let into your life. Being conscious and aware of everything that you're doing.

The Sharing Economy

Ryan believes that a service like Airbnb, where we share space in our home with strangers, is just one early component of a large global change in the way we live and manage our lives. He says that an important global trend is that people are willing to share a lot more. He believes that this collective movement to share more is a response to the fact that we can no longer consume in the same way that we have been over the last several decades.

“Growth” in the past couple of centuries has been very outward-focused: growing revenue, building buildings, accumulating more stuff to put into our homes. Ryan believes that growth is now shifting internal: and that's a function of sharing. The more we share with one another, the more we grow internally.

At the same time, we're seeing that as people share more, they're becoming more

connected to themselves and others, and experiencing more joy in their lives. They enjoy the process of sharing and want to share more. This movement is growing into a tidal wave that's threatening centuries-old infrastructures. You can't stop a tidal wave. You can try, but it's a waste of time and energy.

Ryan believes that we're just at the very beginning of this wave. He firmly believes that global banks will face bankruptcy within future decades because of the sharing economy. Thanks to crowd funding, a person no longer needs to go to a bank to get a loan. Nor do they need to withdraw money from an ATM when they can simply swipe their phone.

The process of sharing is already well-ingrained into millennials and the younger, digital generations through behaviors online. Technology is becoming more and more integrated into the human experience. We frequently share everything from photos, videos, torrents, e-books, and more without even thinking about it. Open source sharing of programming scripts has revolutionized web and software development. This behavioral pattern will only become more widespread and accepted in the physical world when it comes to sharing tangible products: housing, office space, automobiles, lawnmowers, etc.

There is some entrenched opposition to the sharing economy. Regulators are pushing back due to the interests of big business and its marriage with the government. Ryan feels that rather than trying to regulate in order to stifle this shift, we need to realize that this is the wave of the future, and regulate to support this movement. Stifling innovation never provides long-term benefit to society, and it actually causes societies to fall behind the others that do embrace innovation.

More than anything, Ryan sees the sharing economy movement as a people's movement. It empowers individuals instead of empowering the few. He believes that in the days ahead there will be many opportunities for individual entrepreneurs.

Gnome Around the World

May 10, 2010. Ladakh, India.

He refused to accompany them on the suicide mission. A large snowstorm was already on its way. The guide assessed the conditions and told them that they only a 2% chance of reaching the summit. "You will die if you try to climb that mountain," he warned the two young adventurers.

Two hours before summit. His partner, a cheeky Brit who had been cocky during the entire climb, turned to him: "I just can't do it any more. I have to go back." After five days of trekking, Jeff was on his own. *He made a choice that he would keep going, or black out trying. He faced down a steep, steady assault on the summit. The lack of oxygen at that altitude made his legs weaker and weaker, and Jeff had to struggle to summon every ounce of energy to continue. He was only a few hundred feet away, but it was the longest walk of his life.*

It was his dad's birthday when Jeff reached the summit of Stok Kangri, the tallest peak in Ladakh, "The Land of High Passes," in the Indian Himalayas. He savored his prize as he sat looking down in awe at the great gaping vastness of the world below. With this stunning panorama as his backdrop, he held up a sign as snapped a photo to send back home: "Happy birthday, Padre!"

It was only a few years earlier that Jeff had ditched the life of an office worker, leaving behind the world of corporate finance forever. What had gotten him to this peak? Garden gnomes.

Make the Climb

It wasn't the first time Jeff found himself struggling to finish the last few hundred feet of a difficult climb. When Jeff started his business he built his website himself, and even after a long time, there were still no sales. He kept giving himself sales deadlines, but nothing was happening. Frustrated, he left to go backpacking around the world for a few months, and gave up working on the site. Just before he left he did something that saved his company's future. He hired an Indian outsourcer for a couple hundred dollars a month to create content for the website. To his surprise, upon his return the website was now ranking in search engines and orders were beginning to trickle in. It was just in time, too - he was just two weeks away from pulling the plug completely and shutting everything down. Those first few orders saved Garden Gnome World from extinction - Jeff finally realized that he could make this work.

It's a frustration that so many entrepreneurs experience. You can be a few hundred feet away from your goal, yet need to struggle through the most grueling uphill climb to reach it. The oxygen becomes sparse and it becomes difficult to breathe. Everything in you tells you to quit. We often spend so much time preparing our product, and put so much of ourselves into it, that we can get self-conscious. When it comes time to bring it to the market, we can become overly critical of ourselves. The "hobgoblins of the mind" come out, and they can defeat us. Self doubt compounds as fear of failure, fear of success, fear of criticism, all come to the fore. Our minds, hard-wired to resist change, can come to work against us. Launching a new product which could potentially change everything is often incredibly stressful.

Jeff told me that entrepreneurship is a lot like running a race in the dark and not knowing where the finish line is. You don't want to stop the race, and look back and realize that you were so close to the finishing line. But while you run you just don't know where it is. He says that to succeed an entrepreneur, you have to listen to both your heart and your mind. You start at the bottom and must believe in your ability to reach the top. Have a strong sense of optimism. Make the climb. But don't be too optimistic that you become blind to reality - realize when things aren't working and when to correct course. Detach yourself from your ego. It will blind you to reality if you let it. Stay humble and keep learning. Keep a quiet confidence as you put one foot in front of the other.

Finding the Right Product

Rewind back several years. Jeff had just decided to start his own business with a physical product. What kind of product could he create? He didn't have a lot of capital or resources, so he needed to pick a small market without competition. He read an article about garden gnomes, and the inspiration struck. It might be fun to start producing them, he thought. He was looking for something that wasn't too difficult to make, and garden gnomes seemed simple enough - all it takes is some mold and a bit of paint.

The first design he came up with was a garden gnome with a jetpack. As he looked over his first big stack of gnome boxes in his parent's garage, he realized he'd made the most classic mistake of rookie entrepreneurs. He had no distribution whatsoever. At that time, he hadn't yet realized the need to identify market demand before creating his product. He simply wanted to create something that he thought was cool, and figured that if he built it, they would come. It was his first mistake, but on his path to business success, it was only the first of many.

He had spent all his money on inventory, so in order to build up a website to market his gnomes he also had to teach himself HTML and CSS programming. He set up a basic website using Drupal. Fortunately for Jeff, when he returned from his backpacking trip he got lucky with his timing: it was late September, just before the holiday crunch. A steady stream of sales began to trickle in. Because he had chosen an industry that wasn't competitive, it became easy for him to start getting traffic to the site through search engines. Jeff sold his first batch of product and was finally on his way to creating a sustainable, fully-functioning lifestyle business.

Getting Started

Jeff says that it's tough when you want to sell a product but don't know what. **The secret to being successful in the physical product business is to choose the right niche.** You don't want to pick a market that's so small that you have to scrape by; but at the same time, you don't want it to be so big that competition will come in and blow you out.

Retail prices of Jeff's gnomes generally run within the range of \$14.95 (for basic gnomes) to \$34.95 for more elaborate ones. On his website, he also marks up the prices to mark them down, thereby giving the appearance of a good deal. At minimum, Jeff doubles the

cost per unit for retail, though often aims for 300% or 400% profit whenever possible.

Many other gnome products sold by competitors are simply injection-molded, making them very basic and cheap. Their costs are a lot lower than his, but he prefers to keep quality high to target the mid to high-end of the market so that his company is represented well. He believes that targeting the low-end of the market leads to price wars and competing on price, which ultimately proves unprofitable.

Made in China: What to Know

Manufacturing costs are highly dependent on quantities ordered. Jeff says that you have to find a delicate balance. He focuses on small-scale production so that he can get a product that he likes that also fits with his revenue goals. He believes that when you mass produce batches of products you don't get as cool of a product. Because the company is comprised solely of him and a few partners, his overhead is very low, he's able to keep nearly all of the profits, and doesn't need to sell a whole lot of volume. He makes good money and is able to support himself by selling in lower quantities.

Be Specific

Jeff has tried to cut manufacturing costs in the past, and it often led to disaster. While ordering a rather small quantity of figurines, he specified the product perfectly. However, he told the manufacturer that he wanted them in a brown cardboard box. A box is a box, right? Unfortunately, when he got the shipment he was startled by what they sent him. It was as though someone in a village took a big sheet of cardboard, an Exacto knife, and a stapler and used them to make the boxes. There was no way he could let any consumer see these boxes. So he had to re-package all of the boxes, doubling the production costs.

The lesson is that you should take nothing for granted: over-specify everything. Get samples whenever possible. Also, if you're not in Asia but sending samples back and forth to China, it adds a considerable amount of time and cost. A 12x12 box can cost \$200 to ship and these costs can add up quickly.

The first thing Jeff outsourced was distribution. You quickly realize that when fulfilling

orders it's a big pain in the butt to pick and pack all your products.

Whenever possible, it helps to have personal connections with your distribution partners. Jeff met his fulfillment partner in Bangkok, who runs a printing company with extra warehouse space in North Carolina. Through this personal contact, his shipping costs are much less than using a service like Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA). Jeff and I have both noticed that a bunch of drop shippers seem to be located in North Carolina. He's never been, but imagines that the state is full of a bunch of half-full warehouses.

Systemizing Your Business: What to Focus On

After getting distribution, Jeff says the next step is to install systems in place, in order to scale up and grow the business.

The biggest thing is to measure your progress. With a product business, it can be frustrating because you have to keep inventory (and capital to do it). Your money is constantly tied up in inventory. But also, since it's difficult, it makes it more difficult for competition to clone your product and enter your market. **But if you manage your business solely based on the money in your bank, you're not going to make the best decisions.** He says that for the first 4 or 5 years, he was making his company's decisions based upon cash in the bank. It's far better to have a system for measuring progress based on reporting.

Monitor certain metrics of your business regularly, such as: how much traffic am I getting to my website? How much of that traffic is converting to sales? Determine which metrics are the most valuable, then focus on improving them. He says this advice might seem like common sense, but many bootstrapped entrepreneurs are so inundated with all of the details of running their day-to-day business that they forget to monitor metrics and make good decisions for the long-term future of the business.

Marketing by Season

A big part of success when it comes to marketing your business, Jeff says, lies in watching trends develop and capitalizing on them. A lot of the people who buy Jeff's

gnomes do so as gifts, so its important for him in his business to take advantage of consumer trends. The holiday season is a big boon to sales. In June, July, and May, people buy more traditional gnomes to put in their gardens. When there's a big political race, Jeff can take advantage of the situation by creating political gnomes. For instance, he's designed unique gnomes of Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and Sarah Palin and while those campaigns were in progress those gnomes sold out in high volumes.

Jeff says the next step is to try to get into retailers. The best way to go with a wholesale business model is to go to tradeshow and trade fairs. To set up at a tradeshow you need spend a few thousand dollars minimum for a 10x10 space. Once at the tradeshow, you need to know how to have a professional presentation and know how to make the best of it. Tradeshow marketing is a whole different skill that requires its own experience and know-how.

Distribution is different for every market, depending on the product. For example, if you sell jewelry there are sales agents you can hire on commission. Jeff feels that, as an entrepreneur, its worth your while to outsource as many of these tasks as possible. As soon as you are able, figure out what can be outsourced. He says that instead of taking his sweet time to set up his website in the beginning, he wishes that he would have paid someone \$500 to do it so he could free himself to focus on other things. If you try to do everything on your own, its easy to get "lost in the forest" and lose sight of the big picture.

Jeff offers a tip for those who sell their products through their own shopping portal: keep your storefront and corporate websites separate. For example, don't use an e-mail that is tied to your e-commerce website. You don't want your suppliers to easily find your distribution, because if they know what your profit margins are they may try to re-negotiate with you at a higher price.

Jeff's Advice to Mobile Entrepreneurs

Jeff doesn't consider himself "rich" - at least not in the traditional sense. While traveling in Hong Kong, he met with several bright friends who all took the finance path that he abandoned. Each were all making loads of money working 14 hours a day. Yet Jeff and his quixotic lifestyle were the center of conversation that night. They bombarded him

with all kinds of questions: was he coming out ahead while running his business? Jeff replied that it depends and responded with a question of his own: how much is your time on this earth worth?

Jeff's friends in Hong Kong placed all of their self-worth upon the number of zeros in their bank account. Jeff says that if you make \$200,000 a year but don't have time to do anything meaningful in life, then what's the point? Do you want to wait until the end of your life to enjoy it? By that time, you'll be old and it will be far more difficult to do the things you'd like to do. Even getting up and down steps will be a challenge for you.

It all comes down to the priorities you set for yourself. Jeff looks at his friends back home buying houses and new cars, while he's out exploring the Himalayas. It's easy to be jealous of each other. Jeff says that it's about finding the right mix.

Your perspective will change dramatically as a result of travel and world experience. Jeff says that if you live in one place your whole life, you aren't aware of the permeating mentality that seeps in and shapes your worldview. As soon as you step free of that, it allows you the perspective to make better decisions. When you travel to different countries, you expose yourself to different mentalities and unique ways of living. It gives you a unique lens to view the world and view life. Too many people become stuck in one mentality and continue to spin the wheels without stepping back and realizing that there are an infinite number of options open to them.

Find an overall purpose or mission that can drive all of your activities. Jeff has spent a lot of time thinking about what's important to him right now. When he was young he was driven by a desire to see the world; now he's seen it. You eventually arrive at a point where you look at the world and need to determine: what's my place in it?

Be open to sharing your ideas and don't play things too close to the chest. Entrepreneurship is not like a poker game, it's the opposite - you want to share your hand with other players. Jeff says that a big mistake he made in his early entrepreneurial career was being too private and not opening up enough to meet and share with other entrepreneurs. He says that regularly going to entrepreneur meetings is immensely valuable; you can pick up a ton of great insights and feedback that you wouldn't otherwise discover on your own.

Utilize the Small Business Development Center. Other entrepreneurs can lend you tremendous insights. Read the book “E-Myth Revisited” by Michael Gerber. The examples might be cheesy, but it instills the notion that you need to create systems and look at your organization as a whole. It also depends on the type of business you want to build. If you want to be a self-employed freelancer it requires a different approach than if you’d like to create a company that you can sell someday.

Become an “entrepreneur” instead of a “wantrepreneur.” A lot of people look at successful entrepreneurs and the lifestyle that they lead, and they see all of the milk and honey but don’t want to put in the same amount of work that made such a success story possible. Get into business for the right reasons. And just get started. Any experience is better than no experience. If you want to learn something fast, the best way is to just go out and do it.

When you pick your business idea, choose something that you’re deeply interested in. Whether you like it or not, to successfully develop a business requires you to make a commitment of at least 3 - 5 years. Starting a business is a lot like getting married: it requires a long-term commitment and lots of time and attention to succeed. Jeff thought he would only be involved with his first business for a year or two, but it has now lasted seven.

One Step Forward Through 100+ Countries

No Half Measures

Johnny Ward is not one to let obstacles stop him from getting what he wants. Broke as dirt and needing capital to fund his dream of international travel, Johnny returned to Ireland and did the only thing he could: lock himself up in a hospital for five weeks so that different pharmaceutical drugs could be tested on him. While these research experiments are generally believed to be safe, it was only ten days earlier that a story broke of a few English guys who had gotten swollen heads and lost a few fingers as a result of a similar experiment.

Johnny took the money from the trial, about \$3,000 USD, bought a one-way ticket to Thailand and never looked back. Turning down a future career in finance, he moved to Chiang Mai, an uber-cheap city in the foothills of Northern Thailand. There he took a month-long English TEFL teaching course, earning his CELTA certification. He became a certified English instructor and found work at a local school, earning about 21,000 THB a month (\$700 USD). He lived on modest means with a basic studio apartment with a dingy scooter to get around, but he felt he was living big. He didn't have two pennies to rub together, but loved every minute of the experience.

Fast forward to today, Johnny is now 30 years old and has been to over 110 nations on his quest to visit every country. This year, he's on an 8-month overland journey through Central and South America to Antarctica. While he travels, his staff works for him and he easily earns a healthy five-figures a month. On average, he works about 15 hours a week, with most of his operations outsourced. He's created a lifestyle and business where he can work less while pursuing his dreams and earning more.

Johnny is a living, breathing example that you can live the dream and still do well for yourself financially. Many people seem to think that these two things have to be

mutually exclusive: you can either choose to travel and have fun, or be serious and focus on your career. Even Johnny thought this, too. He had chosen the travel route, to travel to every country in the world. However when he began his travel blog, OneStep4Ward, it changed his life forever and he was able to have his cake and eat it too.

He's not the only one. Many have now realized that it's possible to accumulate material wealth and still live the high life. Guys like Johnny and many others from the Western world live in Southeast Asia and use "geo-arbitrage" to their advantage. In Bangkok, where Johnny is based out of, you can live like a rockstar on the cheap and have money left over for business ventures and investments.

The Stow Away

Rewind back to 2006, Johnny's first year in Asia. As his 22-year old self, Johnny didn't have the funds to do a whole lot. \$700 USD was enough to live and that was about it. Forget about spending money to travel around. Still, he had a month off for the holidays and really wanted to visit China. Lacking the requisite travel funds or even a visa, he did the only thing he could do. Johnny took two of his friends, went to a small border town and in broken Thai, attempted to negotiate a ride up the Mekong river on an old cargo boat. Johnny was determined to hitch a ride on one of these boats. But after being turned away twelve times, he resigned himself to thinking it simply wasn't meant to be. Finally, the captain of the 13th boat said yes. All they had to do was avoid police, pay the captain \$30 each, and sign a few documents stating that they were full-fledged members of the crew.

A bit apprehensive at first, Johnny feared the crew might take his macbook in the middle of the night and dump his body into the river for good measure. The crew was indeed a bit frosty in the beginning, but after a few rounds of drinks with the sailors, they were accepted into the crew. The boat first stopped in Burma, where Johnny and his two friends snuck in to the local village. They ran into some police, and instead of arresting them or even asking for their papers - the authorities were excited to see foreigners and everyone ended up getting drunk together.

Johnny's Adventures

From 2006 - 2009, Johnny traveled on the lightest of budgets. He traveled for a period of 13 months throughout Asia, on a budget of about \$4,000 or \$5,000. For that entire time his budget was about \$9-10 a day! He backpacked through areas in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal. One time in Bangladesh, he stayed with a man and his family in the slums of Dhaka. He couldn't afford to upgrade to the Four Seasons, but despite the modest accommodations he thought it was cool and loved the experience!

Today, it's an entirely different story - thanks to his online business activities, Johnny has financial freedom and can do as he wants to. While happier now, he feels that the romance of travel dies a little bit once you have more money.

Johnny has so many favorite highlights from the past several years that's it hard for him to name just a few. A huge football fan, one of his best experiences was attending the World Cup in South Africa. He describes summiting Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Fuji as "unforgettable" experiences as well. Tracking wild gorillas in Rwanda. Swimming with great white sharks. Witnessing the northern lights in Iceland. In Iceland, Johnny rented a snowmobile and rode across a glacier at sunset. He says it was "so beautiful," unlike anything he's seen.

Johnny just completed a trip in Central Asia. He flew his mother into Uzbekistan and took a trans-Uzbekistan railroad trip across the desert, which was breathtakingly beautiful as well. He also traveled to Iraq and Iran and was absolutely floored by the hospitality of the locals. He says it's really nice to be able to travel with his mom and do all these things, because it's all new to them given where they've come from. In the summer of 2014, he's taking his mother with him to Paraguay, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

When I asked what some of his worst experiences were, Johnny responded that the worst experiences are sometimes the best; they leave you with some of the best stories to tell. One time he was trying to get to Nepal from the north of India. At the time, the Maoists had overtaken the country and closed the border. He ended up taking three buses back to back to back. On either side of the aisle, the buses simply had benches with 4 people crammed onto them, uncomfortable conditions which Johnny had to endure for 49 hours. 40 degrees Celsius, no back rest, nowhere to sleep - he describes it as 49 hours of absolute hell. But he laughs about it now.

On another occasion, Johnny was traveling with an Irish friend, Paul, who had never traveled before. His friend met him in Tunisia and together they traveled to Sudan. Paul woke him up in the middle of the night. Something was amiss. “Go back to sleep,” Johnny groaned, “it’s four in the morning.” On went the light, and they discovered an enormous rat’s nest under Paul’s bed. Paul was terrified, but Johnny simply laughed hysterically. He took out his camera and took a priceless picture of Paul. Here he was, a big rugby player, standing atop the bed in his tightey-whitey underpants, absolutely mortified. Johnny still gets a good laugh out of telling that story.

Somalia and Sudan both seem, to me at least, to be risky countries to travel in. I asked Johnny if he has ever been worried about being taken hostage. Johnny responds by saying that Somalian people, and also Iran people, are the friendliest he’s ever met. He says that when he travels to those places he shakes more hands than “David Beckham when he arrives in Tokyo.” People come running across the street to shake his hand saying, “Welcome to Somalia.”

There are sometimes isolated incidents, however. During his second day in Somalia, Johnny was at the market buying bananas when an old man came up and punched him in the face. But afterwards everyone rushed to help Johnny and he could hardly walk four feet without someone offering tea, a chocolate bar, or some other gift and profusely apologizing for the incident.

In his eight years of traveling, Johnny says, being punched in the face was the worst thing that’s happened. He has been in the hospital once or twice due to spills on a motorbike, but that’s about it. His mother always worries about him whenever he travels to these crazy countries. He always reassures her, saying he’s not going to get kidnapped or stabbed. Despite having an iPod stolen once in India, he’s never had any run-ins with police or crime in eight years of travel. He says he’s more worried about theft in cities like London, New York, or Sydney than he is in Somalia, Sudan, or Iran.

Just say “Yes” more

Most of us would be incredibly apprehensive about the daring experiences that Johnny has been through. I asked: how does he overcome fears and doubt?

“Just say ‘Yes’ more,” is Johnny’s advice. His philosophy is based upon this attitude.

When we live our lives by this ethos, and say “yes” to opportunity, we’re always guaranteed to experience more fun and fulfillment. Even if he’s just sitting at home and someone asks to hang out, Johnny tends to think: “I just want to stay home with the air conditioning on and watch Dexter.” But, following this “Yes” philosophy, he pushes himself to get out there and meet someone new. The person may be from Sri Lanka, or Ecuador, and he relishes the opportunity to learn something new and have fun. And so, you must consciously make an effort to push yourself out of your comfort and say “yes” to opportunities when they arise. The more you say yes, the more opportunities develop. Pushing yourself out of your comfort zone is an ongoing effort, but the rewards are huge.

Another thing is to simply “ask” more often. If you don’t ask for something, you won’t get it. Too many of us don’t get the things we want because we’re afraid to ask for them - whether it’s a raise, a date, or a couch to sleep on. Travel is immensely valuable because it forces you into a new environment where you develop these habits far more quickly than you would at home. To survive in a new and foreign environment, we have to drop our over-protective personal bubbles, meet new and different people outside of our circle, say yes to things, and begin asking for things more often.

A big thing that holds people back is irrational fear of the unknown element - and of something bad possibly happening. Johnny isn’t fearless - pushing himself out of his comfort zone is as much of a struggle for him as anyone else. But he believes that if you see a new opportunity and you don’t take it, you will regret it later. Taking action, or making an important change is often uncomfortable - but the regret that comes from inaction and stagnation proves itself to be far more uncomfortable.

Beginnings of an Online Business Empire

Johnny continued to travel as cheaply as possible for three years. **In 2009, the existential questions began to creep in: where will I be in ten years? What am I going to do for my future?** Maybe it’s time to get a real job, complete with suit and tie. So this thinking took him to Australia and an office job. But after about six months, he was ready to slit his wrists and kiss corporate life goodbye forever. He tried to quit, but was offered a promotion. Another two months went by, and Johnny went into suicide mode again. He decided to start his travel blog, OneStep4Ward.com, and for the next 3 or 4 months he

used the company's time to start writing posts about his travels.

He had heard rumors that you could make between \$1,000 - 3,000 a month by blogging. He saw other travel bloggers who did simple package tours find success through their blogs. And he thought, I've traveled a lot more than these bloggers, if they can get an audience than why can't I?

He began blogging with the hope of making money. **His first goal was modest: get to earning \$1,000 a month through the blog.** \$1,000 was the golden number that would allow him to permanently travel. After all, he'd gotten by on a budget of half that during his previous travels. Flush with savings, he quit his job and flew one-way to Africa. Things started slowly at first, and in the beginning he was only getting about two visitors per day. But he persisted, and suddenly while in Ethiopia he received an e-mail out of the blue with an offer of \$60 to advertise on his site. This was the first dollar he had ever made, and he thought it was amazing. It proved that he could make money if he continued. And sure enough, after about six months, the blog was making a few hundred each month and after a year he was closing in on his goal of \$1,000. Within a year and a half, he was making \$2,000 - 3,000 a month.

How to Make Money Blogging

How long does it take someone to make money from their blog? Are there any shortcuts to speed up the process? This is what I most wanted to pick Johnny's brain about, to see what kind of insider tips he could lend from his experience.

How many articles does one have to write before they start making money? Johnny says that when he looks back at his first set of articles, he cringes at the quality. They were little more than diary entries. But they helped get him to where he is today, so he takes the embarrassment on the chin. During the period of time that he worked at the office job in Sydney, he wrote about 50 articles, recounting stories of his travels over the past 3-4 years. He didn't study any courses on writing or blogging, he just got started and ran with it.

Next, I asked Johnny: what makes the best content? What makes a person successful at creating content? Johnny explains that creating a successful content strategy requires

a delicate balance of attracting traffic and also engaging your readers. Articles such as “The 5 Best Bars in Bangkok,” and “5 Things to See in Berlin,” always work best for attracting traffic. Although they often don’t provide the most compelling reading, these articles are great for drawing organic traffic from search engines. But to generate an engaged readership, the readers have to buy into your story. Johnny’s story is that he is an ordinary guy from Ireland, just like anyone else, with no money who decided to travel the world and live his dreams. And if he can do it, so can anyone else.

Further, he adds, most people spend their time posting articles about the “same, boring stories.” They’re generic and lack creativity, he says. Companies like STA Travel offer the same round-the-world travel route to travelers from London to Bangkok to Sydney and back again. Johnny says this type of travel and the quality of stories it produces is too sterile, boring, and generic. He says it’s just traveling in one air-conditioned bus with thirty middle-class white kids between hostels packed with thirty more middle-class white kids. And they spend seven weeks overseas getting drunk with each other and watching movies in hostel common rooms. This is not real travel, he says, and that’s not the type of stuff people are really interested in reading about.

To blog successfully, you have to be genuine. You have to live, breathe, eat, and sleep the topic that you’re blogging about. It’s about authenticity, and digging deep into the subject beyond the surface level. You have to be unique and different. Within each niche, there’s a certain status quo. Travel - and by extension travel blogging - is no exception either. Within the travel community, there’s a rather sizable group of people that only go to sites suggested by Lonely Planet guidebooks. You need to break out of that, he says, and be a little different. For Johnny, package tours are his worst nightmare. The idea of being constrained to a set itinerary makes him cringe. He’s only used tour operators once - in North Korea, and only because it was required by North Korean law.

Tell Your Story and Build Your Brand

Through the process of blogging, you grow into your own brand. You put your name and face out everywhere, and the process of becoming a brand happens almost by accident. The process is quite self-involved: you frequently talk about your experiences, and your own dreams and goals. Though it may be a bit self-absorbed, it’s the price you have to pay to promote your blog.

Johnny insists he hasn't done anything amazing or special; he's just an average guy who found out he could make money blogging, picked it up and ran with it. At first money came in through ads placed on his blog. But now he's making far more money working as a consultant, using the experience and brand he's developed through his blog. He has created a spin-off from his personal brand, called "Step4WardMedia" that performs corporate blogging services for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Johnny doesn't rely on monetizing his blog these days, but still loves writing blog posts and still considers his travel blog to be his greatest asset. He loves to wake up in the morning and receive e-mails from readers wishing to discuss their travel plans. Even after eight years, he still lives and breathes travel, and loves thinking about and talking travel. The whole "get it out of your system" thing doesn't apply to him. He's following his passion, having fun, and making a ton of money at the same time. "Yeah - it's really cool, mate," Johnny says.

Step4WardMedia

Curious about his income-generating activities, I pressed Johnny further about his media business. Who are your clients, and how do you get your clients? I wanted to know Johnny's secrets for getting corporate clients in the English-speaking world: UK, US, Australia, etc. while he was based in Thailand.

At the moment, Johnny hires six salesmen. They go to work for him contacting corporations and offering technical expertise. The corporate market is almost infinite. Every company that isn't blogging in 2014 needs a blog. Whether they use Step4WardMedia in 2014 to create a blog, or wait three years to work with another company to start a blog, they need to have one.

I asked Johnny if it was difficult to find entrepreneurial opportunities while he travels. A lot of people that I know divide their time between developed countries like the US, Germany, or Norway, where their businesses are based, and countries like Brazil and Thailand, where they go for leisure. But it's about 50 / 50. Can Johnny really manage his business full-time from the road?

Johnny says that the beauty of having a blog that talks about inspiration and business and travel is that people come to him all the time with different types of business propositions. Further, the social group he keeps is all within the same collective entrepreneurial “mindspace.” Simple nights out for beers come to serve as a sounding board for the exchange of ideas and brainstorming. Many potential opportunities arise, but Johnny believes that when you feel you can hit a home run and are onto something that can make \$25 or \$50k a month, then pause everything else, stick with it and put everything into it while the opportunity exists.

Trading for 5-Star Resorts, Cruises, and Exotic Tours

Want another awesome example of how starting a blog can change your life?

For his 100th country, Johnny went to the Maldives, an island nation in the heart of the Indian Ocean. A far cry from the dirt poor style of travel when he started, Johnny stayed at the luxury 5-star Niyama resort, a favorite getaway of megastars like Jay-Z and David Beckham. Upon his arrival in Male, the capital of the Maldives, a staff member of the resort met him to escort Johnny to a private seaplane and off they went, James-Bond style. Upon arriving at the resort’s private island, he and his girlfriend were escorted to their own villa, complete with wooden stairs leading into the ocean, a private pool, their own golf cart, all the food they could eat, and more.

The best part? The trip and stay were free, provided compliments of the hotel. Johnny is no celebrity or head of state - he’s just a blogger.

This wasn’t the first time Johnny received a stay at a luxury resort for free - far from it. In the south of Thailand, he was given a complimentary stay at Sri Panwa Hotel, the nicest resort in Phuket, including all of the elements of luxury - private pool, balcony overlooking the ocean, and more. In London, Johnny stayed at the ultra-lux Grange St. Pauls Hotel London, across the street from St. Paul’s Cathedral. The Xara Palace Relais & Châteaux in Malta, a favorite destination of Bruce Willis. Jabunami Villas in Bali. The Savic Hotel in Prague. The list goes on and on.

Johnny has an assistant who works full-time to arrange trades for resort stays, tours, and other travel deals. Johnny describes resorts like Niyama as jaw-droppingly, out-

of-this-world beautiful. The normal rate for this resort is \$2,000 USD a night - but if they're running at only 90% occupancy, then they lose money by having empty rooms. They might as well invite bloggers like Johnny to stay for a few nights in exchange for a review, giving them leverage with their online marketing. It costs them nothing to give someone like Johnny a room at the resort.

Anyone can engineer these types of trades. Once you start a blog and build a following, you have a form of leverage that you can offer in exchange to hotels, cruise ships, and tour operators. Johnny gets a million hits a year on his blog, and about 25,000 fans on his Facebook fan page, but everyone starts somewhere. If you can show the company you want to trade with that you have an engaged readership, then it makes sense for them to accept you. Anything that isn't running at full occupancy - such as cruise ships - is prime for a trade. The cruise might normally cost \$5,000, but it doesn't cost the company anything to give you an extra room on the ship if it isn't sold out. In November of 2014, for example, Johnny is getting a free 11-day (normally \$5,000) tour to Antarctica. It costs Chimu Adventures, a South American tour company, almost nothing to bring Johnny along, so they might as well get free online marketing out of it.

It's a win-win, Johnny gets to travel in luxury and liaise with the CEO and marketing head of the companies he barter with. So these trades also help him to build valuable business connections as well.

Exotic cruises and stays in \$2,000-a-night resorts are the kinds of things most of us dream about. If you start a travel blog like Johnny's, it is absolutely possible to get them for free - it just comes down to asking for them. If you don't ask, you don't get.

Another time, Johnny wanted to go to Bhutan (a small mountainous kingdom due east of Nepal). The problem? Bhutan is one of the least-accessible countries in the world, and doesn't want to get a lot of tourists. A one-day visa for Bhutan costs \$290, so a 10-day tour costs almost \$3,000. Johnny desperately wanted to go, but didn't have a lot of money at the time. So he tasked his assistant to find every single operator that conducts tours in Bhutan. Two-weeks later, his assistant delivered a massive spreadsheet of every tour operator offering tours to Bhutan. He e-mailed every single operator with a proposition. One company responded and agreed to the deal. He was given a private driver, private tour, and all flights included. Now, he's become good friends with the

tour operators, who sometimes visit him in Bangkok.

Want to Live this Lifestyle? Johnny's Advice

Start a blog as soon as possible. And make a long-term commitment to it. No half-measures. A blog is an asset that you'll have for the rest of your life. Become engaged in it, promote your blog through your social networks, and over the years your blog will become more popular and better ranked. Start your blog as soon as possible, and before long you'll have a powerful asset that you can monetize, leverage for freebies, or use to boost your professional career.

Starting OneStep4Ward changed Johnny's life forever. He can sit around on a work-day in his Bangkok apartment, which he owns outright, and watch Dexter all day if he wants to. Starting a blog was the biggest thing that brought Johnny to this point.

Johnny sometimes acts as a consultant to friends helping them get started as travel bloggers. One of Johnny's friends living in Japan is now in month 11 of blogging, and made \$2,700 last month. Together they're traveling to South America because his friend can now live off the blog profits.

Here's how to get started: First, get an OK design for your blog. Investing in a nice, professional design is important. Create a nice banner. Then just get your first 50 articles up on the blog. Make these articles SEO-oriented.

Titles like:

"How to Make Money Online"

"How to Travel the World"

"How Much Does it Cost to Travel the World?"

"5 Things to Pack When You go To Thailand"

These first 50 articles are pretty generic, but they're the type that will allow people to find you through Google and search engines. For these 50 articles, don't even tell anyone about them. Set up your Facebook and Twitter pages, and update them every day or two.

Get these first 50 articles up as soon as possible. Once you have them, pour everything you have into writing 2 or 3 golden posts that you think can go viral. Add one, and then

promote the hell out of it. A few days later, add another, and then another, and keep promoting them as much as possible. By this point, people start coming to your site and can get lost in it. You've got 50 other articles, you're getting organic traffic, and so on.

Keep writing awesome articles, and within six months you're off to the races. How do you know when an article is good? Give it a read over after, and trust your gut. If you pour your heart into it, you can write a great article.

When you write a great article, you could also consider submitting it as a guest post to an already established site. While you'll be giving up a good article, you're also putting yourself out there on a large website that already has a large readership, which will help drive traffic and prestige back to your own blog. News interviews are another great way to drive traffic to your blog. If you've got an interesting story or are doing something newsworthy, contact a reporter that might be interested. Many reporters list their contact information in their articles, and local reporters within your city or state are surprisingly easy to reach.

Escape the System

What if Johnny had continued down the finance path? He's not sure where he'd be. "I'd probably be some asshole," he confides. He says that if you're going to spend your twenties trading time for money, be sure that you get something by the time you're 30. Don't fritter away all of the money you earn keeping up with the Joneses and being locked into an endless cycle of consumption and working to support your consumption habits. Is it worth it to arrive at 30, having sold a decade of your youth, and looking at another 20 years of servitude to pay off your mortgage? Is it really worth it? Of course not, Johnny says.

Minimalism is the way forward, he explains. Don't go around wasting your money. Beyond food and shelter, you don't really need anything. Until you reach the point where you're earning enough money and can comfortably afford to do as you like, stay frugal and smart. "But," Johnny continues, "if I had 100 million I'd be buying apartments everywhere."

The Testosterone Booster

Selling Drugs for Fun and Profit

Lars Wenas is a location-independent entrepreneur who owns the company Explicit Nutrition, which sells a high quality testosterone-boosting supplement at the website ExplicitNutrition.com. Lars launched Explicit Nutrition from his small hometown in Norway, but the business gives him a lot of freedom to travel and live his ideal lifestyle. We met while he was in Thailand, where he had spent a half year, training the days away at a Muay Thai gym in Phuket. In between boxing lessons, he would sit by the beach and drink from a coconut while checking up on orders of his products.

Explicit Nutrition gives Lars the freedom to travel and do whatever he wants to do. As long as he has his laptop with him, he can go anywhere. He is able to work as little as or as much as he wants to, but loves what he's doing, so it never feels like work. He has a lot of goals for Explicit Nutrition, and feels blessed to show up to work each day. However, he would not have gotten to this point if he'd followed the conventional path.

Backstory

Hailing from a normal family life in Norway, Lars was discouraged from doing anything entrepreneurial. Being brought up in Norway and having an entrepreneurial drive is somewhat rare. It's much easier to get a safe job because no matter what type of work you do, you're pretty much guaranteed a comfortable lifestyle. You can work at a grocery store and still earn good money. Norway has all kinds of different systems in place oriented towards keeping people equal.

For his entire life, friends and family advised Lars to do as everyone else does: get an

education, get a nine to five job, and live a normal life. He tried to follow this path, but after a couple of years he was fed up. He worked for an IT company fixing computers and doing the same things every day, and never felt challenged. He looked at other people in his company and observed that they were just doing the same things over and over again. A natural achiever, he wanted to set goals for himself and learn, but wasn't able to do that while working at the job.

One day, Lars decided enough was enough. He wanted to accomplish something more in life. Always passionate about lifting weights and body building, he felt that it was a natural transition to create something within that category. He was looking for ways to optimize the results he got from his training, and knew that testosterone is essential to grow muscle mass and gain strength. He decided to create a product that optimizes the body's natural testosterone production. There were already products on the market but Lars felt that the natural testosterone-boosting category had a lot of room for improvement, so he set out to create something newer and better.

Taking the leap from IT employee to entrepreneur was the best decision Lars had ever made. If he remained with his company, he would still be unhappy, dreading yet another day of doing the same thing all over again. The learning curve he experienced in his first year as an entrepreneur was steep, but he says that the main thing is to keep learning from your mistakes. The first year of business he had very little income and being unsure of where the next paycheck is coming from was taxing. But you get used to it. You take risks, and it's worth it, because they pay off eventually. Before long you'll earn the same income you had before you quit your job - possibly much more. He says that you have to be persistent, know what you want to achieve, and if you keep going you'll achieve it. If you try one approach that doesn't work, you just change direction and try a different approach to reach your goal.

If you want to be a successful entrepreneur, Lars' advice is to find something that you are really passionate about. Find something that you love and enjoy. Look at the market and ask how can I do better? There are always problems in any product category, so find those weak points and go to work solving them. Find the areas that need improvement, and improve them. You can get lots of feedback and do a lot of research, and that helps, but you never know if you have a winner until you try. Run a small launch to test your idea, and if the feedback you get is positive, then build upon it. But don't keep your ideas

a secret and don't let them sit on the shelf: you just have to go out and do it. Most people talk and talk but never do. If you want to create a new life for yourself, then you need to step out of your comfort zone and go at it 100%.

If you're currently an employee at a stable but boring job, feeling listless and uninspired, you can break out and create a better life for yourself. There's a lot we can learn from Lars and his story, a former IT specialist who has built a very successful location-independent business from his laptop without any employees.

Starting Up and Getting The First Sale

When Lars decided to start his product business, he began by taking a month to do a bunch of research, study the competition and the market to find an opportunity. He looked at all the other companies, and saw a major flaw in their products: competitors were all using proprietary blends with cheap ingredients. He realized that what was going on behind the scenes wasn't good. Using proprietary blends, he explains, is a way that supplement companies conceal what they put into their products.

After researching the market, Lars started collecting information on ingredients. He sought out help from people who create supplements on a daily basis. Once the formula was ready, he began to research manufacturers. Finding a good manufacturer in the supplement industry is so important, and he spent a lot of time doing research on manufacturers. He noticed during his research that a lot of manufacturers had been closed down by the FDA for bad manufacturing processes. Even though it was a bit more expensive, he went with the best manufacturer he could find. The manufacturer produced his first batch, it was shipped to the fulfillment company, and the product was integrated into his website.

Lars nervously bit his nails during the launch, wondering if it was all going to work out. Then the first order came in and shipped successfully. But he was still agitated. Was it a fluke? Was this really going to work? A few small problems popped up, but they were fixed one at a time and it wasn't a big deal. After a while he began to wonder: "What was I so afraid of?"

I asked Lars if he did any testing beforehand or asked his friends, "Hey, would you buy

this supplement?” Lars said that he was able to get feedback from his market by visiting online forums and asking questions. He specifically focused on respected experts and well-established people in the fitness community. These people provided him with a lot of valuable information that helped with the development and marketing of the product. He created a great product, and his mentor and business coach Jorge Coutinho, who was also interested in bodybuilding, became his very first customer.

Producing the Product

I asked Lars what it cost to manufacture his first batch of supplements. He said that to produce a minimal viable product, the smallest order he could place was 1,000 bottles. A lot of money went into the first batch - about \$20,000.

Lars needed investors to help him produce the initial set of products, so he turned to friends and family. He went to his cousin, himself a business owner, and asked for assistance. His cousin was skeptical at first but eventually came around. An important criteria for investors, Lars says, is that they should be able to contribute in some way other than simply providing money - they should also be able to help with some of the work, or be able to set up connections.

Lars also says that it’s important to take the time and put in the work to create a good business plan. You can download an almost finished draft on the internet and fill in the questions yourself. A typical investor won’t want to read a 25-page business plan: they want to know your marketing plan and where the money is.

Lars lives in Norway but runs an American company. He says it can be a bit challenging, involving many late nights and a lot of e-mail communication. Many of his business partners in the US he’s never met in-person.

Facebook Marketing

Lars broke even on his first batch of supplements. He then began to try out a lot of different marketing strategies to see what was effective. He tried Facebook ads, Adwords, video marketing, and affiliate marketing.

What he found out was that over 90% of his sales come from Facebook. He creates affiliate partnerships and discount codes for Facebook fan page owners within the bodybuilding and fitness categories. To find and reach these fan page owners, Lars searches for terms such as “powerlifting,” “weightlifting,” “supplements,” and so on. He finds the big pages and writes them, saying: “Hey, you’ve got a great page, I have a way you can earn some money off of it, write me back,” and builds partnerships that way.

In the beginning, Lars contacted about 500 pages within the bodybuilding and fitness niche. When he sent his offer out to ten fan page owners, it was typical to expect one reply back. These fan page owners often get approached with offers and you won’t always get through to them. Even if your offer is great, it does no good if your e-mail is not read.

On the other hand, some fan page owners will reply but don’t want to be offered an affiliate commission, preferring to be paid per the post. To pay the owner of a fanpage to post a link to Lars’ product on their page typically costs between \$5 - 20. On average, Lars gets about 5 sales for each post, so its easy to get your money back and accumulate new customers for the product. If someone asks to be an affiliate, Lars gives them 20% commission on any referrals they send. It’s a lot of money for Lars to give up, especially because he offers free shipping. **But when a customer buys from you a second and third time, that’s when you make the money.** You need to spend a little to first get them to your shop, and then the key to making a profit is to re-sell them.

Through his Facebook strategy, Lars was able to steadily amass a pool of prospects and customers to sell his product to. Today his fan page has over 75,000 followers. His method is simple - build connections with other pages who have a good, active engagement with their followers. He focuses on pages with followers in the US, Canada, and Australia. Often he will share pictures with other fan pages. You can also simply take the URL of your Facebook page and ask the fan page owner to post it to their page - one post can get your page 50 new Likes.

Much has been made of Facebook’s recent change to their algorithm, and a lot of business pages have lost engagement. Facebook has been desperate to monetize their business model. Lars says that it’s still possible to get a lot of engagement through

Facebook if you work with the right pages.

Lars has outsourced the work of regularly updating his Facebook fan page to a friend. Managing a Facebook page properly is too much work to do yourself, he says. His friend creates a new post every third hour, about 4 or 5 times a day, which requires about 20 minutes of work a day. Lars pays him a monthly fee and often sends him some supplements, so it's a win-win for them both.

To update the page, Lars has his friend find many workout-related photos to post on a regular basis. These photos are usually meant to inspire or humor his audience - these types of photos often get shared and attract new followers. One of their most-shared photos was a picture of a muscled-up kangaroo. The photo went viral and got shared all over the web, even getting featured on a Norwegian television show.

Lars and his partner find the photos they use on their fan page from Pinterest and Tumblr. He says you can search for any category and find great photos. If a photo has a lot of "Pins" then it's a popular image that will provide good engagement with your fanbase when posted to Facebook.

Mixed in with these entertaining posts, they will sometimes post a link to Explicit Nutrition's free e-book to get opt-ins and sometimes post product offers. You can share an offer, pay a little bit to promote it, and these posts get a lot of opt-in signups. He says he tries not to do it too often though - between two to five times a week.

Lars has experimented with a bunch of different approaches to see what gets results. One time a page with 4 million fans shared a post on his behalf. He was excited when he saw the post but quickly disappointed when it only brought about 20 Likes back to his page. On the other hand, he says, you can share a post with a 5,000 Like fan page and get 500 new fans.

The fan page for Explicit Nutrition is very professionally put-together and features a great design with its logo, header, and photos. Lars market is almost exclusively men, so the look and feel is very appealing to the male gender. He is able to get great feedback from his fans, such as ideas for future products to produce. When asked, his fans told him that they would love to see the company create a pre-workout supplement. Now,

he is working with a product developer from the UK who has developed many top supplements to create the formula.

Customer Care and Nurturing

If a repeat customer orders from Explicit Nutrition two, three, or four times Lars will often personally e-mail the customer and offer them a gift for free. Usually he'll send them a free T-Shirt that says "Conquer Everything" with the Explicit Nutrition brand and logo. Gestures like these are another way that Lars is able to stand out, because big companies don't really make this type of effort for their customers. For his best customers he'll e-mail them personally saying: "I really appreciate you being a customer. I want to give you something for free. Please let me know your size and preferred color so I can send you a T-Shirt." Does this give him away as a one-person company? Perhaps, but its worth it for the positive relationships he builds with loyal customers.

I asked Lars for other techniques he uses to keep customers coming back. He has also worked to build an e-mail list, where customers are automatically integrated into his MailChimp autoresponder. He follows up with them asking to write a review for the product and asking them if they'd like to re-order when the supply runs out. The service he uses to collect reviews is called "Yotpo," which creates an attractive "social reviews" widget catering specifically to eCommerce websites. In exchange for writing a review, Lars give them a discount code as thanks.

When Lars follows up with his customers on his autoresponder, he often sends advice about nutrition, fitness, and lifting. For example, one e-mail might be about the right type of techniques and programs for squats. Another might be about protein, and another might be about fat loss or gaining muscle. They create YouTube videos and send an e-mail to customers every week with a link to the video. **Lars says it is definitely worth it to put a lot of work into the autoresponder, because if you write good copy it will provide good results.** The autoresponder is very useful for reminding people to order a second and third time.

Lars' e-mail list currently has about 5,000 people. He says you need to generate a lot of opt-ins if you want to make sales. In his industry there are so many other products out there that you really have to put out a quality product and quality content to your list.

Margins

I asked Lars about his profit margins. He explains that the profit margins in the supplement business vary a lot. Some supplement companies use low-quality ingredients that are cheap to manufacture. Lars insists on using high-quality ingredients in his product, which tampers his profits. But he believes its worth it to produce a superior product and engender brand loyalty.

Lars believes in keeping things simple, so he doesn't sell many bulk orders of his products to gyms and other retailers. He prefers to maintain sales through his website to keep profit margins high. Selling bulk orders to gyms also requires extra work and calculations to determine whether its worth doing. Up until now Lars has been content to run the business remotely from his laptop and travel around for pleasure, though he plans to start showing his product at tradeshow and fitness fairs.

Lars says that if you want to build a healthy company, cover expenses and grow, you need a gross margin of at least 30%. A single bottle of Testoturbo costs \$59.99 and includes free shipping. A typical bottle of Testoturbo lasts for one month, but they also offer a bundle of three for customers who want to buy in bulk. He also recommends offering a recurring subscription model.

Operations

Explicit Nutrition employs Lars as its only full-time employee. He has friends who help, such as his social media manager and his cousin, who helps him direct the overall strategy, and various contractors he hires from time to time.

His website is built on Shopify, and he paid a designer \$6,000 to create the graphics for the site. He believes that spending money to create a professional-looking website is money well-spent. There's a big difference between a \$1,000 website and a \$10,000 site. Your website is the face of your company, and you need to invest in the website if you want to grow. The design of your website is one of the most important factors, Lars says.

Lars has been using the same website that he did when he started. He says that once

your initial storefront is set up, you should next focus on optimizing the website for cross-sells as you expand your product line. You should also perform some A/B testing to try out different forms of copy and measure conversion rates.

You can view Explicit Nutrition's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/Explicitnutrition](https://www.facebook.com/Explicitnutrition) and also contact Lars at contact@explicitnutrition.com.

The "Weird" Freelancer

Tim King and I met in college, and since then I've been amazed by the things he's been able to accomplish. Tim was the one who first introduced me to the concept of a "bucket list." Long before I had developed the travel bug, Tim was posting eye-popping photographs of himself running with the bulls in Spain, and capturing the northern lights in Sweden. In our young-twenties, I was still trying to figure out what to do with my life; Tim was LIVING the life - and made no qualms about it. He's a top achiever who goes after what he wants, and inspires others to do the same.

Career-wise, Tim is thriving at freelance photography during a time when many photographers are struggling. He's a master at promotion (he's created several YouTube videos that have gone viral, each generating several hundreds of thousands of views), and networking (he recently interviewed Gary Vaynerchuk on his blog). As a lifestyle designer, Tim is a rockstar. It's as though he has no perception of a "comfort zone." In a post on his blog (timkingblog.com), called "On Being Weird," Tim describes himself in his own words:

"I can't tell you how many times someone has told me I'm 'the weirdest person they've ever met'.

I actually take that as a compliment, because it highlights exactly how predictable and average the person exact-opposite would be. Do you think THAT person would be 'really interesting' to hang around?

I'll tell you one thing...consistently taking people by surprise and exposing them to new ideas NEVER gets old. When I can break someone out of their comfort zone and show them a new way to REALLY have fun, it's one of the most rewarding experiences in the world."

One of the weirdest things he's done? Tim was inspired by "Eyes Wide Shut" where Tom Cruise walks into a secret society meeting, and wanted to do something similar. So for his birthday, he decided to host his own mock secret society meeting, complete with robes, candles, animal masks, and chanting Gregorian monk music for ambience. Once he and his friends were all set up, they ordered a pizza. The delivery man walked in on their meeting and the ensuing interaction was priceless. The video went on to gain one million views on YouTube, was featured on the Today Show, and Tim was also interviewed about the video during a live news segment for the Huffington Post. On top of all that, a company cold contacted him afterwards, sending him a check for \$500 to license the usage of the video.

Tim retained the press contacts he'd made from the video. The Huffington Post soon invited Tim back for another interview about wedding photography, which further helped his freelance career.

Looking to prove that his viral pizza prank video wasn't a lucky fluke, Tim created another promotion called "30 dates in 30 days," where he well... you guessed it... went on thirty dates, with thirty different women, in one month. The logistics alone are quite impressive. Tim created a win-win partnership with the people behind the "Details Matter" app, and the different venues that he visited during the promotion. By leveraging his blog and posting about each experience, Tim was able to offer each venue publicity. As a result, all of these different types of dates were complimentary. To fill up all 30 of the dates, Tim posted a video explaining the event and blasted it out to his networks, asking friends to help him set up dates with different girls. In exchange they would get to go on a fun date, such as parasailing, for free. Everyone won: the venues got exposure and attracted new customers, Tim went on 30 fun dates for free and both he and the app received a bunch of publicity.

Afterwards, Good Morning America wrote about Tim's 30 dates event, and he was interviewed by all local news media outlets.

How to Survive and Thrive as a Freelancer

The lesson is this: as a freelancer, your work and personal life are always intertwined.

If you don't love people, or if you're shy about promoting yourself, then you'll have a very tough time of it. Freelancing may not be the easiest course to take, and it's often prone to "feast or famine" cycles where the next paycheck is not always guaranteed. It's a roller coaster ride, to be sure. It takes a thick stomach, and isn't for the faint of heart. You need to become comfortable with dealing with rejection, because you will be rejected, a lot. You need to have a lot of confidence in yourself, because how much others believe in you is directly proportionate to how much you believe in yourself. Freelancing requires an ocean of patience too, because you will frequently have the depths of your patience tested. All that said, freelancing is the easiest path towards self-employment because it requires very little in the form of capital; you are simply selling yourself, and once you sign up your first client, you're in business. It's also a great proving ground to hone your skills, build a reputation, and develop some experience on your path to becoming a badass business boss.

Not all successful lifestyle designers own product businesses. They may not all have some unique widget, supplement, or information product for sale. I've found that a very substantial segment of them are freelancers: writers, web designers, photographers, etc. that act as "talent for hire" for clients in need of their services.

Tim is an excellent example of what it takes to succeed at freelancing. Relentlessly proactive. A great photographer, to be sure, but equally great at networking, promotion, and marketing. So I sat down with Tim and asked him to share his best techniques and strategies for successful freelancing. Making a buck as a freelance photographer can be very difficult these days - anyone with an iPhone can take a great photograph, and high quality stock images can be purchased through websites like photodune.com for as low as \$1. How is it that, in this rough environment, Tim is crushing it while most photographers struggle?

Tim often asks himself the same question, and feels that it comes down to a matter of priorities. A good friend of his has been failing at photography, and so decided to enlist in the armed services instead. He thinks it's unfortunate because his friend is so creative, and he's offered him some suggestions to help turn things around. But his friend isn't willing to do the things needed to be successful.

If you want something, you do whatever it takes. "Actions express priorities," Tim says.

How bad do you want it? Tim feels that since people simply don't want something bad enough, they refuse to be pro-active enough or think outside of the box. They aren't willing to try ideas that are odd or unorthodox. He thinks it all comes down to your motivation and mindset, more than anything else. Push yourself on harder, each day, to do bigger and better things.

Stick to what you're passionate about. For example, not too long ago Tim got offered a lucrative gig to take architectural photography for a worldwide chain of hotels. It's a very good gig, that pays about \$15 - 20k per assignment for about a week or two's worth of work. It would also be steady work and Tim would no longer have to worry about booking gigs. However, Tim opted not to take up the offer because he's not passionate about architectural photography. And he thought, if I'm not going to take up this offer, then I have to make sure that what I DO end up doing is even better than this. And that's also pushed him on harder.

How to Make a Living Pursuing Your Passion

To really succeed, stick with what you're passionate about. Sounds simple right? The real challenge is to find a way to make a living while following your passion. Getting clients - especially the **right** type of clients - is a struggle for most freelancers and yet makes all the world of difference between those who thrive and those who barely survive.

I asked Tim what advice he would have for someone who wants to start out following their passion - how can they find enough good-paying clients to get themselves started on the road to success?

Tim responded by first recommending the book "Crush It" by Gary Vaynerchuk. He attributes that book to really opening his eyes, and showing him how to build a brand online and across social media outlets for maximum exposure. His recommendations are: 1) read the book, and then 2) find the established industry leaders who are "crushing it" in the field that you want to work in and try to find a way to work with them for little or no cost. The key thing is to find someone who is really, really successful.

Tim says that most people don't seek out people who are actually successful, and gives an interesting anecdote. A lot of people who want advice about photography ask

questions from clerks at camera stores. However, he explains, employees at camera stores are not necessarily well-established photographers - after all, if they were true professional photographers, then they wouldn't need a day job. If you want to get big and have massive success, you must find people who have had massive success. Find these people and say, "Hey, I'm willing to put in the time and the work, just help me get started in the right direction."

Referrals

Mentors can get you started on the right path, and if you do really good work for them, they can end up becoming your first clients. If you've been able to demonstrate that you're reliable and dependable, and you've shown to have the skillset required, you can count on them passing along extra work your way and offering you a stream of referrals. Before long, if you work hard enough, you'll have all the business you need to make a full-time income.

In freelancing in general, the best way to scale up is always through referrals. Referrals are the bread and butter for almost every freelancer. Tim says that a referral is a privilege, not a right. He believes you shouldn't directly ask for referrals; but ask your mentor, "what kind of guidance could you give me that would lead me to more business?" He feels that if you're good enough and provide enough value, you'll get those referrals. If you do everything right and they don't help send you business, it may be time to step back and think about aligning yourself with someone else.

When you work with a client, get to know them. Find out what their interests are, as a person. Keep in touch periodically to say, "Hey, how's it going?" or send them a thoughtful little gift in the mail. A client relationship system (laid out in the Part 3 of this book) goes a long way as well. Creating a standardized client relationship system was perhaps the biggest key factor that helped me sustain my advertising business.

Pricing Your Services and When to Stand Firm

One of the biggest challenges freelancers face is pricing. When pricing, Tim says, you have to consider a lot of different factors, usually relevant to the type of client and their industry. He says that, whatever the ideal price that you'd like to charge is, you

shouldn't stand firm in 100% of all situations. You should also consider the investment you'll be making towards your portfolio and assess the quality of the client. For example, celebrities will sometimes expect a photographer to perform work for them for free. There's a lot of prestige in being able to say that you're Angelina Jolie's photographer, and such a gig would provide you with a lot of leverage towards booking future business. But don't discount your services for no reason, if the client doesn't offer the same type of opportunity.

Tim feels best able to convey a high degree of value through in-person consultations.

Being eye-to-eye conveys so much more than e-mail. Interpersonal factors, such as rapport, can be created through an in-person meeting. Tim says you also need to communicate how much you care about your work. Tell clients that you're always focused on improving your work; so if they like what they see now, then they're going to love what they see in a month's time. Tim charges a rate that's higher than the photography industry standard, and believes that his dedication to continually producing better quality images drives that.

The work speaks for itself, but it's also key to demonstrate a personality that's dependable, agreeable, and easy to vibe with. Nothing speaks better than having an "abundance mentality." Will the client feel that they can count on you? Would they feel comfortable vouching for you, and introducing you to their friends? You'll know you're doing well in this area when past clients start to send you referrals.

Master Networking

Connect with Connectors

All of the most successful people will tell you: "Your network is your net worth." This is perhaps never truer than it is for a freelancer. To succeed at freelancing usually requires a broad network of associates, colleagues, clients, and prospects. You have to extend your reach far so that the right people know about you and your work. Tim is a master at connecting with connectors - industry leaders, movers and shakers, and people with strong, broad networks and powerful reach.

Case in point: Tim recently took an online writing class taught by best-selling author

Michael Ellsberg, author of "Education of Millionaires." Tim's main priority was to join the group for the networking opportunities. He didn't simply take the course as an attendee. From the very get-go, Tim offered Michael something of value: he sent him a link to blog post he'd written called, "On being weird." Michael featured the post in his initial introduction e-mail to the entire group of 80 people. The arrangement worked out favorably for them both, as Tim received a very valuable endorsement from Michael to the entire group.

The lesson: to connect with connectors, offer them value. If you can, do a favor for them and let them know that you've "got their back."

Conduct Interviews

Another way to connect with prominent business people is to interview them for your blog. Interviewing people for a blog is a great in-direct way to connect with someone and establish a relationship with them, and create value at the same time. Tim focuses on conducting interviews with individuals leading an off-beat career path, separate of the 9 to 5. Whenever possible Tim recommends conducting interviews in person, because the personal touch is important. However, in some cases, such as when Tim interviewed Gary Vaynerchuk or Casey Neistat, an in-person interview isn't possible.

Regardless of what you do, surrounding yourself with these types of people is crucial if you want to accomplish a lot and "crush it" in business and life.

Be Different

Another interesting thing that Tim does when he's out at a networking event and introduces himself, is, rather than giving a 30-second boring spiel about who he is and what he does, he introduces himself by sharing some unique, interesting, and personal tidbit about himself. In Tim's case, rather than say he's a photographer, he tells people that when he was young he originally wanted to be a trainer at Sea World. Then he explains that he went to school to study psychology, but soon found out that the psychology field was full of nut-jobs who wanted to psycho-analyze themselves. And he had to get out of that.

Tim has different stories that are of interest to different people. **By sharing these stories, rather than mere bits of dry information and a business card, Tim is able to establish a personal connection with the people he meets by being likable.**

Online, Tim doesn't push all these stories onto people. He prefers to share them indirectly by letting people find out about them all naturally. For instance, he'll post a photo to his Facebook or a video to YouTube with a link back to his blog with a post sharing the full story. That way, people who have never met him can naturally learn about Tim without him trying too hard.

Also, when Tim meets people in person he's very subtle about how much he travels. Later, when they connect with him on Facebook and see all his photos, people are blown away. He feels that it's far more powerful to promote yourself indirectly like this rather than trying to hard to impress or show off.

Blog and Expand Your Reach

In terms of longevity, Tim thinks that the best thing you can do is maintain your blog. Creating valuable content allows you to expand your audience. Many people work to create content these days, but most efforts to create content do not get the kind of traction that producers hope for. Videos get published without views, articles get posted but get no comments or shares.

To create your own great content, Tim offers the following advice:

1. Think about the subject matter. Anything that is controversial (such as 30 dates in 30 days) has a good chance of going viral.
2. People are interested in human topics such as romance and love. Remember that at their core, people have fundamental human urges so make your content cater to those basic urges.
3. There are many universal things that people are interested in: love, travel, success, money, thrills, etc. These are all things that people want in their own lives. Everyone is wanting more of these things: love, sex, fun, excitement. Clue yourself in on the things that people want.
4. Put in the extra effort to create something engaging, something people would want

to sink their teeth into. Create a strong incentive to share the content, and get people involved in the sharing process.

Tim feels that if you consistently post great content for six months, you'll start to see some traction from your blog. But you really have to stay dedicated. Want to get in contact with Tim? Visit his blog at TimKingBlog.com or e-mail: Tim@TimKingBlog.com.

The Information Marketer

My friend Steve dropped out of school and scraped along at the bottom, working at some of the crappiest jobs out there. He worked at a car wash for eight months until he broke his wrists. Next he tried retail, earning \$8 an hour. But throughout that entire time, Steve knew that working for someone else, at a regular 9 to 5, just wasn't going to cut it for him. He wanted to find a way to make his own money and be his own boss. He came to the conclusion that the internet was the way to freedom, and tried about fifty or sixty different things. He was determined to find a way to leverage his time and lifestyle.

After trying and testing every possible way to make money online; he concluded that whenever you can find a way to drive visitors to a website, you can find a way to monetize that traffic somehow. He's also learned from experience that it's best to have control over everything you do. Its important to control your own product, your own sources of traffic, your own websites, your own shopping carts, and your own lists of customers if you want to make serious money and have real longevity.

Steve discovered a program called "Niche Profit Classroom," and turned his attention to creating products that serve specialized niches. A good "niche" is a small, underserved market that is unique and doesn't have a lot of competition. With this niche marketing method, Steve focuses only on creating information products. Information products are digital products such as e-books, videos, and online courses. The advantage of digital information products is that they don't have many of the hassles of physical products such as inventory, defects, production costs, etc.

An e-book can typically range from 20 pages to a few hundred; the length depends on the subject matter. People tend to assume that more content equals a more valuable product, but perceived value also depends on the strength of your sales page.

Write Your Own Paycheck

When you create information products for unique niche markets, it is easy to become the top provider to the market and control your own price. By setting his own price and selling his products through his own payment gateway, Steve has built several niche websites that each earn thousands in passive revenue every month. Through this niche model, he is able to sell his e-books at premium prices such as \$215. When you consider how many books are selling online for low prices such as 0.99 cents or 1.99 - just spend time looking around on Amazon, you'll realize why this is significant. Even international best-selling authors are giving away their entire books FOR FREE just as a means of generating traffic. However, because Steve does a little pre-planning by focusing on a unique niche to market a product to, and then generates his own traffic (and owns the website upon which his books are sold), he's able to increase his profit margins by 2,000%!

Consumers within specific niches are willing to pay premium prices for information products when you are able to demonstrate that they'll receive value in excess of the prices that they pay. That's why "How-To" books are price elastic and ideal for this niche marketing method. It would considerably harder to sell a work of creative fiction for a price of \$215, for example. But for each \$1 a person could spend on a How-To book, they might see a return several times over. Or they might save thousands of dollars or hours versus other options. Or, if you sold a dating e-book, and a person learned the principles within your book, they could find their perfect girlfriend within 30 days. It could also save them years of frustration and heartache. Think that might be of some value to all the lonely single guys out there? It's your job, when you create the product, to demonstrate value to customers in the form of time or money to be gained or saved, or in another way through some other opportunity.

How to Find Product Opportunities

To start finding opportunities, Steve says, look at what is trending. Google Trends (google.com/trends) is a good place to start. Google Trends shows you chronologically-ordered data about what's trendy and popular. You can also see what's trending by geographical region or topic. Observing trends is important because, as Claude Hopkins (author of *Scientific Advertising*) observed nearly 100 years ago, events and stories

within the news can influence consumer behavior in ways that advertising cannot. Through his several decades of experience, Hopkins explains that it's usually a very costly and time-consuming proposition to try to use advertising to change consumer behavior. It's much more profitable to simply give them what they want: instead of selling ice to eskimos; offer them hot chocolate.

You can also perform keyword research, using Google's free keyword tool, to collect a lot more data about people are searching for, though it doesn't provide the same chronological focus of Trends. With Google Keyword Tool, try to find keyword phrases for your topic that have at least 1,000 searches a month. You want to make sure that enough people are searching for what you could offer, so that it will be worth your time. But, you also want to make sure that there isn't too much competition. Again, that's why you take the niche approach.

One example of a popular topic at the moment is Bitcoin. Many people have a lot questions about Bitcoin and are wondering about how they can make money from it. An e-book that teaches them how would be very valuable to these people.

When you scout for opportunities, look for signs of commercial intent - you want people who are actively looking to buy something. Also, choose a topic that interests you - something that you yourself could be passionate about. If you're going to create an information product, you'll need to spend a good deal of time immersing yourself in your chosen topic and it helps if its something that you can enjoy.

Anything that offers people a chance to learn an important and valuable new skill is great. At a personal level, it could be something like "How to train a dog." Or, if you're an expert at a professional skill, that's even better because you can target business niches. For example, several years ago I taught myself how to create WordPress websites, and through a bit of research I learned that there was a big demand to learn WordPress within the graphic designer niche. There was already a lot of potential competition on the web offering WordPress training videos for the average person. But since I created a niche website that offered specialized training unique to the graphic design niche, I was able to outmaneuver competitors and charge my own price.

Steve has also found that people will pay a lot of money for information on how to start

their own businesses. These people are looking for more freedom in their lifestyle; and you can do well for yourself if you offer them automated, turn-key systems. “Automation” is an important word, he explains. People want to be assured that they don’t need to possess some unique skill from birth or know the right people to be successful.

Once you’ve found a popular topic, it’s time to check the competition. Take some of the possible keyword phrases you’ve found through Google Keyword Tool and perform a search on the Google homepage. To assess competitiveness, look for a couple of things:

- The “PageRank” of the websites already listed in the results. To check PageRank, you can use a free tool like “SEO Quake.” SEO Quake displays advanced parameters, such as PageRank, for every result in the search. You can also search online for a “PR checker,” although this is a bit slower because you’ll have to manually input each website, one by one. At any rate, if the results listed all have high PageRank, then its considered competitive and it would be more difficult to rank within search engines. If you see a lot of sites that have 0, 1, or 2 PageRank, then ranking within the top results of the organic search will be much easier.
- The number of paid advertisements for the keyword phrase. Paid advertisements show to the side and above the organic “natural” search results. The more advertisements you see, the more expensive and competitive placing your own ads will be.

Product Creation

When Steve has an idea for an e-book, he may not actually know anything about the subject. So to save time and create a product quickly, he’ll sometimes outsource the research for the book. He recommends first going to Amazon and checking out other “how-to” books and follow the overall template they offer, then plug in your own variables based on the subject matter. Books that teach how to do something often follow the same format, he explains. For instance, a how-to book for golfers might mention the “3 biggest mistakes amateurs make when putting.” You could take a concept like the “3 biggest mistakes” and apply it to your own subject matter. Another option is to take frequently asked questions and create content providing the answer. Yahoo! Answers is a great place to type in a keyword and search for questions that people are asking. The keyword tool also provides ideas for questions people are asking.

When he outsources the research, Steve creates a set list of questions and hires a contractor to research and provide information. Once he has all of the research, he can compile a table of contents from the information and write the e-book within a day or two.

Once the product is created, Steve creates the front-end for the product by giving it a name, designing a logo, and setting up a simple squeeze-page website. He doesn't spend very much time at all on these "front-end" activities, because the only purpose of the website is to serve as an e-mail collection system. All the magic happens on the back-end, he explains. Once people "opt in" to receive e-mail correspondence from your website, you must focus on building a relationship with them. The e-mail follow-up is the most important part of the entire process.

6 Tips for E-Mail Follow-Up:

1. Begin by creating your first twelve e-mails for follow-up. Steve finds that usually after about seven or eight e-mails, an interested prospect is likely to buy something. He believes that if someone is not going to buy your product within the first twelve e-mails, then they'll likely never buy.
2. You want to "strike while the iron is hot." The moment someone opts-in to receive your e-mails, their interest level is high. Your first e-mail to that person needs to be superb. It should be packed with the best information you have to offer.
3. To improve response, make your e-mails as personal as possible. Autoresponders give you an option to use a customized [Name] tag which will automatically insert the name the person gave you when they first opted-in.
4. Get on the e-mail list of some of the most successful internet marketers and see what they're doing. Model what works.
5. Use Aweber, iContact, or Infusionsoft to set up your autoresponder. Steve recommends Infusionsoft as his favorite, but its also the most expensive.
6. The power of Infusionsoft is that you can divide up your list into "segments." For example, within your mailing list, you can have a separate sub-list for people who have already bought your products.

Monetize Your List

Once you've built up your list, it's yours forever. You can continue to offer new products to your existing base of customers and leads. You can create a membership website for them that provides you with recurring monthly income. You can offer them high-end services, such as private one-on-one consulting. Or you can use your list to generate partnership opportunities for other people's products. It's totally up to you; but now you have a pool of people who are interested in what you have to offer, and they're likely to keep buying from you.

Traffic = Money

Now you have your product, your front-end squeeze page, and back-end follow-up sequence. You're five feet from the finish line. It's time to start driving traffic back to your site.

There are a hundred ways to do this; a sizable portion of the entire modern-day advertising industry caters to this purpose. For you do-it-yourselfers, one of the best ways to get large amounts of targeted traffic for free is by building up relationships with people within your niche and "parent" niche. Every niche and sub-niche has a larger niche above it. For instance, many niche products fall into mega-niche categories of health, wealth, relationships, travel, sports, etc.

If you can contribute guest blog posts and articles to websites and publications that already get large amounts of traffic, you can direct these to your site. You can feature your article on an online news portal, an independent blogger's site, or even a traditional news publishing platform. For example, both the LA Times and CNN have blog sections devoted to travel. So if your product is travel-related, you could provide contributions to either of those and get a lot of traffic back to your website.

The catch with this strategy is that the bloggers and reporters behind these blogs are inundated with requests for guest blog posts, and many attempts to reach out to them fail. To be successful, you should really try to build up a relationship with them. And also try to be a little bit unique and different. They want to provide interesting content to their readers, so have something interesting to offer. You can also visit the large blogs within your niche and provide helpful, insightful comments to their posts. Other readers

will see your comment and click the link back to your own website.

Steve is also a big proponent of using off-line methods to drive traffic to websites, such as direct mail, print, radio, and so on. On average, for every 100 visitors you drive to your squeeze page, you can expect that about 10 will sign up for your mailing list. Of these 10, perhaps one or two will buy something at some point. These are just some conservative estimates. It will take some time to build up enough traffic to make it worth your while. But don't give hope. Test different strategies, play up the ones that work and discontinue or reduce the ones that don't.

When you're starting out, Steve recommends that you keep costs down. You could lose a lot of money if you don't know what you're doing, so don't spend too much on advertising until you figure out what works well. Measure the return that you get on your investment from different marketing strategies. In general, Steve believes that getting search engine traffic from low-competitive keyword phrases is one of the most cost-effective, sustained sources of traffic.

The Local Business Consultant

Kevin Wilke teaches students how to work from home earning \$5,000 to 10,000 per month performing simple online marketing for local businesses in their neighborhoods. And his students often get their first client in less than a week. Kevin's system is unique, simple, and easy for anyone to get started, so I invited him for a chat to share how the process works.

A bona-fide lifestyle designer always seeking greater leverage from his time, Kevin is a master when it comes to generating high-value leads. The lead generation system he teaches is entirely virtual, and with his process one never needs meet with prospects or clients in-person. The entire system can be done over e-mail, phone, and one-on-one webinars. With Join.Me, a free webinar service, one is able to give presentations virtually and close deals.

Kevin's company, Nitro Marketing, has a stated mission of "Inspiring, teaching, supporting, and empowering people to transform their lives." Through Nitro Marketing, Kevin has taught over 10,000 students how to work independently from home. Meanwhile, Kevin divides his time between New York City and his second home of Brazil, where he "lives for the moment."

How he reached this point is slightly less glamorous. It took over a decade, and a succession of failures before he aligned with his current path. Kevin literally "crashed and burned," hit the pavement hard, picked himself up, and turned things around through pure grit and a "whatever-it-takes" attitude.

Crashing and Burning on the Road to Success

Growing up on a small farm in Iowa, Kevin watched his parents struggle financially. Before long they lost the farm and went through a divorce, and the experience affected him in a profound way. It gave him the motivation to never go through the same thing himself when he became an adult.

When he was in college in 1996, a new fad called the “Internet” (invented by Al Gore) came along and Kevin immediately saw the potential to earn money from it. He proceeded to start a succession of three businesses which all flopped. Back in those days, no one really knew how to make money online and there was no one around who could teach. And so Kevin fumbled along through trial and error for several years without really knowing what he was doing. His first website used a service called Websponder and was the ugliest website ever created in the history of the internet.

Between his online business and two part-time jobs, he was earning less than \$5,000 a year. Each day was a struggle to survive. Kevin slept in a tiny shoebox apartment in a rough part of Arlington, Texas, living off of credit card debts. He used cash advance checks to pay his rent and buy groceries. That all lasted until his credit ran dry and everything was maxed out. Kevin vividly recalls the day it happened. It was a major defining point in his life when the credit card statement came and said, “Kevin, you’re now maxed out on this credit card as well.” He had no more options left. From that point forward, he couldn’t even go buy food for himself.

Kevin started freaking out. And then just when things seemed to be at their lowest, disaster struck and things became even worse. One of his part-time jobs involved driving to Subway stores and performing evaluations to ensure that the franchises were following procedure. With each store he visited, he received \$30. One day while driving on the highway en route to an evaluation, he smashed his car into the car in front of him, completely totaling it. The event made a hopeless situation even more hopeless, as he lost the only remaining option he had to earn any sort of income.

In spite of everything, Kevin remained optimistic about the future. He always believed that he was meant to be successful. But when he got home, reality told a different story: he was sitting in a crappy apartment with no car, no options, no nothing, and still wasn’t having any success online. It was at this juncture that Kevin asked himself:

“Am I really meant to succeed as an entrepreneur? Or should I just do what all of my friends from college have done, and do the logical thing of giving up on my crazy dream of having my own business and get a desk job? Should I just accept that this is what my path in life is meant to be? Or should I just keep moving forward, despite what the world is saying?”

The world seemed to be saying, “Kevin, this isn’t for you.” But all the hopes and dreams he held were saying: “I was meant to be successful.” And Kevin had to make a choice. He had to decide whether to push forward in spite of everything or to give up. He made a decision that day that his hopes and dreams were more important than anything in life. He made a commitment to do whatever it took. It was also at that point in life that he realized that he wasn’t really running a business; he was just playing at business.

It was at that critical point where things started to turn around. The insurance money he received from the car wreck was enough to pay for rent and groceries for one more month. And so Kevin hustled for the next few months, doing whatever he had to in order to make ends meet. He started another job earning \$7 an hour for a water filter company, walking around neighborhoods putting up yellow Post-It notes on people’s doors.

Like a lot of people looking to become entrepreneurs, Kevin got sucked into network marketing. One day a guy from out-of-town wearing a suit-and-tie started drawing circles on a whiteboard, promising multiple streams of income. Kevin was all-in: hook, line, and sinker. The problem was that he was an extremely shy, quiet, low self-esteem kid at the time. The idea of going and talking to people frightened him. And so he deduced that maybe he could find people through the internet instead. Over time, he got really good at generating leads online. He could generate hundreds of leads every single month, but he was still terrified to pick up the phone and talk to them.

The big “AHA!” was when he realized he had discovered a great method for generating leads online, at only 5 cents per lead. Back in the day, there was a website called GoTo.com, which offered the world’s first pay-per-click search engine. Back then, people believed that it was a sin to be able to buy a position in a search engine. Kevin saw a huge opportunity. He was able to bid on keywords like “home business opportunity” for only 2 cents a click, and generate leads for 5 to 10 cents per click. He then realized that there

were probably many other people who would love to learn how to create leads online. He created his first training program teaching people how to do it.

Nitro Local Marketing

Nitro Marketing was founded in 2001, and has been going strong for over a decade. For the past five years Kevin's focus has been on local online marketing, due to huge shifts in consumer shopping. People no longer use the traditional methods such as the Yellowpages or the newspaper to find local businesses - they go online.

Local businesses know that this trend is happening and they know they need to market themselves on the internet but they don't really know how, and they don't really want to learn how. They just want someone to do it for them. Kevin saw an enormous opportunity in local marketing consulting as the new way to make money online. And it's been a huge success, he says. Of all the things Kevin's done and taught, this type of business model has created the most success stories. Kevin finds it most meaningful and rewarding when his students can leave a dead-end job to being able to work from home, be with their kids, and enjoy unlimited potential for their time, freedom, and money. His work creates massive transformation in people's lives and with each success story that comes in, he considers it a great gift.

What's more, Kevin's students are successful when they help other businesses be successful as well. The businesses his students serve benefit and go from laying people off to hiring new staff and growing. So there's an effect where everyone benefits and plays a part in effecting the change the economy and our world needs.

For most people, getting started making money online is difficult. You have to learn all kinds of skills like web design, search engine optimization, and marketing. It could easily take a year or two before you start seeing any kind of success. With the local marketing approach that Kevin teaches, by contrast, all you need to do is go out and talk to a couple of business owners and collect a check. Within a few days you could start making a few thousands dollars a month. You don't need to know everything about SEO, driving traffic, or programming websites. All you need to know is what to say and how to present and sell it to a business owner. You can also outsource the work, which makes it very easy to fulfill the services you sell even if you have only a basic knowledge.

With his local marketing training program, Kevin says that almost 25% of the students start making money within 30 days. In the world of information products where 2% or 3% success rate is common, a 25% success rate is completely unheard of. Compared to other online marketing routes, Kevin's system is simple and easy to use. Students aren't overwhelmed with all of the things they have to learn and do. All that his students have to do is go out and talk to people and pick up a few clients. Local marketing removes all of the barriers that prevented success online, he explains. You just need to be willing to go out and do something.

Kevin's business model doesn't require any capital or credentials to get started. As long as you have some fundamental knowledge of online marketing, then you will know more than 99% of most people. If you know more about what needs to be done, and how to get it done, in the eyes of average business owners you are the expert because you're much further down the path than they are. Using his process, you can also outsource the work so you don't have to labor at the fulfillment services. You can delegate the hard work to experts who perform the marketing fulfillment services for you.

With Kevin's local marketing training program, you can get your first clients within 30 days and earn between \$1,000 - \$5,000 a month on a recurring basis and have the work done for a fraction of the cost. Everybody wins. The client is happy because you help them get more customers, and you earn a good living for yourself. It's a great business model for everyone.

Attracting and Evaluating Clients

To get clients and make money performing online marketing services for local business you should observe the following four criteria:

First, make sure to target the right type of businesses. You need to find out: how much is a new customer worth to that business? With a roofing company, for instance, one roofing contract may run \$4,000 or more. Similarly, with a dentist, a new customer could be worth several thousand dollars. To make this model work, you must find clients in businesses where a new customer is worth at least a couple of thousand dollars. That way, you need only generate a few new customers for them each month to make the

arrangement profitable. They might pay you \$1,500 and earn \$10,000 return on their investment, so you can make it a no-brainer situation for them.

Second, make sure it is an industry where people are actively searching online for what the business has to offer. There are always a number of people looking for plumbers, dentists, and chiropractors. There are hundreds of industries that fit this criteria. However, some businesses such as salons would not be worthwhile because a customer to them might be worth only \$50. So if you were to work for a hairstylist it would be virtually impossible to generate a significant amount of new business to make it worthwhile.

Third, Kevin recommends that you start out by approaching people that you already know. When you e-mail someone, you simply tell them that you're moving in this new direction providing marketing services and would love to talk with them about it. Be a bit humble when you approach them and explain that you're making this transition, but there's a reason why and that you have a greater future that you're going after. Every entrepreneur has been in the place where they were a new business owner and starting in a new direction as some point or another. Entrepreneurs have a place in their heart for someone else who's starting out, and if they can give thirty minutes of their time to give insight and feedback, they're contributing to the next wave of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs know what it's like to struggle, and so are the most supportive types of people in the world.

If you're a high-confidence person, you can start contacting people and close some of these deals immediately. If you have low confidence you may need to get a little experience talking with people and even offer to perform the service for free at first. You could also barter.

Kevin also recommends creating a separate e-mail letter to send to people you know asking for referrals. Everyone knows local business owners that they use, such as dentists, or housing contractors. It's very easy to find referrals who can benefit from these types of services.

Fourth, you should determine whether your potential client is already spending money on marketing right now. If they are not already spending money on marketing,

then they haven't bought into the thought process that they need to spend money to make more money. If a business owner looks at marketing as an expense instead of an investment, then it's difficult to convince them. These types of clients are going to count every single penny, question everything that you do, and create a whole lot of hassle and frustration for you.

Kevin also has certain criteria for what size the company needs to be for them to work with. New entrepreneurs are not a good match because they do not yet have the budget to take advantage of these types of services. The business needs to be big enough so that they already have a team of people working for them. Otherwise the business owner is still in the "technician" mode where they want to manage everything themselves.

How to Close Deals Successfully: The Consultative Selling Model

To close deals with clients successfully, you should follow a **consultative-sales model**. You have to avoid being viewed as just another person selling a commodity. Instead, you want business owners to see you as a marketing partner - someone who has their best interests in mind, someone they can trust and count on.

Every business owner is experiencing certain pain points in their life and in their business. In consultative sales, you perform a "needs analysis" by getting them to share what those are and then identify them. It's as simple as asking: "What are you currently struggling with?" As an example, a big pain point for many business owners is not getting enough customers on a consistent basis. They always need to hustle to get more customers, grow their cashflow, and ensure that they make payroll. Many business owners feel that they can't grow and expand. They want to get another truck, or perhaps open another location. These are ***all specific pain points*** for them. They also have ***opportunities*** that they want to capture and take advantage of. And finally they have their business ***strengths***, that they feel they are really great at.

You must find out: the client's pain points, the opportunities they want to seize, and their business strengths. Once you identify all of this information, you can present the services and solutions you offer in a way that solves all of the problems they have, empowers them to capture all of the opportunities, and leverages their strengths as a business owner. When you follow this process, you avoid being seen as just another

vendor providing a service like everyone else. You're viewed as someone who is on their side, who can provide solutions for the problems and opportunities that they are presented with right now.

What makes this sales process work is that you don't have to go for the hard-close. Throughout the conversation, you create agreement from them all along. Through the research you've done, you know what they're really looking for and what they want. When you elicit those things: what they need, what they want, you can circle back and say, "Well, I think you should look into doing this. Do you think it would solve that problem that you have?" If they are in a state of agreement with you, then it's an easy transition to get them to ask: "What would it take for you to do these things for me?"

Another thing that works is to offer your services on an exclusivity basis. For example, you can tell your prospective clients that you will only work with one dentist in a geographic region. Before long you'll develop a body of work with successful case studies, and have a proven system that gets the results that they're looking for. If they decline or hesitate, then they'll miss out on the opportunity and a competitor will gain these proven results instead. The exclusivity factor is a big plus for a lot of these business owners. It gives them more confidence and greater incentive to sign up.

How to Position and Present Yourself Professionally

The local marketing space is becoming more competitive - most business owners have been approached by a lot of people offering online marketing. So to simply approach someone with the prospect of online marketing is not enough. Instead, you have to be savvy about how you position yourself and your business. Kevin believes the key is to focus on specializing for a specific industry. It is much easier to focus on one industry instead of trying to talk to everybody. By positioning yourself this way, it gives you an instant advantage, even if you're brand new. It helps establish greater trust with the clients you hope to attract. When you approach them, creating trust is the most important thing - especially if they've been burned in the past. Building trust so that they feel comfortable working with you is key.

What most people do is they act as a "general practitioner" offering a full suite of services to any business owner with a pulse. So they work with carpet cleaners,

plumbers, chiropractors, and dentists and perform a variety of different services for them. Kevin feels that it's much better to specialize, because if you remain a generalist serving everyone you run the risk of becoming a commodity and fighting for the lowest price.

It's far more effective to pick an industry where you can be the go-to person. Take dentists, for example. On your website and marketing, position yourself as the best provider of online marketing for dentists, and focus only on them. You know what their pain points are, you know what their desires are, and your site speaks directly to them in their language. Your marketing and service offerings tie-in directly to what dentists want. Now, without even talking to them, you're at a higher-level of trust and authority with them because you've positioned yourself as a marketing expert for dentists.

Positioning yourself this way also helps you to differentiate from a lot of cookie-cutter services such as VistaPrint, GoDaddy, and other big companies that offer template marketing services to these same business owners. Almost guaranteed, the results that business owners get from these companies have been horrible. For you, this is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they're already pre-sold on marketing. The downside is that you have to build up that trust and show them that you are going to be different than what they are currently trying, and that you can help them get the results they're after. At the end of the day, that's all that matters to business owners: whom can they trust with their marketing?

How to Generate and Convert Prospects

To further increase trust with a potential prospect, you should position yourself as an expert. Your website should look professional. You should have an "opt-in form" and autoresponder sequence set up. In your follow-up emails your objective is to send them high quality information that educates them while positioning you as an authority within the marketplace. As you continue to e-mail them, some prospects might be interested in hiring you right away, some might come around within a couple of months.

So when you market yourself, one of the first steps is to put out educational marketing materials and place them inside an automated funnel to keep in touch with prospects.

To find content, pain points, and language that speaks to a specific industry, Kevin recommends going online and seeing who is already doing well within the space. If you live in Dallas, for instance, perform a search for “dentists in Dallas” and check out the top-ranked businesses. Take a look at who they are, what they’re doing, and take notes.

Then, as soon as possible, perform an in-person or phone survey of five business owners within that industry. Just have a conversation with them, with no intention of selling them anything. All you want is to find out what’s going on in their world, to identify the pain points, what’s important to them, and the language that they’re using. You can get a ton of value from these conversations: you identify the pain points the niche has, which will help you create your marketing, your presentations, and the way you package your services.

Dane Maxwell, owner of The Foundation, teaches a similar approach which he calls “Idea Extraction.” In this process, you call several business owners within an industry and then identify their common pain points. Then, as Dane teaches, you can develop a minimal viable software product that provides the solution to these pain points. Kevin is a big advocate of this strategy, and says that you can shortcut things so much just by having a handful of conversations with actual business owners. If you’re new in an industry, that’s one of the most important things that you should be doing - have as many conversations with as many business owners as possible. You’re going to learn so much when it comes to their reality and what they’re looking for.

To get people on the phone you should again start with people you already know, and get referrals. Tell them that you’re out to help business owners with their marketing and are also passionate about the industry. Tell them that you’d love to connect with them for 30 minutes to see what would be most beneficial to them and what they are looking for when it comes to online marketing. You want to ask them what they’ve done in the past, what they’re doing now, and then offer to share what you’ve found with them afterwards.

Another way you can market yourself involves using report analyzer software. The software analyzes their current marketing to see what is working and what is not working and creates a report on their online presence. This differentiates you from everyone else and you can educate them on the potency of their current marketing.

Whether they sign up for your services or not, you offer them value this way.

There are free website analyzers that you can use such as Hubspot's Marketing Grader (marketing.grader.com) and WooRank (woorank.com). Kevin also offers an online presence analyzer called the Nitro Ranking Report, which is offered as a free tool to members of his Local Internet Marketers Association (LIMA - localima.org). The software collects the business owners' phone number, and instantly generates a free report that provides them with a website analysis. Membership to LIMA costs \$99.95 a month and also comes with the report analyzer, monthly newsletter, training webinars, a full resource library, and other "done-for-you" materials.

Last But Not Least

All good things must come to an end. I sincerely hope you've enjoyed this book. Now that you're done, don't just sit on the information. If you've found something useful in these pages, go out and utilize it.

This book was big (300+ pages!), and for good reason. It's meant to be used as a reference, similar to an encyclopedia. It's not meant to be a brisk read that you finish once, and then put down.

Go out and create something meaningful with your own hands. Explore with your own two feet. All you need do is put one foot in front of the other.

Make your one life count. And then share your experience with others who would follow.

If you'd like to join a community of other like-minded individuals, go over to www.OpenWorldMag.com, and check out blog, podcast, and magazine (coming soon!). We feature the movers and shakers who take charge, step outside of their comfort zones and work to build a marvelous life. These people are made of the same stuff as you and me, with no super powers. Yet they made the decision to take a risk and do something exceptional, excuses be damned.

There's more goodies, of course...

- Language and Travel Hacks
- Profiles in Courage, featuring the most awe-inspiring lifestyle designers
- David versus Goliath accounts of entrepreneurs who beat the odds and won
- "Inner Game" Techniques to break through fear
- How to win friends and influence people in 2015 and beyond

And of course, much more!

Finally, if you've enjoyed the book, share the word with others! And feel free to let me know what you liked or didn't like. I welcome any constructive feedback. You can reach me via the contact page at OpenWorldMag.com, or on the book website at BuyYourOwnIsland.com.

Godspeed on your path, wherever it may lead you. As you embark on this brave new journey, you may notice a realignment occur. Chances are you may become a new person with new priorities, new values, and a new purpose.

And remember - life is not a race and there is no finish line. Be your best self and make the most of this one life that you've been given. And maybe even join me on an adventure or two.

Your Friend and Kindred Spirit,

Danny Flood

Bangkok, Thailand

Friday, December 19th 2014

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to dedicate this book in honor of my late father, Jim Flood. An inventor, entrepreneur, and the most honest, patient, loving, caring, creative, and resilient human being I have ever known. I wish I had said “I love you too” more often. But I do love you more than words can express and value the time we shared together more than anything else in the world. I will never forget you and all the many important lessons and blessings you have given me.

A special thank you to Jasper Ribbers, a friend and fellow screwball. Your mentoring and guidance was critical during the pre-launch of this book. Thank you also for catching the many errors and typos which I had missed, and for being absolutely indispensable in making this book reality.

To my many mentors who have helped me in my quest to shape my reality. Thank you to Tony Robbins, who helped me sort my life out when I was a clueless young person and start on the right path. Muchas Gracias to Maria Navarro, owner of Hostel Sauzal, who shook me up and taught me that I had nothing to lose by following my dreams.

Thank you Zeke Camusio, for all the generous mentoring and advice you’ve shared with me, and also for the peerless example you’ve set. You continue to inspire me to achieve, do, and be more than I am. Thank you to Jared Heyman, the “Runaway CEO,” for all of the direction and feedback you’ve provided me over the years. You’re a true class-act, and I know you’ll succeed at anything you set your mind to.

Thank you to other mentors who have guided me over the years: Mike Spencer Bown, Craig Clemens, Eric von Sydow, Steve Piccus, Sean Stephenson, Greg S. Reid, Tony Hsieh, Timothy Ferriss, Jack Canfield, Chris Guillebeau, Seth Godin, Ryan Holiday, Rolf Potts, Michael Gerber, Guy Kawasaki, Natalie Sisson, Ramit Sethi, and Natalie Lussier.

Everyone who contributed their accounts and experiences: Suchen, Daniel Benner,

Ryder Cuddington, Mags Khor, Kelly Ling, Nick Ramil, Derrick Yazwa.

I'd like to especially thank everyone who offered to help as a beta-reader for this book: Jonathan Norris, Alex Liss, Allyn Reid, Jessica Greenwalt, Matt Hartless, Morgan Sullivan, Richard Atkinson, Thao Nhung, Kevin Koskella, Erika Delemarre, Sue Silk, Sara Shermis, Scott Glasberg, Gabe Gunlock, Movis Romain, Alicia Daigle Hanson, April Stickelman, Crina Andrei, Neo Douglas, Eric Williams, Derrick Sparhawk, Tom Edwards, Dan Zalewski, Chris Backe, Carlos Frias, Jayde Wofford, Diep Nguyen, Siaw Wei, Michele Bednar, Viktoria Gonzales.

This book was the biggest undertaking I've made to date, and your support, feedback, and encouragement helped me make it through.

To my friends and kindred spirits who have been in my mastermind group over the last two years: Ryan, Justin, Joseph, and Daniel. I owe much of my growth over the past few years to your support, advice, connections, and accountability. Thank you.

To everyone I've featured in this book who agreed to share their stories: Andrew Ferebee, Johnny Ward, Ryan Fix, Lars Wenas, Steve Kadlec, Kevin Wilke, Tim King, Jeff Swanson. To other lifestyle designers whose support and insight helped shape this book.

To everyone I've met during my travels, it's been an honor and a privilege. I've learned so much from my different friends across the globe. To every person who's hosted me in their home: Faisal, Derek Kooren, Jeffrey Lungot, Mandy Nguyen, Saiedeh Kirby, Tiana Laurence, Sandra Hanna Lee, Prasite and Yui Naruewan, Iris Abras, Felix Abante. To kindred spirits I've met on the road: Lijun Yang, Tobi Durler, Joe Oster, Stephane, Diego, Jimi, Ronald and Johnnel Tepora, Chateau, Nong, and countless others.

A special thank you to all of the sales and marketing authors whom I've learned from these last several years: David Ogilvy, Claude Hopkins, John Caples, Dan Kennedy, Jay Abraham, Victor Schwab, Robert Cialdini, Joe Polish, Dean Jackson, Frank Kern, Eben Pagan, Mike Koenigs, Ryan Deiss, Don Crowther, Marlon Sanders, and Kevin Wilke.

Last, but not least: thank you for reading this book! Feel free to say hi on Twitter or Facebook: @dandanflood.

