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ON CONTENT MARKETING

FOR AN ONLINE LEARNING STARTUP



Content Marketing Guide

How to use power of Content to Increase Reach and Revenue and Reduce Costs

March 25, 2016

Noida, Uttar Pradesh: At 4.30am, the streets were deserted.

But there were around 10,000 men and women – young and old, rich and poor, fat and skinny – present when I arrived at a well lit stadium.

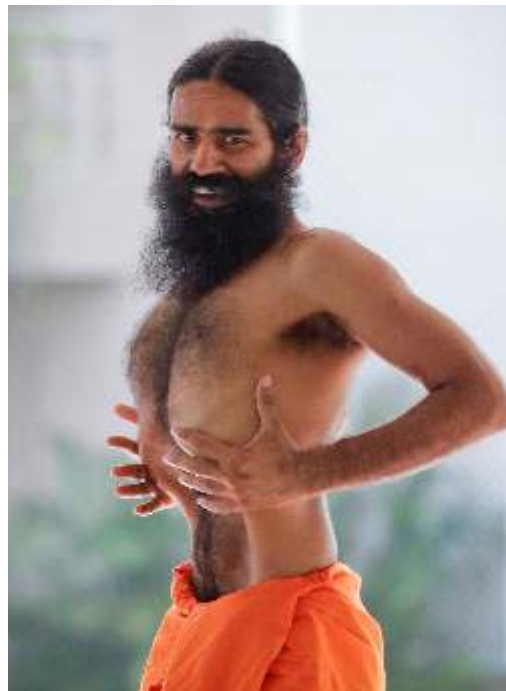
I went there to see one half naked man with a hairy chest, talk and do stuff related to health and fitness.

You might have heard of this man.

The man born as Ramkishan had humble beginnings as the son of an illiterate farmer. He struggled with childhood paralysis. But all that is a thing of the past. Today, this man has taken the center stage and is the driving force behind a business valued at **US\$1.9 billion (Rs13,000 crore)**.

Do you know who am I talking about?

I am talking about this man.



Baba Ramdev

The monk who could buy a Ferrari.

He is the force behind Patanjali Ayurved.

Acharya Balkrishna, Baba Ramdev's close associate, established Patanjali Ayurved in 2006. It is now one of the fastest growing FMCG companies in India – selling 700 plus products with a turnover of Rs2,500 crore during 2014-15. It aims to touch Rs5,000 crore during next financial year.

How did he do it?

Simple answer, **Content Marketing**.

Baba Ramdev is the best content marketer that the world has seen in recent times.

Let's go back a bit to understand how?

As a child, he started practising yoga to get rid of effects of paralysis on his body.

In 1984, he joined a Gurukul near his native village and learnt yoga for five years. Later, he joined another Gurukul and imparted free yoga training to locals.

In 1995, he started a small pharmacy that offered free health consultations and sold medicines.

He kept on doing it and in June 2002 – reached to a level where one of his yoga camps was telecast by a religious channel.

In 2003, Aastha TV began featuring him in its morning slot. There he proved to be telegenic and gained a large following.

The key here is to understand that he was consistent and persistent; and he offered free education. He also started small – and not at a national level.

Ramdev started with free yoga camps. Once these camps become popular and people started recognizing him – he started to make money by selling the seats at these camps.

I paid Rs3,000 to attend the yoga camp in Noida and this helped me understand the phenomenon. With up to 10,000 attendees, the revenues from one such camp would have easily been in the range of Rs1-2 crore. He did at least 30-50 such camps in one year.

He had also launched an eight-day yoga and meditation package on the SuperStar Virgo Cruise once – from India to Hong Kong to Halong Bay, Vietnam. After being subsidized by a corporate sponsor, the price tag to cruise with Baba Ramdev came to be Rs80,000.

Without knowing about the term content marketing – he did content marketing; and did it amazingly well.

In his camps – along with doing Yogasana and Pranayama demonstration – he talks about home made remedies that you could use to get rid of diseases. Then he says that if you have hard time understanding the method or preparing the concoctions and powders – then you could buy these from one of (15,000) company owned stores.

He has also assembled a team of ayurvedic practitioners who offer free consultations to attendees at the outpatient clinic, held every day during the camp – and prescribe Patanjali Ayurved's medicines.

He also did one very smart thing. He packaged Yoga into an easy to understand series of Asana and Pranayams – and proposed them as the cure for most of the diseases. That is content marketing magic – bundle knowledge in an easy to understand package and weave a story around it.

Think about this course that you are a part of. There is a structure in place. You are learning digital marketing via email through 12 lessons. It is tough to learn something like digital marketing without a structure. I know because I tried learning that way.

So what is content marketing?

I am sharing three definitions with you.

"In content marketing – you solve the problem of your (future) customers using content."

Ramdev's content is free yoga training. He tried to solve the health (problem) of people and ended up selling Rs 2500 crore worth of products in 2014-15. He has started advertising only recently – so you can easily attribute 90% or more of Patanjali Ayurved's revenues to content marketing i.e. free yoga training.

Here is another equation that can help you understand content marketing:

"Content Marketing = Content + Strategy to promote this content across multiple platforms with an intent to get results (like website visitors, blog subscribers, leads, prospects and customers)"

Or understand it using this angle:

"Content marketing is the process of creating valuable, relevant content to attract, acquire, and engage your audience."

If you are selling high end fashion products then you can solve the problem of "how to look stylish" through your content and sell more of your products.

The right mindset for content marketing

Never put out content without knowing what you are going to sell. Even if you do not have the product ready – you should have a broad idea of what your product will be – before you start publishing the content.

If products are too complex for you – then think of service or training. You can teach people something that you are good at.

At times, you may have to work it backwards. For example, you may have a blog that is growing fast and you are happy about the growth. That's a good situation to be in but don't stop there. Create your own solutions that you can sell instead of promoting other people's products.

If you have a blog that is going nowhere – then also you need to do this. A lot of bloggers don't invest enough time and energy in their blogs because they get no returns out of it. If you are a blogger in such a situation offer services. With services you can start making money as soon as you get someone to pay you for what you know and can do for them. Then reinvest what you earn into the blog and look out for more freelancing opportunities.

Do the same If you run an Ecommerce website. You can create demo videos /how to use videos for you products, and customer happiness stories by interviewing satisfied users of your products.

There is more to it as you will see once you read further. So keep going.

Who should do content marketing?

Almost every brand / business should do content marketing.

If you product sells for around Rs 3-5,000 then content marketing should help you sell it directly without much human intervention. If the product is priced higher than this then you will have to

generate leads and then nurture these leads (people) so that they'll eventually decide to buy.

Why do it?

Because it is cost effective.

And, unlike advertising you continue to reap benefits from content for long time even after it is published.

Clay Collins, the founder of SaaS startup Leadpages, was able to use content marketing to decrease the cost to acquire a customer (CAC) by one tenth.

Usually SaaS companies release new version of a product once or twice a year with a large number of updates to the product. Then an inside sales team (the team that sells over phone) works on educating prospects about new features.

Leadpages did the opposite. They released 1 feature a week and wrote about it on their blog. By doing so – they could replace a large inside sales team with one good blogger and reduce their customer acquisition cost.

Leadpages launched in January 2013 and gained 15,000 paying customers in 12 months and continues to grow. They have also raised \$38 million in funding.

How were they able to do it?

As per Tim Paige, Conversion Educator at LeadPages they started with creating a lot of opt-in opportunities (Webinars, Free Reports, Live Demos, etc.). I have shared how to get started with this when I discussed email list building.

Let's dig deeper.

We live in times where your customers are doing their own research, online, without you. They do it before talking to anyone at your company. By engaging in content marketing – you ensure that you are visible in right places when customers try to find you. This builds trust and marks the beginning of a relationship with your buyer.

As we move forward we'll discuss:

- creating your content plan
- how to go about actually creating your content,
- how to promote your content across multiple channels,
- and how to measure it for success.

Right now almost every serious brand is – trying to – do content marketing.

If nothing else – there are trying to blog. This creates a lot of clutter and noise.

To make sure that you cut through the clutter and are not lost in this noise – you need to understand it well and do it the right way – better than others.

You also need to understand how the world is changing to do it right.

We are now living in a multi channel and multi device world. Our customers are accessing

information on mobile, tablet and other devices (like laptops at work or home).

They are active on different channels – at one point they are checking Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat, next minute they are checking emails; and at other time of the day they might be using search (Google), checking out a website of a brand that they plan to buy from and also checking restaurant reviews on Zomato to plan a dinner date.

As a content marketer it is important for you to be seen across devices and on multiple channels in right light.

Your job as a content marketer is to earn your customer's attention.

Agreed it is a tough world out there – but content marketing when done right – helps your brand stand apart.

Your goal with content marketing is to provide valuable, relevant, and educational content – in order to become a trusted source through all of that information.

That's what Baba Ramdev did. Do you think there are better yoga experts than him out there? I bet, there are. But by providing all that useful content – he became a trusted source of info about yoga and ayurveda.

Here are some important elements that should be present in your content marketing strategy – if you are thinking about using content marketing for your brand.

- 1) Your content should not be boring or self serving. Make it interesting and engaging. It is not wise to talk about your brand all the time. Put the spotlight on your customers – let them shine. When you do that for your customers – they become your brand ambassadors.
- 2) Your content should be created based on what your customers want and what they are searching for.
- 3) You should never write a piece of content without an end goal in mind. You can have different goals for your content it can be thought leadership, awareness for brand, or traffic generation.
- 4) Do numbers driven content marketing. Write down what you want the content to achieve. Do you want more leads, do you want new followers on social media? Write down these goals and numbers before you start creating content.
- 5) Make your content marketing cost effective. You do this by creating evergreen content. Evergreen content when created remains relevant for months and years to come. At least 85% of the content you create should be evergreen. Rest can be news driven, company updates, trends etc.
- 6) Be available on all devices and channels that your audience frequents. The content you publish should be customized for each channel.

Once you do that you will be able to build a relationship and customers will trust you enough to buy from you.

Benefits of content marketing

With content marketing you get customer's attention

When content marketing is tied to SEO, customers find you when they search for something related to your brand. This helps build awareness for your brand.

It helps you establish trust with people. People buy from companies that they trust.

You reduce the cost of acquiring leads and customers like in LeadPages example above.

Difference Between Content Marketing and a Sales Pitch

Content Marketing	Sales Content
Educates	Sells
Pull	Push
Shares interesting info – like behind the scene stories	Shares product details

How to do content marketing right?

Use 5:2 formula.

First publish 5 educational content pieces and then 2 promotional content pieces (one soft sell and 1 direct sales pitch). Keep on repeating this.

You would have noticed that I did not follow this ratio. Because my goal is to give tons of value first without expecting much in return.

Does this mean that I am scared to talk about our products?

Not at all. I am proud of the products we have put out and the new ones we are working on.

So, I'll do it when I have something to offer you that'll give you 10 times return on your investment and never before that.

And, if I do that I'll ask for your permission first – because that's the right way to do it.

In any case – we'll continue to share 98% of all our content for free with a goal of making our free knowledge better than paid products out there.

But you need not do it my way – use the 5:2 formula and talk about your product/services often.

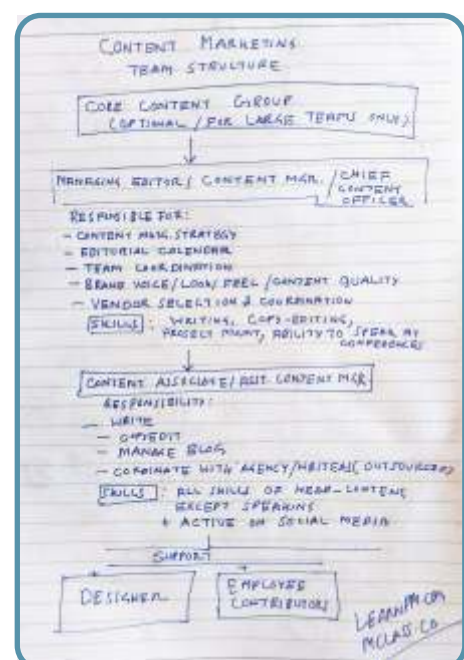
Creating a foundation for content marketing.

Building a Content Marketing Team

First, let's understand the structure of a content marketing team. I am sharing a sample structure below. This is the structure of the content marketing team for an established brand. Startups or solopreneurs can have a leaner version of this team – where 1 or 2 people take care of all content marketing activities. So how to structure and execute your content marketing effort:

There will be a core content team with leaders from different marketing teams. This team ensures that the content that is coming out has the right message, brand voice and it is consistent with all other communication.

Then, the content servicing team. It will have a managing editor (person in-charge of the content strategy) /



associate editor – then different writers (internal or external)

The content requests come to core content team which then gives to content servicing team.

How to build your content team

- Keep your eyes open for people creating great content and reach out to them
- Search on LinkedIn and check their content outside LinkedIn. Reach out to those whose work you like and think is suitable for your brand
- Check out former journalists who have covered an industry similar to yours
- Ask friends, associate, colleagues for a referral or ask on social media

Also ask for employee contributions. They can help you with blog posts and eBooks. Subject matter experts from within the company can help out with webinars and technical content.

You can also hire an external team and outsource your content production.

It works for both big brands and startups.

If you are a startup then chances are that you have a lot to do and a small team. Maybe you have still not reached the stage when you can hire your own team. In that case – it will be wise to outsource.

If you are a big brand and you understand the value of content marketing – then you'll need more hands even if you have a content team in place. In that case – go with an external team.

You can work with independent writers or an agency. Working with independent writers can be a hassle with respect to managing things. Take this route if you find a kick ass writer and you want that person on your team.

In case of an external team onboarding is really important.

For onboarding:

- Educate them about your business and brand voice.
- Give them a style guide. I'll get into details of create a style guide below.
- Work with them to get the quality you want.
- Give them the editorial guidelines.

You can create simple editorial guideline like this:

(Modify to create your own)

Guidelines for the writers.

- Proof read, edited, original content, should not have been posted anywhere in the past.
- Focus on one idea per blog post.
- List a takeaway at the end of the blog post.
- Your contribution should be related to the TOPIC (Add your topic here).
- Write as if you are talking with / addressing a single person.

- Write short sentences and paragraphs not exceeding 4–5 lines.
- For a 800 word post – don't think of a 400 word post padded out with fluff words. Think of a 1,600 word post trimmed down to its essence.
- To make the writing process efficient – come up with topics for a month of writing – usually four times the number of articles you plan to submit, and then move ahead with writing. Share this in last week of preceding month. (For example, share topics for April, during last week of March).
- Use quotes and reference research. The text based on research and quote should not exceed 15% of the article length.
- The article that you contribute cannot be re-posted / published elsewhere.
- In case of multiple contributions, please make sure that there is no duplicate content or repeating of ideas across blog posts.
- Use real world examples.
- Avoid using adverbs.
- Use active voice wherever possible.

Engage designers to make the content look beautiful

You can have your in-house graphic designer or outsource this to a freelancer / an agency. You'll take their help in design of ebooks, infographics, slide decks, and one page checklists.

Also check out Canva or Pablo if you want to do this yourself.

Content marketing (function) ownership

Usually marketing team owns content marketing with content manager/ managing editor/ content head reporting to marketing head/ CEO.

In really large organizations – one of the following team can own content marketing.

- Product Marketing
- Demand Generation
- Corporate Marketing
- Brand Marketing

Whichever team owns it – all teams should provide inputs and share comments on important pieces before they are published.

Significance of content marketing team

If you are the one leading the content marketing team – be sure to establish good rapport with different teams that you work with. Continue to ask them – what type of content can help them and then create it for them. Take their help in promoting the content.

The content marketing team works with different departments within marketing and support all of them with different types of content – that helps them achieve their respective goals.

Here is the different type of content you'll create to serve different teams:

- **Demand Generation / Lead generation** – Content that helps to drive demand for your business, such as ebooks, infographics, slide decks.
- **Customer Content** – Customer case studies and testimonials that really show the external community how your product or service has helped customers.
- **Brand Content** – High level thought leadership content, such as guest blog posts, editorial content for industry publications and, the content that you want to put out there to really show what your brand stands for.

How to make sure that your content is effective

To do that you create Buyer Personas and Buyer Journeys.

I have discussed this in the guide on SEO so I am just going to touch upon this briefly.

Buyer persona – is the profile of different types of buyers who buy from your company. Each of these customers will have a different path for purchase. This path is known as the buyer's journey.

Based on buyer personas, you:

- Choose what content to create
- Target the right topics that these buyers care about
- Decide on the voice and tone.. (personal or research driven)

For example the content you create for a 50 year old customer who is a leader at a company will be different from someone who is in 20-30 year age group at a different level professionally and has different content consumption habits (prefers video over written content) or someone who is in 18-25 age group (mobile first generation).

Every buyer will have a buyer journey with different buying stages.

A customer may first come across a story about your brand on a site like Business Insider or YourStory → then do a random search on Google and come to your website → without exploring much there → head to your social media channels → from there come back to your blog → and then explore content there.

This will vary depending on your product and also at what buying stage a customer is at (ready to buy, researching or just exploring).

With this in mind, it makes a lot of sense to have a "Start Here" section on your blog. This makes sure that a random visitor on your blog is not confused. With a "Start Here" section, you hold their hand and introduce them to your best content first and let them choose from a small number of content pieces.

How can you get better hang of buyer persona and buyer journey

Do interviews and secondary research. Look at what people post on Quora, what they write on reviews site or lookout for blog posts where customers have written reviews of competing services on their own blogs.

Sit with your sales team (if you have one) and listen in to customer calls. You can do it as the calls

happen or check out the recorded calls later. For recording and accessing the audio over cloud – you can use a reasonably priced cloud telephony / IVR system like Ozonetel / KooKoo.

Talk to customer services team. If you work in content marketing for a startup or if you run a startup yourself – then take customer support calls at least one day a week. By doing this, you will learn a lot about what motivates your customers to buy and what are their challenges. You can use this learning to create effective content.

[If you are in the process of launching your startup or have launched your startup but do not have customers – then leave everything – even stop reading this – and get your first customer. Send cold emails, make cold calls, ask friends /colleagues for referrals and get your first (set of) customers and then spend evenings and nights on content marketing (and other digital marketing efforts).]

Speak to current customers – happy and not happy.

By doing all this you should aim to record following:

Customer background, job, goals, challenges, main source of info that they rely on, preferred content medium – video, email, ebooks; objections that they have about your product/service, their role in purchase process (are they the decision maker or there is someone else who assists in purchase decision).

Once you know this pick out the major customer group that you need to address and then create content that speaks to each persona and people at different stages in buyer journey.

Do not get discouraged if you don't figure this out at first try. No one gets it right the first time. But keep your eyes and ears open and try to learn as much as you can about your prospects and customers. Genuinely care for them. Eventually you will learn enough to serve them well – first through your content and later through your products.

Developing your brand voice

This is important to ensure consistency in content creation if you have more than one writer working on content creation.

For this you create a **brand voice persona** which is – **the feeling that you'll want your content to convey**. This persona can be – conversational, accessible, educational, authoritative, or professional.

Next you define your **brand voice tone** which is – **the way that your content will sound**.

Your brand voice tone – can be friendly, direct, honest, formal, or scientific.

Next, you'll determine your **brand voice language**. This is essentially **the language in which your content is written**. This could be simple, wordy, complex, jargony. It depends on your business and who you're selling to.

Next step is to create a style guide. Once you have your persona, your language, and your tone all written down; you and your content team (in-house and outsourced) can figure the exact style to write about your brand.

It may look a bit complex in beginning but if you take a day or two to think about it and note it down – you will have a system in place to scale your content marketing.

All these elements will go in your Style Guide.

For your style guide – you'll answer following questions:

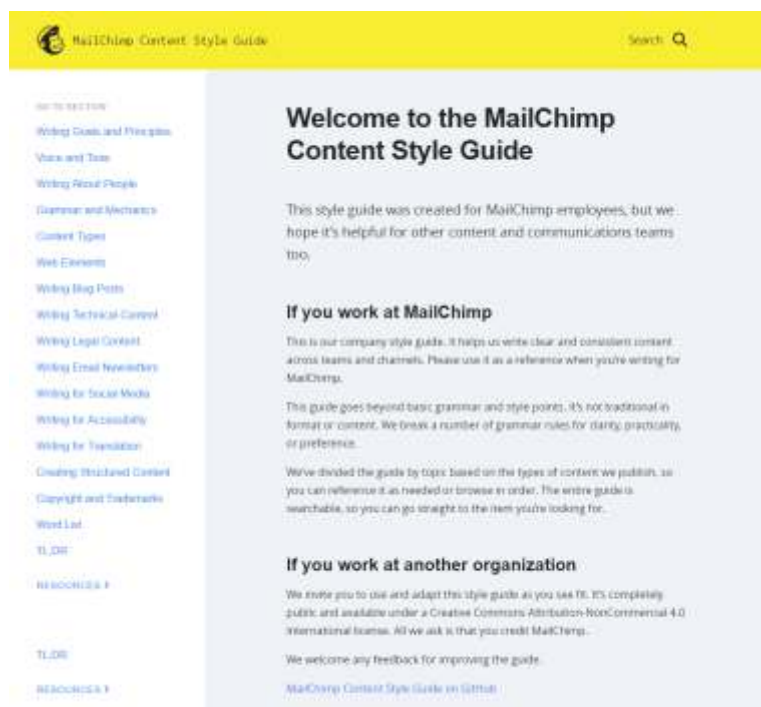
- About your brand
- Who do you sell to
- Who makes up the content team
- Your style and writing tone
- Specific grammar guidelines, as well as content types and structure

This could be as short or as lengthy as you want. The more information you add to it, the easier it'll be to train – content marketers who'll join – about your company and your style.

Your tone will differ slightly for each persona. Your voice should be consistent for all content.

Once you have figured out your brand voice and tone and other elements it is time to put all that into your style guide.

Check out <http://styleguide.mailchimp.com/>



and create a shorter simpler version for your own style guide. Your style guide can be a simple Google doc or a PDF.

Content marketing goals

It is important to set content marketing goals because with goals you can define what content marketing success will look like. Once you define it – you'll be able to measure it.

- You can set up both short terms and long terms goals
- Your goals can be qualitative – brand recognition, thought leadership, social engagement, relationship building, and trust
- And quantitative – number of new leads, downloads, social shares, leads, and revenues.

You can track how well you are achieving your goals by using goals functionality in Google Analytics. (I'll share more about it in coming weeks when we'll discuss Google Analytics in detail).

You can also look at the reports that you see using inbuilt dashboards of social channels like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn etc. Also look at your CRM. If you are using a marketing automation software like Hubspot then it becomes simple to check these.

How to ensure success with your content marketing goals

Do not keep these goals to yourself. Share with key stakeholders, schedule check-ins with teams. This will make you accountable and improve chances of success.

It is scary to put yourself out in a spot by announcing your goals and it will take planning and effort to achieve those. But when you perform – you will make your team happy and you can ask the CEO or CMO for more budget.

You can do the same if you run an agency or if you are a freelancer offering content marketing services to brands.

For a content writer it is tough to become data driven and methodical. If you can do that you will be able to stand apart, command respect and earn increased revenues from your clients. So take time to absorb this and try it.

Choosing content marketing technology

If you are a small operation you can use a simple spreadsheet.

If you use WordPress and have a blog or website with multiple contributors you can use a plugin like Editorial Calendar.



For larger operations and more sophisticated features you can use content marketing software like DivvyHQ, Kapost, Marketing.AI, Skyword or CoSchedule.

These softwares help you organize and prioritise tasks, manage projects, collaborate with different teams/writers, create overall editorial calendar and execute on your content marketing plans.

It may take a while to get used to the software but once you start using one that fits your needs the best – you may not want to go to spreadsheets or relying on emails to manage your content marketing.

Also check out Uberflip that helps you create, manage, and optimize content experiences at every stage of the buyer journey. It is a bit pricey so only large organizations or startups with good cash flow will be able to afford it. Give it a go if you can.

How to choose the right content marketing software and train your team

To choose the right software – you need to understand and note down your content marketing workflow. You will have to see how many people are collaborating on your content effort, what is the

process of content creation, the stages in approval process and who approves it.

Once you know this – you should check out software demo, take a trial where it is available. Also share your workflow docs with the software sales support team and ask them how well suited the software is for you.

Once you decide on software – subscribe, learn yourself and then train your team and any agency or freelancers who are involved. In most cases – content marketing software provider will have videos / screencasts about how to use it that you can share those with your team.

Creating your content plan

1. Come up with topic ideas

It starts with coming up with topic ideas. I have covered this a good deal in the lesson on blogging.

Make sure that your content matches your business objectives. Keep your buyer persona and your seo keywords in mind.

Check out what your competitors are doing on content front. Use a tool like Buzzsumo to find the most shared content on any topic (search for your topic) and write about that. This way you will start with proven content topics that are sure to be shared if you write well and make it better than the content that is already there.

Ask people on your email list about what topics they want to read.

Install an app like WebEngage on your website and ask visitors what they want to read.

You can ask your team for content ideas. Ask people on the sales team, customer service, and marketing team. Each will talk about customer desires and these will become your topics.

2. Decide on the content themes

Decide your monthly, quarterly, bi-yearly, or yearly content themes.

This helps you in prioritization.

So for Quarter 1 you may be launching a new product and your content can focus on build up for that launch. For Quarter 2 you may focus on one industry segment that you sell to.

If a quarter is too long for a theme then go with monthly themes. While you are working on your content (blogpost, slide decks, ebooks, infographics) around a particular theme – do not miss out on your ongoing content initiatives. This means you should have themed content + some regular content.

Important: Map Content to Your Sales Funnel

Before you think about mapping content you need to understand your sales funnel.

Here is the standard definition:

“A **sales funnel** is a marketing system. It’s the “ideal” process you intend your customers to experience as they go from Prospect to Lead to Customer to Repeat Buyer.”

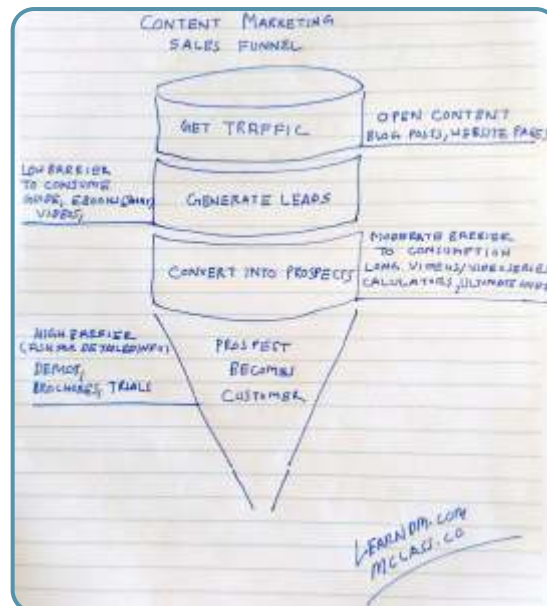
(I am going to share about sales funnels in details in next lesson on lead generation – so look out for that.)

For now, you can understand that a sales funnel is a “funnel” like structure to understand customer acquisition process – where (website) visitors enter on the top of the funnel and get introduced to your brand and are then converted into leads. Some of these leads are converted into prospects. Some of these prospects become customers. This ideally results in a win-win scenario. Customers get value in form of your product or service that you offer and you get revenues.

Only a small number of visitors become leads. Then a small number of leads become prospects and a small number of prospects become customers.

Here is what it may look like:

10000 visitors → 1000 leads → 100 prospects → 10 customers



Top of the funnel (TOFU)

Website Visitors / Leads – found your through social media, media mention.

Share best practices, educational and thought leadership content.

Middle of the funnel (MOFU)

By now – you know who they are. They have shown buying behaviour. You nurture them.

You nurture using reports, ROI Calculator, and share a bit about the product.

Bottom of the funnel (BOFU)

You have prospects who are close to become customers.

You need to share info that is related to the product through demos, sales webinars.

You convert (turn prospects into customers) by showing that return on investment (RoI) on your product or service is higher than the investment. You share customer case studies to make sure that prospects find something to relate to. At this point, you want to assure these leads/ prospects that your product/service is the correct choice.

Mapping your content with the sales funnel helps you in achieving your content goals.

Once you have content for each stage of sales funnel you ensure that random visitors to your website start the journey to become your customers.

Understanding the content mix

Choose your content mix (type of content you'll create) based on topic, goal and promotional channels for the content you plan to create.

Following are some content types that you can use in your content mix.

Blog Post (800 – 1800 words) – can be used for different topics and theme.

Frequency: You can post a blog post once a day or once a week depending on your resources and content strategy

Checklists – These are usually 1 or 2 page long downloadable content pieces. A checklist can have a list of best practices or resources on a particular topic or a list of actionable tips.

Frequency: Once every fortnight

Ebooks - are downloadable short books on a particular topic. They can range from 10 to 50 pages.

Frequency: Once a month or every other month



Ultimate Guides-These guides can be offered both as a PDF download and also made available to read online chapter wise. They can go from 50 to 150 pages. They can be later used to create smaller content pieces.

Frequency: Once a quarter

Infographics- Infographics are vertical graphics that are short and easy to consume. In an infographic you take information like interesting statistics about a topic, and present it in a visual way. You can post them on your blog with details in text about what is presented in the infographic. Text explanation helps with SEO. You can use services like Infogram to create these on your own.

Frequency: Once every two months

Industry Reports – You can create industry reports by conducting surveys and presenting it in a well designed document. Reports contain industry data and point of views of professionals in the industry. You can give interesting names to the reports – something like “State of Retail Industry 2016: Based on Inputs of 400 Retail Professionals”

If you promote this as a survey result – then it will have less impact than if you brand it as a report and format it like an ebook.

Frequency: Once or Twice a Year

Also look at other content formats like videos, slide decks and webinars.

Video - You can create videos to make your content mix interesting and relevant for a wider audience. You can post your videos on YouTube, Facebook and also embed them on your website. Your videos can be for product demo. You can also take your blog posts and convert it into interesting videos on varied topics.

Keep your videos from 1 to 3 minutes. If you are sure about your content and believe that you are a good storyteller then you can go for longer videos of 10-15 minutes.

Frequency: Once every fortnight

Slide decks – You can create Slide decks or presentations based on your blog content or infographics. Once done – you can publish them on SlideShare and promote to your email subscribers and also on different social channels.

Frequency: Once every fortnight

Webinar – A webinar is an online presentation – promoted as an interactive event with opportunity for Q and A – with a promise that audience will learn something new by attending the webinar.

In a webinar, a speaker presents along with a slide deck. People sign in and attend webinars in real time. Webinars can be recorded and those who register can watch the recording later. Webinars are great if you are trying to teach something complex to your audience. Webinars are also used for lead generation and sales conversions. You can use software like GoToWebinar (This is the one we use for our paid online courses), Cisco Webex and WizIQ to host your own webinars.

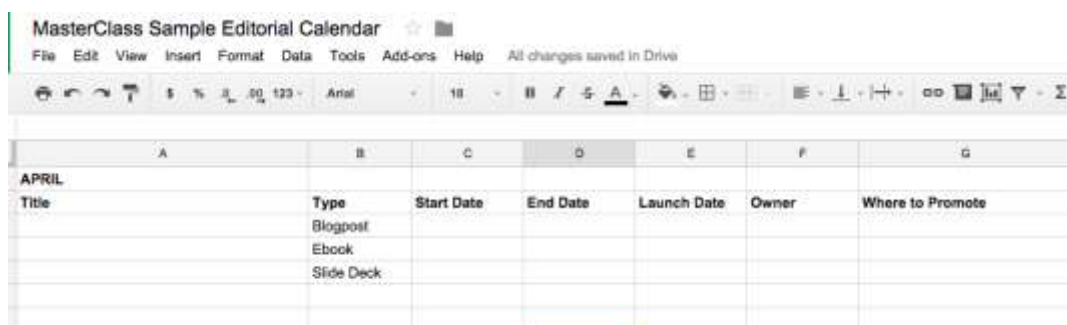
Frequency : Once every month. They can be more frequent if you use them for conversions or delivering training.

By picking up different content types – you can create your content mix and based on this plan you can create your content calendar.

Content plan and editorial calendar

Create a content plan by including the content type from the ones shared above.

Based on this content plan you create an editorial calendar. A basic editorial calendar can be created in a spreadsheet with fields as shared below.



MasterClass Sample Editorial Calendar						
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help All changes saved in Drive						
A B C D E F G						
APRIL	Type	Start Date	End Date	Launch Date	Owner	Where to Promote
Title	Blogpost					
	Ebook					
	Slide Deck					

Once you are ready with an editorial plan you move to content creation.

Efficient content creation

To make content creation efficient you should build a repeatable process to make it simple and

consistent.

Here is a 15-step process than you can follow:

- Research - If topic is technical or requires deep expertise then discuss this with an expert from within the company – do an interview / braindump to supplement your own research.
- Create an outline – include points that you are trying to put across and write down different sections.
- Write first draft.
- Add intro and conclusion.
- Break your content into headlines and subheadings – add list and bullet points to make it scannable.
- Do another round of edit for improving content and flow.
- Add examples, reference links.
- Review to make sure that it adheres to style guide (This is for new team members / contributors).
- Copy Edit for grammar and structure.
- Send it (or share via Google docs) to 1 or more people for review. If you want to review track changes use MS Word.
- Write second draft if needed.
- Read it aloud and fix any typos.
- Show it to everyone who is involved (members from different teams).
- Send for design. Designer should refer to style guide for brand colour, font usage, and image style etc.
- Once done – LAUNCH.

This is an extensive process. If you want something simple – remove some steps from the process above.

Make your content work longer and harder for you using content repurposing

By content repurposing you take one piece of content and convert it into a different format.

Work on a big content piece – like ultimate guide (50 – 150 pages) and then break it into different resources.

By repurposing the content used in a detailed guide you can create following.

- 5-10 ebooks based on different chapters
- 10 or more checklists
- 4 Infographics / slide decks
- 5 Videos based on the content
- 20 Blog Posts

You can also reverse this process and start with blog posts eventually convert these blog posts into different content formats.

“The Martian” movie that went on to gross \$627 million started as a series of posts by Andy Weir on his website. Once he started posting it – some readers requested he make it available on Amazon Kindle. First sold for 99 cents, the novel made it to the Kindle bestsellers list. Weir was then approached by a literary agent and sold the rights of the book to Crown Publishing. From there it got wings and it became the success you see today.

The lesson here is to **never underestimate the power of small consistent action** – and a small piece of content. You never know how it will surprise you. So be sure to make everything you put out – best you can do.

Promoting your content

If you want the content to help you in completing your content goals (getting blog subscribers, generating leads etc) then you need to have a barrier to stop people from directly consuming your content. This is also known as gating.

To introduce a barrier or to gate your content – you put a form in front of your content. Here are some examples.



Another example



Anyone willing to check out this content needs to share information to be able to view or download that piece of content.



There are different options that you can choose.

Option 1- Gate all your content – good to build database for startups – except early stage content (like blog posts).

Option 2 – Gate content based on buying stage. Only gate content items that are close to product buying stage.

Here are some pointers:

DON'T GATE – Early stage content like blog posts – when user are getting introduced to your brand.

GATE – Mid stage content – ROI calculator.

DON'T GATE – Late stage content like – Case Study

Another commonsensical thing to do is to put a gate / form in front where you invested a lot of time in creating the content.

Create a content promotion strategy

Create a strategy document – and add topic of the content, audience, goals with the content and suggestions to promote.

If you are going to promote it yourself this doc will be good for reference and bringing clarity to your thought process.

In case you are working for a brand or a client then hand this doc over to the client or company's your digital marketing team. You should ensure that the promotion plan is multi channel and utilizes all relevant facets of digital marketing.

The digital marketing team working on content should test different channels and then put more efforts behind the channels that are giving you good results.

Utilize the sections on your website to highlight important content

- Add your downloadable content like eBooks and Ultimate Guides in Resources section.
- Create a section on homepage where you can add additional resources. This should be close to footer.

- Create banners (like ads) on your website and cross promote content on relevant pages. You can add these banners to your blog sidebar.
- You can also have a related resources section on the bottom on each blog post.

Promote on social media

Post your content on social channels. Organic is not enough always. See which content is moving and pay to promote it. Also do it for important content pieces like eBooks, new videos etc.

Always include right CTAs and share the value that a particular content piece offers.

Monitor responses to your social media channels and reply promptly.

For the launch of an important content piece (like an ebook, video or webinar) – update the cover pic of your social profiles to promote that particular ebook, video or webinar.

Promote on LinkedIn for B2B products. Share updates on your company page. Use sponsored updates and LinkedIn ads (Advertising on LinkedIn is costlier than other channels). You can also leverage LinkedIn Groups and post updates there.

You can upload slide decks on Slideshare. Slideshare allows you to add lead gen forms to slide so use that functionality.

Use Pinterest to promote Infographics. It usually works better for B2C content.

Using email marketing for content promotion

Make sure that you send updates about new content to your email list. In the email offer a short summary and then include a CTA asking your subscriber to download, read or watch depending on the content you are promoting.

If you are promoting an ebook or another downloadable content assets like an ultimate guide then add a cover of that resource to your email.

Find partners who work in similar industry and ask them to promote your content in return of some incentive. You can pay money for this or promote your partner's product to your email list.

Using your blog for content promotion

For every content piece that's not a blog – like ebook, webinar, infographic, video, slide deck – write a brief blog and ask your blog readers to check that content out.

While promoting this content offer actionable takeaways, add a screenshot / image of the content and include a strong CTA (Call to Action) asking people to download / watch / join.

Use content syndication to promote your content

If your content is very good then there are sites that allows you to republish your content on their platform.

Blog post syndication is simple. Repost all blog posts that you write on your blog – on LinkedIn and Medium – 10 days after you publish them on your blog. 10 days gap is to make sure that the blog post

published on your site is indexed (included in search results) by search engine. This is from SEO perspective. An even smarter idea will be to post a part of your content on LinkedIn and Medium and ask readers to check out the rest on your website.

You can also try syndicating your content on sites like Business Insider, and Huffington Post. It is slightly tricky but you can give it a shot.

Use influencer marketing to promote your content

Influencer marketing is a form of marketing that identifies and targets individuals with influence over potential buyers.

You can engage influencers in your industry by featuring them in your content. For example in this content marketing guide I have featured Clay Collins and Tim Paige from LeadPages – and I can reach out to them and request them to share it with their audience.

So how does this help in your content marketing?

When influencers share your content their audience – it gives your brand added visibility and credibility in front of an audience that is relevant for you.

You can find influencers based on your industry knowledge. You can also use apps like Followerwonk to find influencers on Twitter in your space. You will find some usual faces and also unearth some new accounts that you didn't know about or didn't think were relevant.

You can also use hashtags on social media to find and connect with influencers and meet them at industry events.

Some content types like roundup posts (where you ask 20-30 industry influencers to answer one question and feature all answers in one place) and ebooks where 1 or more influencers are featured work well to engage influencers.

A roundup post can have a title like – 20 Industry Leaders talk about the biggest trend in INDUSTRY NAME. With a roundup post you put the collective power of influencer behind your content. Even if only 8 influencers share your content – that's eight times more reach than usual.

Be sure to not showcase same set of influencers in all your content. Engage with new people. This will help you get a wider reach.

Use Pay Per Click (PPC) Ads to promote your content

For an important content launch – leave no stone unturned to make it work. Even if it means putting some money behind it.

Use PPC ads like Search Ads, Banner Ads and Retargeting to promote your content. This will help you increase reach of your content and if the content is gated – you can collect some leads as well.

If you do not know much about PPC – it is okay. You can try out other content promotion techniques. If you are keen to learn about PPC basics – then you should check out the Google Adwords lesson which you'll be able to see in coming weeks.

Because PPC can cost good deal of money – use it only for MOFU and BOFU content – content that is for those who are in later stages of buying journey.

Measuring your content rol

By tracking your content marketing you become confident about investing in content.

Many marketers do not think about Rol – because they don't know how to measure it.

Decide on your goals when you are creating the content. Think and decide what are you looking for – social shares, leads or visits. This will also help you decide your gating strategy.

To measure your Rol – write down the investment for each step and resource in content marketing process.

Item / Resource – investment (in Rupees)

- ebook – 5k
- Ultimate Guide – 15-25k
- Slide deck – 5k
- Checklist – 1k
- Asst. Content Manager / Asst. Editor – 70k / month,
- Content Manager / Head – 150k / month
- Writer – 30 – 50k / month

Based on prominent industry surveys here are some original goals for content marketers:

- Brand awareness
- Lead Generation
- Customer Acquisition
- Thought Leadership
- Engagement
- Brand Loyalty
- Website Traffic
- Lead Nurturing
- Sales

Pick some of these content marketing goals and start tracking in a spreadsheet to begin. (Track monthly using Google Analytics.)

- Traffic
- Referring sources
- Exit pages
- Bounce time
- Top Content Assets

You can also track content downloads, social engagements – in your marketing automation software.

Also track social shares, likes, comments, social follower increase etc.

How to do content marketing if you are on a budget?

Content Marketing on a Tight Budget

Content Marketing can be done on a very small budget - even for free.

Here is a **sample content marketing activity plan (including tips on how to execute it) for a budget of ₹90,000.**

No.	Activity	Budget Allocation (Amount in ₹)	Details
1	Blogging	30,000 (for 60 blog posts)	Invest the money in outsourcing this job. For ₹30,000 you should be able to get 30-60 blog posts depending on the length. Don't go for the cheapest provider. Test 4 writers by paying them for 3-4 blog posts and give the complete assignment to 2 writers.
2	Email Marketing	10,000 (for email marketing template)	Get an email template created. If you are using MailChimp or any other software - ask your developer to include installation in the price.
3	Social Media	Free	Do it yourself (DIY) based on what you learned.
4	Mobile Apps	Hold	Do when you have budgets.
5	Guest Blogging	Free	Learn about it in chapter on blogging and do it.

Content Marketing on a Tight Budget

No.	Activity	Budget Allocation (Amount in ₹)	Details
6	Video	Hold	Do when you have budgets.
7	Interactive game, quiz, contest	10,000	Run a promo like notamodel.tv. The amount will be used to promote the giveaway using Facebook Advertising.
8	Images	Free	DIY. Source for free from Flickr creative commons pool or create using Canva.
9	Infographics	Free	Create using the tool shared above.
10	Develop Case Studies	Free	Outline customer problem, resolution and outcome as shared above.
11	Offer White Papers	Free	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
12	Create a comprehensive FAQs page	Free	Create this based on your experience and by looking at old customer emails.
13	Create Ebooks	10,000	Get a freelancer to do it.
14	Podcast	5000 (for basic equipment)	Hold until you have all most other activities going.

Content Marketing on a Tight Budget

No.	Activity	Budget Allocation (Amount in ₹)	Details
15	Host a Webinar	~ 5000 (for 6 months gotomeeting.com subscription)	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
16	Host Events / Meetups	Free. Get attendees to pay.	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
17	Go and Speak at Conferences	Free. Get hosts to pay you.	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
18	Make Your Website a Well-Rounded Hub	Free (Paid for a very large website)	Just keep adding most relevant content to your blog and FAQ pages
19	Create SlideShare Presentations	Free	Convert the content of every blog post in a SlideShare presentation. How to do it well in one of the forthcoming modules.
20	Create Press Release	Free	Search "how to write a press release". Write one and use free press release distribution sites.

Content Marketing on a Tight Budget

No.	Activity	Budget Allocation (Amount in `)	Details
21	Develop High Quality Marketing Collateral	-	This is not needed in the beginning as this is cost intensive.
22	Try Direct Mail	-	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
23	Develop Research Reports	Free	Use a survey app like Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com) to conduct surveys and compile responses to create report.
24	Sponsor Events		Hold until you have all most other activities going. This will call for some budget and is not recommended as a starting activity.
25	Develop Resources Page	Free	Check out this resource page (helpscout.net/resources). This is from HelpScout, a company that has its growth powered by content marketing.
26	Develop Microsites	10,000	Build using Wishpond
27	Use Advertorials		Hold until you have all most other activities going.

Content Marketing on a Tight Budget

No.	Activity	Budget Allocation (Amount in `)	Details
28	Use Native Advertising	-	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
29	Use Packaging to tell a story	2000	Add content stickers to your existing packaging.
30	Offer Premiums/Giveaways	-	Hold until you have all most other activities going.
31	Develop In-depth Guides	Free	Use your blog posts as base. Create a guide by combining old blog posts.
32	Checklists and Templates	Free	Brainstorm and get started.

Now you know all this – time to give it a try one by one.

Content marketing can make your brand more accessible and trustworthy. And, trust or lack of it – may very well be difference if your customers will buy from you or not.

It starts with taking some time to think and plan your content, know your customers and giving them value through your content. Soon, you will see them as loyal customers.

Assignment for the week (Finish by March 19th, Saturday)

- Write down your buyer persona.
- Create a brief style guide using the example above.
- Create your editorial calendar for April 2016.

Hope you have learned and enjoyed.

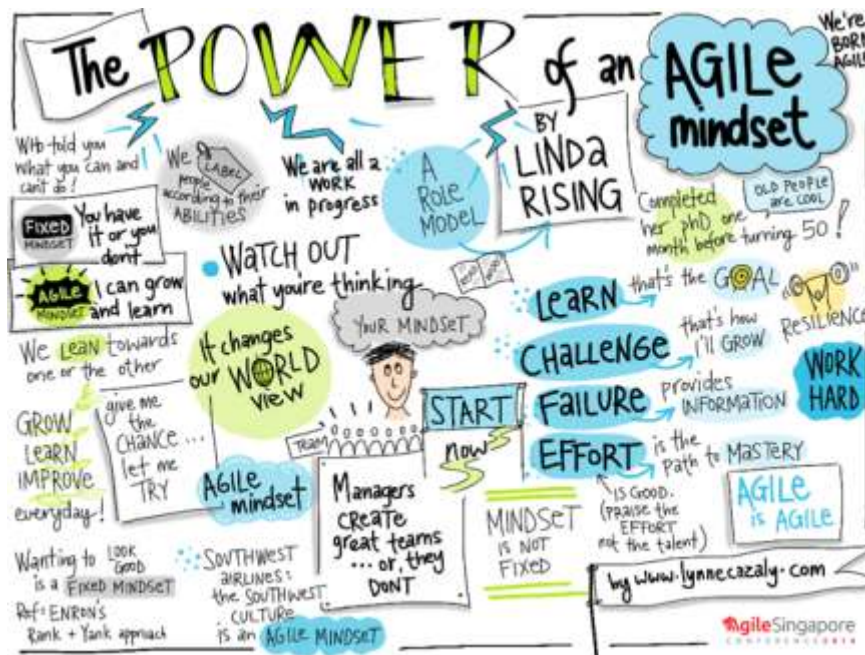
Mohit – A Digital Marketer who is happy to talk to you again.

BLOG POSTS

ON BUSINESS AGILITY & VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

FOR A GLOBAL CONSULTING COMPANY

Are You an Agile Leader ?



"All failure is failure to adapt, all success is successful adaptation", says Dr. Max McKeown, innovation strategy, leadership and culture expert.

The statement is meaningful in current times when an organization's ability to fit into new environments or speedily reacting to the change has become more important than ever.

What differentiates a leading organization from others is its readiness to get out of comfort zone. Such an organization adapts to changes brought about by external forces.

This is not a one-time exercise. The organizations operate in a competitive market. They cannot afford to innovate for a quarter and then do nothing for another; because the other organizations are also adopting new ways of working.

In such a scenario, the only way out is to demonstrate agility and flexibility continuously. This is not possible without agile leaders, who are nimble and ready to take on volatility created by the market conditions and the competition. Agile leaders take quick action in such a scenario, course correct while they move ahead and turn these situations into opportunities.

Making something out of nothing, finding sense in apparently unrelated ideas, embracing uncertainty with confidence and inspiring others to transform and break out from norms are crucial skills for agile leaders.

Are You an Agile Leader?

Do you exhibit agility? Are you effectively managing change? Are you inspiring people to get out of their comfort zones and do something that they have never even thought of doing?

To be precise, the question is – are you an agile leader?

Let's find out with the help of an example. Consider two scenarios:

Mike is working in a packaging solution firm in its design and evolution department. Instead of his creativity he is best known for processes and procedures. His usual management approach is to conduct a morning meeting each day, delegate tasks to each team member, guide them wherever needed and ask them to report in evening to inform him about the developments. Needless to say, the work is completed always on time. But his team members gradually got into a habit of being told what to do and how to do it.

Justin, on the other hand, has an entirely different approach. Instead of delegating tasks to his team members, he asks them to choose their task themselves and figure out on their own how to go about it. It's an unsaid rule that each team member will choose a different task each time. Though his team goes through a lot of chaos because not everyone is capable of doing everything but ultimately they manage to do the task by working together. Justin's aim is to push everyone out of their comfort zones and take up challenging tasks, and change ways of thinking and doing things.

Are you more like Mike or Justin?

Both the approaches are opposite to each other. In the first situation, Mike is just managing things and creating followers. While on the other hand, Justin's approach is making people think and giving them an opportunity to become agile. He is building creative and agile employees who are stronger, smarter, more confident and competent to become future agile leaders. And the beat goes on.

Agile leadership is not about handling people and managing things. It's about preparing the workforce to face new challenges, acquire new skills and perform well under changing conditions on a continuous basis.

Key Characteristics on Agile Leaders

Agility is not a standalone competency. It's an amalgamation of a number of interconnected abilities. The above scenario depicts only one aspect of leadership agility. There are numerous other aspects of it. Let's take a look:

1. Change is permanent.

Agile leaders accept that the business environment is highly turbulent, fiercely competitive, brutally uncertain and extremely complex. The only way to deal with it is to anticipate more changes, more volatility and emerging threats despite implementing new ideas and initiating transformation on a regular basis.

2. Agility is a conscious and ongoing effort.

You can't become agile overnight. It's an ongoing process where you gradually and consciously prepare yourself and your team members to develop the right mind-set, willingness to change old habits and make space for new ones. Though it's done consciously, an agile leader won't force anything on her team members. Instead she will help everyone understand the need to be agile.

As an agile leader, you say, "We're doing this not only to break the norms but to see how it feels to be outside the set patterns and how we manage the risk." With this, you also answer their question – "What's in it for me?"

3. Agile leaders believe in shared leadership.

Lao Tzu says, "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves."

Leadership agility is not about positions or superiority over others. It's about influencing others and engaging team members in activities that can influence other team members. It is about developing a collective leadership behavior in a team.

As an agile leader, you promote a new way of thinking. You encourage people to become a network of competencies that make them more confident and resilient to operate in the face of uncertainty.

4. Agile leaders don't over analyze.

An agile leader doesn't spend too much time analyzing a situation before acting. The idea behind this is that if you keep analyzing things and wait for more information, the chances are you'll never get it done.

An agile leader is able to synthesize apparently unrelated pieces of information and use it to find out an efficient solution.

5. Agile leaders believe in dynamic management.

Agile leaders build learning organizations. Rather than supporting a vertical hierarchy, agile leaders introduce horizontal communication and ways to interconnect thinking and facilitate shared learning and faster innovation.

6. Agile leaders develop the right mind-set.

Agile leaders know that people can get used to virtually anything, if they are trained consciously; are given plenty of time to ponder and understand; are made to think that they have no choice but to respond to change.

So what exactly do you need to do? You need to help them understand why they have to change the way they have been working for years. You must create an environment of strong trust, in order to make them believe that you really want to help them grow.

7. Agile leaders are open to new ideas.

The main aim of agile leaders is to respond to or introduce change. This is possible only if the company's workforce is able to innovate quickly and continuously. In such a scenario, agile leaders are open to new ideas, no matter how absurd they sound. They encourage employees to build on their ideas, if there is some reality associated with the ideas.

Leadership agility is not only about breaking the norms or set patterns of doing things. It's a competitive advantage for you, your people and your organization.

Where do you stand in terms of agility? Which characteristics do you exhibit already? What do you need to adopt to be a more agile leader?

Give some thought to it and find how you can stretch your limits, to emerge as an agile leader.



Collaboration Apps and Tools



When was the last time you snail mailed a letter to a co-worker? If you are like me – not in a long time. Email is what we use to share documents. We also use collaboration apps like Google Drive. We use these apps because it is more convenient and efficient than old way of doing things.

In the modern workplace, collaborative flexibility is essential. Companies like Buffer and Automatic virtual collaboration to hire location independent talent.

Teams don't always have the scheduling luxuries they require to get all their members in the same place at the same time. Nowadays, you can't reasonably expect to complete a project that incorporates numerous disciplines or employees without allowing for distributed collaboration, especially if you want to stay competitive.

Luckily, there are plenty of ready-to-go tools and apps that make it easy for virtual teams to work together regardless whether they're actually in the same building or geographical region. These are just a few of the most popular flavors you'll encounter:

1. Communication Tools

Distributed workforces necessitate novel approaches to keeping in contact. You can't simply walk down the hall and touch bases with your team members, so it's essential that you replace that face-to-face communication with something equivalent or superior.

Chat services have come a long way since the early, bug-filled days of voice-conferencing and AIM. Although basic text-only services and VoIP still have their roles, you can do so much more with apps like HipChat and Skype. These highly featured platforms let you call, drop and drag to share files, and group chat via text or video, so it's much easier to maintain a natural communication routine than it used to be.

Don't forget about embedded chat services and organization suites that feature chat. Google's GMail, for example, contains a fairly functional chat pane that mimics some of the best features of more dedicated apps, like Skype, and Slack integrates with Bitbucket and other platforms.

2. File-Sharing Tools

If others can't access the results of your efforts, there's not much point in collaborating. File-sharing apps have long been common standards within the tech world, and other industries are taking heed as they adopt similar technologies.

Although app suites, like Google Drive, integrate file sharing with document editing capabilities and actual content production, they're not the only ways to spread the work around. Alternate hosting services, such as Dropbox, are extremely popular, and Amazon Cloud Drive is commonly used by government organizations and firms that need to work in small teams or plan on migrating their shared content to active, consumer-ready web servers at some point in the future.

File sharing has become the standard at many modern firms. For instance, Dropbox for Business boasts customers like Vita Coco, Kayak and even foursquare, while Amazon Cloud Drive and Amazon Web Services have been employed by NASA, the Obama presidential campaign, Pinterest and the CIA.

3. Distributed Workflow Tools


Virtual teams often lack the flexibility required to adopt unified schedules. For instance, team members in different time zones usually have to contribute their work in accordance with their sleep schedules. As a result, you'll need to work hard to manage the overall workflow and ensure that your project is being completed as efficiently as possible.

Infrastructure applications, like Time Doctor and TimeCamp, are flexible enough to track complex schedules and analyze how project time is used. These tools are popular with IT firms, such as Innuva IT solutions and Cognician Software, but smaller entrepreneurs, like InkMustache and the GoldenRuleVA, also rely on these products to track hours and increase productivity.

Other infrastructure applications, such as TeamViewer and Yuuguu, provide some similar efficiency data gathering capabilities, but they're geared more towards giving you a more solid management presence. These applications permit you to take control of remote screens or view work in process, so you can keep track of how things are moving along or provide in-depth direction. These programs also boast fairly capable remote meeting functions.

4. Annotation

The one major problem with virtual teamwork is that having so many spoons in the pot can make the original recipe hard to follow. Annotation is essential, and good note-taking has saved many an otherwise doomed endeavor; by making your train of thought as clear as possible, you ensure that others can pick up right where you left off and continue pushing a project towards its ultimate goal.



It's up to you how you decide to maintain a coherent sense of direction within a team project, but it's best not to let things spiral out of control. For instance, with projects that involve programming, comments are usually embedded within code blocks, but that only gets you so far. While inline commenting is an essential part of group work, it only functions on a limited basis; keeping an entire directory organized as multiple individuals make changes requires a more elegant solution than simply inserting tons of comment-filled plaintext files.

Annotation applications, such as Evernote, are really popular because they let groups take advanced notes in an orderly fashion, even from different computers and mobile devices. You can create annotations that link to specific files or other notes, so you can organize a large body of work as you generate content. Similarly, platforms like Basecamp and Trello allow you to start with a basic idea, invite others to the team as necessary and build complex projects from the ground up. These apps are also popular because they facilitate personal projects, permitting you to keep your team members' schedules inline with your firm's and minimize conflicts.

Naturally, the majority of these applications are highly customizable and adaptable. Ultimately, what you get out of your collaboration software depends entirely on how you utilize it.

Which of these collaboration apps do you use? Do you have personal favorites? Please share in comments.



Barriers to Business Agility and Insights on How to Break Them



The system is that there is no system. That doesn't mean there are no processes. We have great processes and they make us more efficient. But that's not what it is about. It's ad hoc meetings, talking in hallways and calling each other at 10:30 at night to discuss a new idea or something that shoots holes in how everyone's been thinking about a problem. This is how Apple works", said Steve Jobs, the charismatic entrepreneur, marketer, inventor and leader.

Steve's statement shows that he knew what could keep Apple at the forefront of innovation and competition.

Why I cite Steve's example here is because despite being the supreme product owner who was dominant and ruthless in his approach, he embodied many characteristics of agility. He kept complex processes at bay, focused on simplicity, drove innovation, empowered his people to bring about change, and assigned major projects to small teams while allowing them to manage on their own.

He knew that it's the culture within that could make change and innovation a routine part of their organization. Though the company has processes but it never becomes a prisoner of those. Rather it challenges convention to become more agile, or let's say more capable of speedily responding to changes or introducing changes.

However, most companies find it difficult to balance innovation, flexibility and agility. Time and again they have concerns regarding changing internally as fast as or faster than external changes.

The classic conversation – “We’re bringing more structure into it or we are working on establishing a process for doing this task more effectively” drives them away from being agile, flexible and non-conventional, killing their spontaneity and creativity.

Mechanization (restricting humanization) is one of the root causes. This is because mechanization does nothing but further complexes a process. Most companies face crisis when they need to implement a change or adapt to new markets and environments. The employees of such organizations are left with no choice but to restrict to the set processes.

The argument here is that companies must understand that it’s the spontaneity, flexibility, speedy decision making, adaptability, coordination, simplicity and open communication that work in face of extreme complexity. Companies like Apple, Pepsi, Google and Amazon have been using this principle to crush competition.

An agile leader must work towards amplifying the characteristics of humanity and empowering people to interact, take initiatives, make decisions and figure out how they’re going to get a job done.

“I like interacting in the world of ideas, though somehow those ideas have to be tied with some physical reality. One of the things I like the most is dropping a new idea on a bunch of talented people and letting them work it out themselves”, said Steve.

Barriers to Business Agility

So, what do you think stops an organization from being agile? Is it corporate politics, poor planning, organizational hierarchy, monotony in work or lack of clear vision that’s causing a serious hindrance?

Let us identify the real issues that businesses face in battle to become agile or more agile.

Fear to Experiment

“It’s not possible for an organization like us. Apple has this in its DNA. We’re not Apple.” Seems relatable? Yes, even now most organizations fear to experiment.

The management needs to be mentally agile and dare to experiment. Despite working in a continually changing environment, leaders tend to resist change due to some associated fear – fear of unknown, fear of failing, fear of being judged, fear of competition, fear of monetary losses or fear of customers’ reactions.

If the fear of change is not overcome or managed, an organization can never become agile. Because it’s the willingness to change and adapt to new environments that makes it agile!

Execution After Planning

“We are planning how to efficiently execute this.” You must have heard this classic statement many a times.

This attitude makes planning and then execution time taking endeavors, often resulting in unnecessary delays.

Conventional organizations consider planning and execution a sequential activity. The agile businesses like Facebook adopt the approach of “Fail Fast”. Planning and execution go parallel and

team members are encouraged to experiment and execute fast. Work is broken into small segments and team members quickly perform the job and make changes and iterate if they fail.

Apple follows the same ideology. Steve said, "Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It's best to admit them quickly and get on with improving your other innovations."

Rigid Hierarchies

Organizations following rigid hierarchies often delay decision making and communication and ultimately the process of change. While agile businesses are not managed by a person or a small group of people, rather decision making is generally an un-choreographed and unguided affair among team members.

For being an agile organization, you will need to let teams manage on their own instead of appointing managers to control decision making. Let them figure out how they go about a particular job. Empower them to make decisions and feel accountable.

Idea of Sustained Competitive Advantage

Organizations adhering to the concept of sustained competitive advantage can never break the shackles of convention and move towards agility. They can't cash in forever on their few innovations. Markets are continuously changing and they need to work towards continuous competitive advantage.

This is possible only when innovation becomes a part of their routine business operations. They need to learn to discard or withdraw a product from the market when it's no longer plausible instead of hanging on to it.

All Work No Play Philosophy

Why is it that people prefer sticking to an organization even when they have to work for long hours? Because they also have the play time! Agile businesses focus on amplifying the human element of their employees.


Google employees are allowed to dedicate 10% of their time doing anything related to their personal lives. Teams at Apple work incredible hours to get a job done but then they can work in hallways and call meetings of colleagues and friends anytime to discuss what just struck their mind.

Traditional organizations always struggle to acquire and retain talent. This is because the lives of employees at such places become mechanical and boring.

Equal Priority to All Details

Non-agile businesses focus on collecting all the details necessary to plan a project and execute it in one go. This is again contrary to an agile practice that focuses on small set of details and integrates planning with execution.

The idea behind this is that greater understanding cannot be achieved right in the beginning. Rather it unfolds over time with experimentation. Moreover, requirements can change anytime. So, instead of spending months in in-depth planning, it's ideal to quick start with a project by breaking into small segments that don't eat up too much time.



Here persists the 80/20 rule. 80% of the tasks can be completed on the basis of 20% of the details/information.

To become agile, companies need to put people before processes, be they employees or customers. Change can be scary but not changing is scarier. By shedding the age-old concepts, they can become agile.

The agile manifesto is not about shedding everything that's old school. It's about having a set up that brings out the best in people and drives them to innovate.





Business Agility

Recently my friend Leah and I were walking our two Labrador retrievers. The dogs were off-leash and enjoying their freedom when suddenly they ran back to us with their tails between their legs. As we scrambled to get their leashes back on, Leah said, "It must be a cat."

"A house cat?" I asked.

"No, a bobcat," she replied.

Once we had the dogs safely on leash, we began to look for the bobcat. But we didn't see one, and we continued on our way.

Then I happened to glance back, and the cat I saw crossing the path was no ordinary housecat, or even a bobcat.

It was a cougar.

With new urgency we hurried along. The path rose up a hill, from where we could see that the cougar was working its way around the periphery of the open grassy range. It was slinking down low in the classic "on the hunt" stance. Now we were scared, and we got out of there quickly. Once we were safe in our car, we called the authorities. We learned that cougars can run fifty miles an hour and leap forty feet.

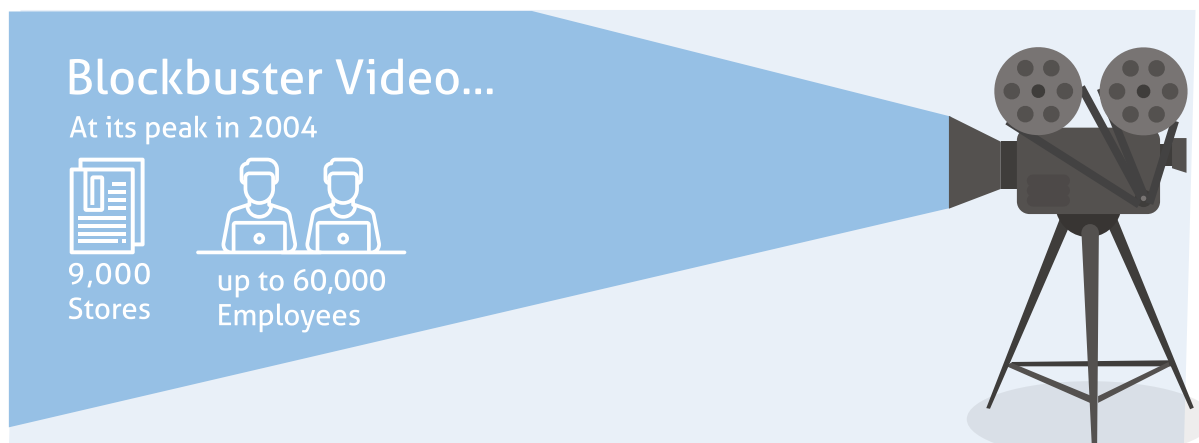
Truly a real threat. A very agile threat that could have easily overtaken us.

If you're in business, which would you rather be—a friendly Labrador retriever on a leash, or an agile cougar?

I'll bet your choice was the same as mine. In business, you want to be fast and agile.

Netflix

How an Agile Company Embraced the Future



Here's an example of what can happen to a company that isn't agile. Remember Blockbuster Video? At its peak in 2004, Blockbuster had over 9,000 stores and up to 60,000 employees. It ruled the movie rental business. By 2010-only six years later-the company had filed for bankruptcy. Its upstart competitor Netflix quickly became the number one provider of movies to consumers.¹

Even though Blockbuster was not an old company, its business model quickly became obsolete. It earned much of its profits by charging its customers late fees on video returns. This system worked only until disruptive change happened. Instead of charging customers to rent individual videos, Netflix offered subscriptions, which made onerous late fees unnecessary. Customers could watch a video for as long as they wanted, or return it and get a new one.²

Blockbuster ignored change. They assumed that Netflix was a domestic cat, but as they developed momentum Netflix was indeed a cougar that took down Blockbuster. That is how disruption happens. It doesn't seem like a problem in the beginning, but in reality it's a real threat.

For agile companies, there's opportunity in disruption.

The Future of Agile Methodology

For companies seeking to stay ahead of the curve, the agile management approach is the wave of the future. Here are four of the primary criteria of agile management



Regular Adaptation

A key principle is regular adaptation to changing circumstances. Your strategic plan, which may be intended to chart your course over the next year or five years, cannot be carved in stone over the entrance to your building. It needs to be flexible to reflect changing conditions, both internal and external.

Trust

Success is achieved by motivated individuals who communicate with each other. This can only happen in a culture of trust. Success is no longer a matter of the CEO issuing a memo that the employees must obey. The successful project is the result of a high level of trust and communication between every member of the team.

¹TIME, 17/10/10. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2022624,00.html>. Accessed 14/04/15.

²Forbes, 05/09/14. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/gregsatell/2014/09/05/a-look-back-at-why-blockbuster-really-failed-and-why-it-didnt-have-to/2/>. Accessed 14/04/15.

Communication

Information is valuable. It must be shared not only among employees and management but between a company and its customers. Close, daily cooperation between business people and customers fosters a climate of agility, whereby the company is never caught off-guard by an unexpected external or internal change.

Efficiency

In business, time management is critical. When you have to wait for a cumbersome report to be delivered to your desk, that's time wasted. When the R&D team has to wait for feedback from the customer, that's time wasted. The agile business environment is finely tuned to respond quickly and decisively, and to ensure that every action moves the team one step closer to success.

Square

Creating a Future-Ready Organization

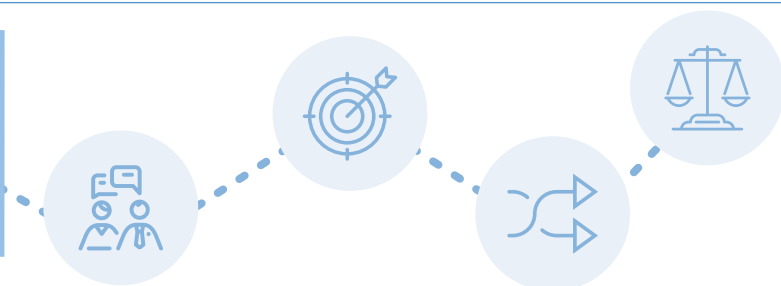
Square is another company that started out looking like a cat but is quickly becoming a cougar. Founded in 2010, the San Francisco-based company created a new and simple way to take credit card payments. Four years later, it processed sales of more than \$100 million in a single day, making it the 13th largest U.S. retailer by annual sales.³ It defied all expectations by creating a way to send money that has almost no barriers.

How did Square grasp the future? It saw an opportunity for creating a simpler payment solution and offered the product quickly. The idea for Square came from pain point that many small-business owners had long struggled with: the cost and difficulty of taking credit card payments. Square's plan was to allow anyone, anywhere, to take credit card payments. It began in 2010 with the Square reader, a small piece of disruptive technology that converts a credit card's magnetic stripe into audio pulses, which are then transmitted via an iPhone's headphone audio connector and cellular network to Square. The reader turns any iPhone, iPad, or Android phone or tablet into a credit card processor.⁴

The company is driven by an emphasis on teamwork and transparency. As someone who values agility as the company moves into the future, CEO Jack Dorsey regularly invites the entire workforce to offer feedback. Every Friday, the staff assembles for Town Square, the company's weekly all-hands meeting where they talk about how they're doing and where they're going.⁵

Becoming Agile

When you're ready to take your organization to the next level, here are some practical steps that your company can take.



³<http://www.wired.com/2014/12/square-100m-sales/> Accessed 14/04/15.

⁴VB News. "Yikes: Square hack lowers the bar for credit card fraud." <http://venturebeat.com/2011/08/05/square-hack-credit-card-fraud/>. Accessed 14/04/15.

⁵Undercurrent, 01/2015 "The 20 Most Responsive Companies of 2014," Report, <http://www.undercurrent.com/companies-1> Accessed 20/03/15.

BOOK CHAPTER

ON BUSINESS AGILITY

FOR THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS "BOOK"



Agility: It Begins with a Mindset

Are we able to adapt to the evolving business conditions and market trends quickly and efficiently?

This is the big question vexing most enterprises in volatile market environments and cycles. We live in a time of unprecedented technological change where a new product or service can eliminate our business models literally overnight.

Just consider the findings of the 2015 "Innovate or Perish" global study conducted by market research firm Vanson Bourne and sponsored by Automic, an automation service for enterprise customers.

Researchers found that 33% of business-decision makers "believe the failure to innovate" and keep pace with technological change will most adversely impact their company's margins in the next five years.¹ 79% of respondents expect a decline in revenue, 80% anticipate a reduction in their customer base and 73% forecast declining international operations.

In addition to rapid technology shifts, businesses must also contend with political risk in the form of an aggressively transformative regulatory climate. No sector captures this challenge better than banking and finance. In the aftermath of the American sub-prime mortgage crisis and the Euro Zone crisis, executives have been strangled with new laws and central bank policies that offer no guarantee of success.²

So, how do we proceed? How do we keep pace? The only way to confront this problem is by responding fluidly to change - by being agile.

In business, it's true that we must respond quickly to change. However, responsiveness is not the same thing as agility. In fact, agility is a mindset devoted to constant self-reinvention and the continued repurposing of your core-business service. Responsiveness is merely a byproduct of an agile mind state.

Here's where the challenge arises. In the CEO and senior leader sessions I lead, I find that 9 times out of 10, leaders apply industrial-age thinking to confront 21st Century challenges, an instinctive reaction. But, leaders must avoid these legacy models of business management.

In the age of technological disruption, heightened financial regulation, and enhanced geo-political uncertainty, I would like to highlight three different case studies where businesses leveraged agility to their benefit. The three categories I will discuss are:

- Threat Response
- Regulatory Anticipation
- Strategic Pivots

¹<http://blog.automic.com/whats-holding-your-business-back-research-reveals-the-challenges-facing-global-business>

²http://deloitte.wsj.com/cfo/files/2014/02/BankingIndustryOutlook_2014.pdf, pg.1

Threat Response:

Facebook Acquires Instagram to Stay Cool

With over 800 million daily active users, Facebook is the undisputed leader in social media³ and it's been that way practically since inception. But in 2012, the social network had the agility to understand that online consumption habits were changing. The new market was expressing a preference for mobile engagement and image sharing.

In just eight years, Facebook's once-disruptive platform had become a legacy model. Facebook had transcended all age demographics and acquired users young and old, alike. But to younger Millennial users, Facebook's transgenerational pivot failed as a selling point. This user class is one that seeks a network where they can interact with their friends, not their boring, old parents.

Initially, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg considered building internally a standalone mobile-photo sharing app to capture this new market⁴. But then, Zuck came up with a better idea: acquire a startup with a blooming established user base. That startup was Instagram. At the time of purchase, Instagram had 27 million users on Apple's iOS alone⁴ and when it launched for Android, it registered 1 million new users in its first day. Facebook saw the writing on the proverbial "wall," and responded accordingly.

The social network purchased Instagram for 1 Billion in a cash-and-stock deal, solidifying a new market position as the leader in mobile-photo sharing⁴. But most importantly, the purchase eliminated a disruptive threat. Zuckerberg, sensing the diminishing "coolness" of his brand with youth markets, had the sense to allow Instagram to maintain its own personal brand independent of Facebook. Zuck recognized that legacy models hinder the acquisition of younger users.

Lessons

- If you can't beat them, buy them
- Be detached and selfless enough to recognize when your legacy brand obstructs new market pathways

Regulatory Anticipation:

HSBC Sells Swiss Private Banking Assets Ahead of Legal Scandal

In February of 2015, news broke that between 2005 and 2007 HSBC's Swiss banking unit assisted wealthy clients in evading taxes and laundering money.⁵ These allegations have surfaced in a global regulatory climate, which is increasingly more punitive towards tax cheats, drug traffickers and terrorism financiers.

The anticipation that these accusations would surface most logically explains the firm's divestment of \$12 billion in Swiss private banking assets in June of 2014.⁶ HSBC claimed the sale was a strategic move to reduce costs and improve profitability by shedding non-core businesses. In my opinion, this divestment was a move to shelter the parent company from legal liability and fines related to looming investigations of financial misconduct.

In the week preceding the writing of this passage, France has opened a criminal probe into HSBC's Swiss banking division and imposed a bail amount of \$1 billion Euros. Also, the bank is facing similar investigations in Belgium, Switzerland, Argentina and India.⁷ The bank's CEO, Stuart Gulliver, has

⁵<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/feb/08/hsbc-files-expose-swiss-bank-clients-dodge-taxes-hide-millions>

⁶<http://www.zacks.com/stock/news/138083/hsbc-sells-125b-swiss-private-banking-assets-to-lgt-bank>

⁷<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-04-10/hsbc-s-long-list-of-troubles-just-got-even-longer>

tried to diffuse the controversy by publicly stating that the bank is “too big to manage⁸.” He also said that the bank is looking into selling assets in Turkey, the U.S., Brazil and Mexico.

While my case study is not meant to encourage malfeasance, the reality is that businesses are bound to make legal mistakes. And sometimes the most agile play to reduce the fallout costs from these mistakes is to sell off the problem units that created the fiasco.

Lessons

- Delegate higher-risk initiatives to easily removable (non-core) business units
- Circumvent regulatory headaches through divestment

Strategic Pivots

Morgan Stanley Embraces Wealth Management as its Core Business

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the investment banking industry was in peril. Morgan in particular had suffered crushing losses due to their bad bets on mortgage loans, “forcing more than \$10 billion in write-downs over 2007 and 2008⁹.” The sky was falling for the investment bank and it sold off multi-billion-dollar equity stakes to Chinese and Japanese financial institutions to stay operational.

But former and present CEOs John Mack and James Gorman saw untapped potential in the wealth management sector. The duo architected the bank's joint venture with Citigroup in 2009 to merge Dean Witter with Smith Barney, giving Morgan Stanley a 51% stake.

The pivot worked. Wealth-management earnings “more than doubled between 2011 and 2013, to \$1.49 billion⁸.” Meanwhile, margins grew to 18% from 10% in that same period. As of June 2014, Morgan Stanley reported client assets of 1.9 trillion, 37% of which are due to fee-based accounts – a nearly effortless revenue stream for the firm.

By shifting its focus away from fixed-income trading and other volatile activities in favor of retail wealth management, the bank has reclaimed a top spot on the Street. This pivot helped the firm generate more reliable cash flow, while mitigating balance sheet risks⁸.

Lessons

- Less glamorous business models can produce more consistent results
- Joint ventures prove that agility can be a team sport – you don't have to innovate alone
- Agility is essential for crisis resolution

IN-DEPTH BLOG POST

(3712 WORDS, 800 COMMENTS)

ON DIGITAL MARKETING

FOR AN ONLINE LEARNING STARTUP



Digital Marketing

June 16, 2016 | 805 Comments

You are awesome.

I'll tell you why in a bit.

But before that a story.

Around same time about 4 years ago, I was slated to speak at a TEDx conference in Udaipur. The conference happened. I became friends with my fellow speakers and super awesome people (**Jayesh, Jay, Amit** and others). We sang, had fun and all came back to our homes.



This is Amit Ray who I have linked above – during our jam session that went past midnight. Next to him on right side is Anuj Sharma, fashion designer known for his famous "Button Masala" concept. The guy on left was part of the organizing team. If you are curious how I looked in that conference go to my website and see my picture on my speaking page

I remember that conference for friendship.

I also remember that conference; because a day before the conference – just after I had reached Udaipur – I witnessed the biggest traffic spike – on my small blog (mohitpawar.com) till that day.

That spike happened because uber cool entrepreneur – **Derek Sivers** had sent out **this tweet** to his quarter million followers.

Derek and I had become friends – thanks to the digital world – and he and I ended up writing a

book (my 1st) together.



I then realized the true power of connections and power of digital.

We (You and I) are connected now.

We are talking to each other across the screen (Yes I know you are reading. My hope and wish is that you feel as if you are listening. And I also hope that you do the talking – by writing back to me.)

But before that – let's begin with the course.

You and more than 13,000 other professionals are part of this course.

We did not know each other since few days back and now You and I are here.

How did this happen?

Digital marketing made this happen.

The part that connected us – is known as audience building. You'll learn about audience building in the next lesson.

After audience building, you'll learn other important skills to build a solid foundation as a digital marketer.

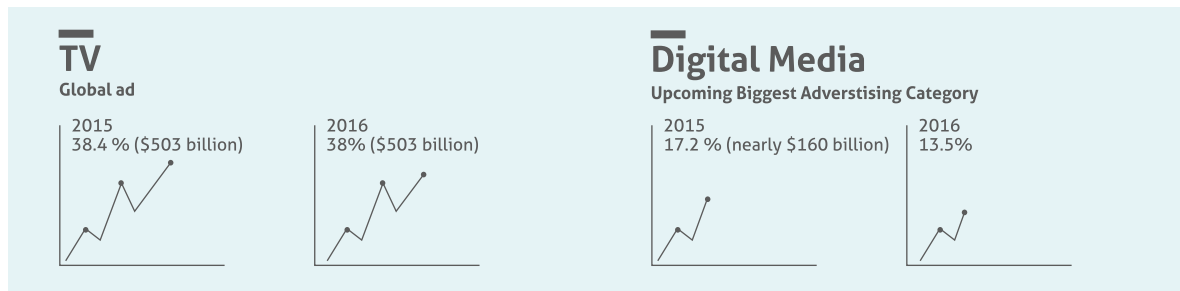
I'll keep it simple.

Because you can get complex (ideas) at many other places.

That said, I cannot promise to keep it simple all the time; because there will be concepts where you'll have to exert yourselves and take more time than usual to understand and apply.

And, for those who love jargons and numbers – here are some to start with.

Digital ad spending will soon surpass TV as biggest advertising category.



By now – you must have read it somewhere. Digital is also eating print.

It's true as you'll see below.

Digital marketing% of total program spend - @IDC

2009	2010	2011	2012
13%	19%	26%	29%
2013	2014	2015	2016
34%	39%	44%	50%

But if you are working in Print or TV you need not be paranoid. More so because you are now learning through this course.

If you are building a startup – times have never been better.

Thanks to digital marketing, you can quickly build audience and get traction for your startup's product or service. And, you can do that more efficiently than in older days.

You will learn how to do that step-by-step in this course. So, stay tuned.

If you are working in digital space as an employee – then you have reasons to be happy because there is more growth and there are more opportunities.

You also need to put more efforts to stay afloat and move ahead. Otherwise, people who are more hungry than you will hustle – will take such courses and then take more advanced learning and move past you.

So, you have an advantage because you are already here – but to stay here and move ahead you better keep the hat of a newbie, a learner on.

And – will digital eat print or TV – may be – but not in near future.

Don't believe in all the hype!

You have heard this before:

Social media is big.

You need to be on social media to be successful.

It's not true for everyone.

Social media (marketing) does not work for everyone.

Not everyone needs to be on social media – to be successful.

So social media marketing is working for who it is right.

What else is working in digital marketing right now?

- Email Marketing is working
- Search Engine Optimization is working
- Search Ads are working
- Blogging is working.
- Content marketing is working
- Marketing automation is working.
- Digital events (webinars, podcasts, live chats, video interactions via Blab and Periscope) are working.

All these work – when you know who you are trying to sell to.. (i.e. when you know who your customer is). Once you have that figured out – you start with digital marketing.

What do you do then?

You see where your customers hangout – where they spend their time.

If your (prospective) customers watch a lot of video then you run campaigns on YouTube. If your prospects are like “Us” (You and I) then you focus on talking with them over email (In other words you do **email marketing**).

Almost everyone searches online (Google mostly) for what they are looking for. So in most industries and products – you run “search or pay per click (PPC) ads” using a product called **Google Adwords**.

And when people search online – they mostly click on the results on 1st page – top 3 results get more than 60% clicks.

As per a report from the online ad network Chitika.com in 2013, around 33% of searchers clicked on the first organic result in Google.com. This is followed by 18% clicks on the second result, and 11% on the third result).



You know how search works.

You search for a term (for example – “cool t shirts”). And you see the results page.

I did that and saw what you see in image.

Now imagine if people in India search for the search term "Cool T shirts" 10,000 times a day – which is a conservative guess for a country with a population of more than 125 crore people (of these 80 crore+ are in 15-64 years range.)

Then Happily Unmarried which is ranked 1st site will get about 3000 visitors from this search. Imagine this for hundred other terms and you'll notice that a top ranked website (in Google) can get lakhs or millions of visitors for free every day – many of whom end up buying.

The Jabong site which is ranked 5th – will get about 600 click through this search term (Cool T shirt).

Also look at the revenue angle (which is the ultimate goal).

I did this simple math. If you go to Happily Unmarried site – they sell these Tees for ₹ 400-800 (mostly for ₹ 799). Now if the average revenue per T shirt is ₹ 600 and if a search terms like this gives them 3000 click throughs and 30 sales – then they are getting about ₹ 18000 daily (and ₹ 540,000 monthly) revenue from this search term alone. When you add other similar search terms – at least hundreds of them – it adds up nicely.

For these visits – Happily Unmarried or Jabong do not pay any money to Google.

The companies which are using Google Adwords are the ones you see inside the red rectangle. Whenever someone clicks on their link they end up paying Google some money.

Cool Tshirts - koovs.com
Ad www.koovs.com/T-Shirts ▼
For Best Apparel Step Into KOOVS™ The Online Fashion Store From UK.

Yepme Men Tees @ Just 199 - yepme.com
Ad www.yepme.com/Men_T-Shirts ▼
Low Price & Affordable Men T-shirts Pay Cash On Delivery & Easy Return.
Buy 1 Get 1 On Winterwear · 6 Million+ FB Fans · 30 Day Easy Return Policy
Styles: Polos, Graphic Tees, Sports Tees, Solid Tees
Buy Any 2 @ Just ₹299 - Yepme Men Sports Tees - Men Polo T-Shirts

Wolf T-Shirts - wolf.org
Ad shop.wolf.org/ ▼
We have the Best Selection of Wolf T-Shirts for Adults and Kids
New Arrivals - Apparel - Plush, Toys, Puzzles - Jewelry

Happily Unmarried- Buy cool caption T-Shirts from our wide ...
www.happilyunmarried.com/products/apparel/t-shirts.html ▼ ←
... exactly what you mean! Buy from our extensive collection of cool & stylish t-shirts online at a very affordable price. Checkout here@happilyunmarried.com. **1st result (32.5 % clicks)**
Respect T Shirt - Sweat Shirts - Will Do (Screw) T-shirt - Jimmi T Shirt

Cool Mens T-Shirt Designs on Threadless **2nd result (17.6% clicks)**
<https://www.threadless.com/catalog/style,tees/type,guys/display,hero> ▼ ←
Artists worldwide create cool mens t-shirt designs every day... shop for your favorites!

Redwolf | Buy Cool T-Shirts for Men Online | Designer T ...
<https://www.redwolf.in/> ▼ ← **3rd result (11.4% clicks)**
Look alive! Redwolf is an indie clothing brand selling a line of designer graphic t-shirts fashioned by music, art and all things pop culture.

T-Shirts, Pyjamas, Hoodies, Boxers & Mobile Covers Online ...

Now you know the value – of coming on top in search results. How do you appear in search results in a top rank. You that by doing **search engine optimization** also known as SEO. Which is to optimize your website is such a way that your website comes among top results when someone searches for a term related to your brand.

In the example above, Happily Unmarried is ranked 1st because they are investing time and some money in search engine optimization; and YepMe and Koovs are showing up there in results because they are paying Google some money every time a visitor clicks on their ads. 1st one is an organic digital marketing activity and 2nd is paid.

SEO is powerful; because you do not need to invest in ads and you get free traffic. Research suggests that this free (organic) traffic is more likely to buy from you – as compared to paid traffic.

To reiterate, when you get users for free to your website, you are getting organic traffic. When you pay money to Google, Facebook or YouTube, LinkedIn or any other platform – then it is known as paid advertising – and resulting traffic is known as paid traffic.

Not every brand owner has money to spare on advertising. So, it's ok to be scrappy when starting up.

When short on money, invest time, energy and money in **content marketing**.

In content marketing - you educate users through content related to your product.

If your free education is good – users will start trusting you enough and like you enough to buy from you.

Here is how it works:

(Free) Content → Trust + Likeability → Transaction

In a transaction – money exchange hands or bank account.

Transaction is what a business wants – it wants money – it wants profits and content marketing helps you do that by spending way less money than paid advertising.

Blogging: is a key part of your SEO and Content Marketing activities. A blog is nothing but publishing your thoughts on the web. You do that by using a blogging software like **WordPress**.

In the lesson on blogging, you'll learn how to do this and more. You will also learn how not to do random blogging but result oriented blogging. Blogging that gets more targeted visitors and more leads. You then use email marketing to convert these leads into customers.

It is easy to be lost in the sea of different digital marketing activities (audience building or email list building, email marketing, search engine optimization, blogging, content marketing, paid digital marketing using Google Adwords).

To avoid that – you analyze the result of your digital marketing effort. Is there a tool to analyze that can help you do it?

Yes, there is. It is **Google Analytics** – Google's web analytics software. You'll also learn how to use it to analyse and measure the effectiveness of your digital marketing efforts. And, then use these insights to decide which activity to focus more on and what to do less (this means you learn to optimize your digital marketing campaigns).

Now, you see there is a lot that you can do to grow your brand using digital marketing.

If you are small team or a solo entrepreneur – it can be overwhelming at times. Even if you are part of a

large marketing team; there is always more to do. This is where Marketing Automation comes in picture.

Marketing Automation helps automate a lot of these tasks like emailing and tagging visitors to your website as warm leads and hot prospects ready to buy. Full-fledged marketing automation software also allows you to access to a single dashboard where you can do blogging, email marketing, content marketing and lead nurturing. You can tell the marketing automation software – what to do when a customer goes from one stage in customer lifecycle to next (like from a website visitor to a lead to a customer and beyond.)

So, I have told you about most of the digital marketing activities that an entrepreneur or a digital marketing professional undertakes to grow their brand.

As shared, all these activities can be grouped under two categories.

1. Organic

2. Paid

Organic

where you (and your team) invest time and non-paid efforts like SEO or Blogging skills to bring traffic (i.e. get people to visit) to your website or app.

Paid

where you pay money (to a company like Google, Facebook, LinkedIn or media company like TimesofIndia, Conde Nast and others) to run ads and promotions – in order to get traffic.

Most of the digital marketers you'll meet or people who call themselves digital marketers are focused on 1 or 2 digital marketing channels. Means they know what a channel does but they are not a proficient user of multiple channels. It is good to specialise but if you are an entrepreneur or if you want to get into leadership roles in digital marketing; and to continue – you should understand the total playing field.

Chances are someone who has a background in PPC (Google Adwords) might tell you that Search Engine Marketing (SEM) which Google Adwords is a part of – is the greatest thing after the sliced bread. Same goes for someone with background in SEO or blogging.

A person who has background in organic growth usually prefers it over paid and those with background in paid go for it over organic. Mostly, because this person is comfortable with this channel.

Smart marketers use both paid and organic channels to grow their business.

If you want to be make a name for yourself as a digital marketer then aim to be Smart Digital Marketer who understands both paid and organic channels.

Use paid to drive instant results. Use organic to build scalable content assets like writing blog posts which gives you increasingly larger number of leads on an ongoing basis or work on building search rankings for your website.

Other habit of a smart (digital) marketers is that they do not try to do everything themselves. Take help wherever you need it. Hire team members who specialize in a particular channel or skill or outsource it to a freelance on a platform like UpWork.com.

What to do if you are starting digital marketing for a new startup or a brand.

Imagine you are about to launch a startup or have already launched it some time back. Or may be your company is launching a new brand a new initiative. And, you are the one responsible for leading digital marketing for it as an entrepreneur or as an employee.

What do you do then?

1. You figure out who your customers are.
2. Then imagine (or ask them) if you already have some customers – what questions they have in mind and what search terms they type in Google to find a website like yours.
3. Then you write answers to those questions and post answer to these questions on your website blog and optimize your website for these search terms.
4. Before this or side by side – you build an email list of people who are interested in the product you make and the content you write.
5. Once you build an email list – you use email marketing to keep in touch and also to sell your product and services. You do that by sending new blog posts – and also updates about your product (with offers and discounts) to this list.
6. Once you have revenues and you can afford start paid advertising. Smart entrepreneurs and marketers use paid advertising to grow quickly.
7. Also invest time to experiments with new emerging digital marketing channels – some of which I'll talk about as we move forward.
8. While you do this use web analytics software to get data inputs and use your understanding of your product and marketing to optimize your campaigns and decide on the next steps.

This brings us to the end of today's lesson.

And now why **I TOTALLY believe that YOU ARE AWESOME.**

You are awesome because you took time to read till the end.

Because you have decided to invest in your growth.

And Because I believe that you will follow through and stick with it till the end of 12 weeks.

Once you do that I can guarantee you that you will come out richer with better understanding and a good overview of all important digital marketing channels; and you'll be more confident about your skills.


Before you go – here is the assignment for the week to go with this lesson.

This assignment is in fact a gift and the first real investment you'll make in yourself.

This gift is the **Digital Marketing Learning Roadmap.**

Take a print out – the "Reading Completed" column for 1st week is already ticked – because you have already done it. You are already a winner because got started – now sit and block time for next 12 weeks (1 x 30 minutes slot for reading and two or three 30 or 45 minutes slots for action).

This week's action (taking a print out + blocking time slots + pasting it where you can see it everyday) will take 30 minutes or even less.



My Digital Marketing Learning Roadmap

Powered by LearnDM.com

WEEK		LESSONS	READING	TIME BLOCKED ASSIGNMENT	READING COMPLETED	ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED
1	JAN 10 - JAN 17	Overview of Digital Marketing			✓	
2	JAN 18 - JAN 24	Email List Building				
3	JAN 25 - JAN 31	Email Marketing				
4	FEB 1 - FEB 7	Landing Pages				
5	FEB 8 - FEB 14	Search Engine Optimization				
6	FEB 15 - FEB 21	Blogging				
7	FEB 22 - FEB 28	Content Marketing				
8	FEB 29 - MAR 6	Lead Generation and Lead Nurturing				
9	MAR 7 - MAR 13	Mobile Marketing				
10	MAR 14 - MAR 20	Google Adwords				
11	MAR 21 - MAR 27	Google Analytics				
12	MAR 28 - APR 3	Putting Together a Digital Marketing Plan				

MY COMMITMENT TO SELF: I, _____ COMMIT TO COMPLETE MY DIGITAL MARKETING LEARNING AS PLANNED ABOVE.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

LearnDM.com is an initiative of MasterClass (mclass.co) India's premier digital marketing training company.

So now – **complete this week’s assignment by printing out the roadmap and blocking time there.**

It’s ok to change it later – but be honest and fill it with an intent to follow through and change in case of a real situation which can happen to anyone including me – unexpected travel, social commitments, or down time.

And:

Don’t forget to send me any questions over email.

Good bye for now

It’ll be fascinating to see everyone’s responses!

Sincerely,

Mohit – A Curious Digital Marketer

Identify the agents of change

Pinpoint the core group of people who will embrace the new approach. The CEO must be involved, not only to give the program legitimacy but to provide an example of leadership. There will be some training involved, and to get started you may even want to hire an outside professional.

Set goals

The key drivers need to know what the company is going to look like and how it will behave as an agile organization. Performance goals are important, such as answering customer emails within two minutes or getting a beta version to the customer by a certain date.

Be ready to change deeply entrenched practices

For example, when companies commit to enterprise agility, one area that may require change is moving from annual financial cycles to adjusting the budget every quarter or even every month, reflecting real-time changes in planning assumptions, both externally (competition and economy) and internally.

Make it fit your company

Not all aspects of agile principles can be implemented across every organization equally. Agility is not set in stone-its always changing.

EVENT COVERAGE BLOG POST

FOCUSSED ON BUZZ BUILDING

FOR NASSCOM

Notes for Nasscom

Seasons change, times too.

8th August was such a day – witness to changing seasons – blessed with small raindrops.

It was also the day when Nasscom Emergeout was happening at Gurgaon.



I got an invite to attend, and decided to join.

The conference venue was Leela Kempinski Gurgaon which stands next to the Delhi-Gurgaon Toll plaza.

For me, a conference is less about condensed 'gyaan' and more about the little nuggets in the sessions. It is also about new connections and interesting discussions in hallways.

My experience at Nasscom EMERGEOUT was no different. I went for connections and learning – and came back with both.

Here is a brief account of who I met, what I heard and what I learnt.

Hope you enjoy reading.

Reached early and one by one met – **Abhinav Sahai**, Anandan Pillai (Anand penned a brief key takeaways post, so if you are short on time go check it here [If you are looking for real crack stay here :)], **Sailee Chahal**, **Jyoti Makhija**, **Siddhartha Hegde** and **Rahul Dewan**. We discussed about the details of the day and after a quick cup of tea – entered the hall for opening session.



<OPENING ACT.>

Som Mittal, President Nasscom opened the Conclave with "Welcome address and Opening remarks".

He talked about Indian tech companies is transition from the IT Services to solutions and now in the products space – and uncertainty across the global economy.

His long years of experience in domain as an entrepreneur and later at the helm of affairs of national's

numero uno body for software – added a lot of weight to words

He said, “What happens in the back doesn’t matter, what you deliver in front that matters.” message was clear -0 despite the chaos.. Indian IT companies and innovator needs to build and deliver quality and be remarkable.

He also talked about mobile penetration being high and people using mobile phones everywhere.

As per him digital literacy shows big promise. I agree. That is why I am betting big on this space with my new start-up. More on that in one of the future posts. For now let us stay at EMERGEOUT.

He then, shared (good) news for small businesses struggling to provide insurance to their employees because of their small size.

Now every Nasscom member co, however small could get insurance cover for its employees.

Already 12,000 members are using this scheme.

Inaugural session was hosted by Krishna Kumar Natarajan (from Mindtree) fondly known as KK.

In this sessions **Aditya Ghosh, Presdident – Indigo Airlines** and **Venky Mysore, CEO Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR)** were to present. They did present and shared tons of little nuggets that I came for.

KK started the sessions by talking the large untapped opportunity in mobility. He introduced Aditya as a lawyer turned entrepreneur. and that businesses can be built on simple ideas and passion



As soon as the intro was over – Aditya got into groove with his presentation titled a “In Pursuit of excellence”

He joked that he is a lawyer who knows little about tech and that because of being among geeks and tech entrepreneurs he brought his VP of Tech along – to answer any questions which he may not be able to answer.

He started by sharing insights about a channel and important question – “Why start a business?”

In his case the question was – **Why start an airline?**

His reason – **Opportunity** – tons of it.

In his words – India has a large, growing population with low aircraft penetration. US has 7,000 commercial aircraft for a much lower populations.

Clearly there was room was a large carrier. So much so – that If aviation industry can convert 1% of train passengers (to air – the industry will need to double the size – overnight.

[Just to keep things in perspective – IR carries about 7,500 million passengers annually or more than 20 million passengers daily (more than a half of which are suburban passengers)]

Then he talked about the origin of the company – which Started in 1989 as Interglobe Air Transport. Indigo Airlines stared in 2006.

In June 2005, Aditya – 29-year old then – signed the largest ever order of 100 aircrafts with Airbus – worth 6.5 billion.

Indigo started operations in 2006 and in March 2007 had 1 million passengers. In March 2012 – flew 35 million passengers with a fleet strengths of 55 planes.

He then talked about **creating a competitive advantage**. He created it by taking lead in ordering planes in large numbers, before anyone else did.

[Airplanes have a long build up time. If you order a plane today, it will be delivered years late.]

In Aditya's (Indigo's) case – competitors could only get their planes once the large order he placed is delivered.

1. Indigo's Big Objective

Low cost ≠ low quality.

He is proud to be Low Cost Carrier (LCC) and wants to remain that way.

As an LCC indigo is committed to provide – spotlessly clean interiors and widest variety of food.

Interestingly, Indigo only spends 1% of its revenues on advertising. Whereas others airlines – his competitors – spend up to 11% of their revenues on advertising. That is one reason why Indigo is the only profitable airline in India.

2. Focus on product.

Product is the biggest differentiator for Indigo.

1 out of 4 air travelers in India fly Indigo. 60,000 customers a day fly Indigo.

3. Thoughts on innovation.

180 passengers are deplaned in less than 6 minutes. It takes clockwork like precision. Turn around for every plane is 30 minutes. And there are 50% repeat customers – mostly because keeping the promise of on time. He laid emphasis on **getting the basics right**.

4. The promise.

Indigo for him stands for – Low fares. On time. Courteous hassle free service.

Indigo achieves this by creating hassle free environment for employees (has been voted one of the best places to work for past many years).

It has close to 6000 employees and the lowest number of employees per aircraft in the industry.

For 50% of its employees aircraft is the office. They should feel connected and stay grounded to make it happen.

Indigo does this by instilling the sense of ownership.

Indigo does not give stock options. For them it is more about personal connection.

5. Differentiate.

Indigo flies to fewer destinations than competition.

More Destinations are good for ego but bad for business.

(Note to self: beware of such decisions!)

They are obsessed about ON-TIME and use technology for being transparent.

In Aditya's words – Indigo is the only airline in India that uses – AUTOMATED TRACKING SYSTEM to measure on-time performance (as per him other airlines use manual system to report on-time – where it is possible to report a 10.12 am landing as 10.06 am landing).

Set yourself few goals when you start. (In August Indigo celebrated 6th Anniversary.)

How Indigo is winning through innovation? and What is innovation?

Everybody pays same fuel prices – then how to compete.

Indigo is using the scale and fast decision making as competitive advantage.

Innovation is to create unique structural advantages that can't be copied for few years.

In Jan 2011 – to keep the competitive edge – Indigo placed a \$15 billion order for a320 NEOs AIRBUS – which has better fuel efficiency In Aditya Ghosh's words – we took risk by putting our money behind a new thing but also created an advantages. [If today a competitor places an order for an Airbus Neo – it will be delivered in 2021 (9 years later).

Till then Indigo will pay same fuel prices – but will pay for less fuel.

Interesting discussion during Question and Answer.

Q: How Indigo keeps costs low in a price sensitive business?

A: By efficient use of capital. By not listing and maintaining focus. In building phase it is important to look long term than Quarter on Quarter that a listed company needs to pay attention to. Indigo focuses on sucking cost and removing inefficiencies

Q: Should a company cut salaries to reduce costs?

A: Indigo does not do it. It may work in very short term but very bad for employee morale and hence for company productivity.



Venky Mysore, CEO KKR was up next.

KK introduced him as someone who he plays golf with.

Aditya (Ghosh) was all about numbers, simple business ideas and execution.

Venky was less about numbers and more about emotions, planning, connections and discipline.

He also personal experiences turned into insights, with a good dose of humour.

Venky started talking about how he came from after spending years in US to India, starting working in Insurance and then his move to sports entertainment.

"Ignorance is bliss" – came to be true in his case.

He shared a small story. That he was born in a Madrasi family and despite having played for Madras University Cricket Team and Madras Ranji Trophy team – his Father pushed him to study – which he did and in the hindsight thought to be good decision.

Soon after he moved to Mumbai from US, he became part of **Young President Organization (YPO)**. Then as luck will have it, connected with Jay Mehta (better half of Juhi Chawla) and part owner of KKR. Soon he found himself at Shakrukh Khan's home discussing about KKR.

He said that KKR's poor show in past 3 editions of IPL had made the owners tired and they let him roll in his style – which worked eventually.

He chose to keep himself away from camera based on his wife's advice. In his words, **"I sticks to what she says"**.

He said that it is difficult to decipher a formula about success but if there was one in his case – it was passion, vision, preparation and execution.

At this point he shared the story of **CLIFF YOUNG**, an Aussie farmer – who at 61 decided to run an ultra-marathon (1000 miles) trying to break a world record.

He failed but next year (1983) attempted another world record (600 miles run between Sydney and Melbourne).

Earlier in life, he has never trained for a marathon and his conditioning and preparation from running after cattle on his 2000 acres family farm – and continued work spells – lasting 2 to 3 nights without sleep.

What is surprising is that he won the ultra-marathon – believe it or not – by a margin – of 1-1/2 day.

Reason: the professional ultra marathoners – who are obviously very fit run for 18m hours and sleep for 6. But Cliff Young went on for days without sleep and this worked as a boon for him.

Lessons!

1. Not knowing about a new venture/space is OK. You can still do it.
2. It's all in mind.
3. Ignorance is bliss

Not knowing enough was a big bonus for Venky. Because of his ignorance of this space – he delved deep into the act

Moving ahead, he shared a FORMULA.

1. SUCCESS = Desire + Acting Knowledge* + Action

*Acting knowledge – learn enough to be the best you can.

[This reminded me of Marc Cuban.. who read every manual , every magazine in – then emerging computer hardware market space when he was trying to make a mark.]

Venky Mysore is a big fan of **MONEYBALL** – the book which has been made into a movie of the same name. It is about decision making.

2. Preparation is very important.

Venky hired a Chennai software firm to create bidding software and created lost of decision trees. Decided to bid for players around a player – not like 4 batsmen and 4 bowlers..

Did extensive research on players and asked advice about emerging stars who no one was noticing. decided on players and took risk and bid high and – spent \$5 million of \$9 million purse of for first 3 players. Because of the research KKR was able to hire — now star player f- or base price of \$100,000

and \$50,000.

People like JAMES PATTERSON who now plays for South Africa – in all 3 forms.

3. Culture and Promises.

KORBO, LORBO, JEETBO.

Realized that – with this he can't make a promise to the fan or customer; because in sports it is not possible to win every match.

A change was required – which he did.

KKR's promise – It's about attitude (ZIDDI/ZID). We may fall down but we will get up again.

4. Show discipline to get others in groove.

Shahrukh has said in a documentary made by Munni Nasreen Kabir, "I am always late in life". Venky Mysore also shared that Sharukh is always late. He is late for everything

Venky shared that for an 8pm IPL match bus has to leave with players at 6.00pm. Shahrukh came to greet and hug players at after 6.00pm. Later when saw everybody reaching early he also starting coming at 6.

5. Relationships/ People are VERY Important.

Before IPL finals KKR created a video with messages from the family members of all players of KKR and managed to show it at the team meeting. Voice over was by Shahrukh.

Everyone was moved.. and this obviously crated as connect.

6. UNDERSTAND winners takes is all – 2nd place – no one remembers.

Question and Answers

Q: How did you manage ego with superstars in team? How did you make sure that stars didn't outshine others?

A: He said that they left some players because thought that they won't fit in. When you have – QUIET LEADERS – like Jacques Kallis in team who are super humble even after being legends. When others see them they also behave.

Before the break into there are a small ceremony to facilitate Emerge 50.

Over tea I bumped into my friend Paras Chopra, and also briefly connected with Indus Khaitan and Prashant Singh.

After tea break we went in for panel discussion.

<INTERLUDE.>

There was two concurrent panel discussions scheduled. I sat through the one focusing on CLOUD, didn't like it much and moved into other panel discussion.

This was titled The Tipping Point: The Big Business Decisions by successful new-age CEOs and how they made a difference.

Following entrepreneurs were part of the panel.

- Prakash Rane, CEO – ABM KnowledgeWare India (moderated)
- Sharad Sanghi, CEO -NetMagic Solutions
- Rammohan Sundaram, CEO – NetworkPlay
- Suresh Sambandam, CEO – OrangeScape, were on stage.

I found this interesting.

Rammohan Sundaram

Some of the most valuable insights came for me from Rammohan Sundaram – who in his own words “quit yahoo in Sept 2008 and started on oct 15, 2008.”

- They started as brand Ad network
- Rechristened as “performance network”
- Got acquired in 3 years – by Bertelsmann one of world’s largest media group.
- Now known as fastest growing media company in the country.

The panel members also talked about “Sabeer Bhatia Syndrome” – [how much you lose – when you sell?]

Ram’s reason to sell – we sold because I was not the only one involved but there were 40 other families (of NetworkPlay team members) also involved.

At one point it was a make or break decision for Network Play – when they had 3 months of cash left – and LinkedIn has own its own entered into ad sales – then he reached out to adtech to become their partner for India. The deal took 7 months to come through. But network play was saved.

HOW I HIRE

Do you have the urge to prove

Figure out who is the dark horse

Rammohan -> **Do not be scared. (You will fail if you are scared)**

Sharad Sanghi

Started netmagic in 1998.

Didn’t have access to capital then rode the dot com boom to land investment from Exodus founders.

How we saved during the crash – “.. because we did not blow money on billboards in 2001.”

Focused on providing value and maximizing revenue per square feet (of data center).

Later (2008 – 2009) entered into — INFRASTRUCTURE AS A SERVICE – and became India’s market leader.

NTT acquired 74% stake in Netmagic.

Suresh Sambandam

Started OrangeScape in 2004.

We used to have enterprise customers like Unilever paying 25 lakhs for a license then took a bet on

going “platform as a service” on top on Google’s platform.

For that we had to take short term hit in revenue – and rewrite 0.5 million lines of Java code into Python.

This bet played big time.

Organic growth is good but when you have repeatable short term cash flow.. it makes sense to acquire mind share and market share.

Mr. Prakash Rane moderated the discussion and brought out interesting points to weave it all together.

Of the next set of panel discussion I chose to witness **“THE CHANGING FACE OF CONSUMER CENTRIC BUSINESS.”**

With,

Troy malone – Asia Head, Evernote

Manish Vij – Co-founder, VUN network

Meena Ganesh – CEO, Pearson Education Services

Aloke Bajpai – CEO, iXiGo (moderator)

The discussion happened in bits and pieces but for reader’s benefit, I have noted it one by one for each speaker.

Troy Malone

His biggest challenges at Evernote was dealing with India’s culture. In India people call to understand how to use Evernote.

Business for them comes through recommendations and word of mouth. 50-60k new users worldwide every day. 1500 in India every day.

Evernote spends money on PR.

Focus on creating a solid product. Once you create an extraordinary product with mass adoption, platform owners will do free advertising for you. He shared an example – If you walk into an Apple store you will see Evernote logo around – Evernote does not pay for it. For him, marketing begins with a great product. I agree.

Meena Ganesh

She shared the TutorVista story. Tutor Vista has 30,000 customers. Uses internet to acquire and deliver. All its customers are in US.

US Market is large with – 60 million (K12) and 20 million (Higher Education) potential customers.

Used PR to drive initial spikes and then SEO/SEM and UI iterations to hook consumers to its service.

She also talked about putting eggs in different baskets.

They have invested in Bigbasket.com – and are doing hyper local (BTL) marketing to promote it.

Also into jewelry ecommerce with bluestone.com – and using celebrity marketing for it.

Manish Vij

He talked about – building an Indian customer brand.

Paid marketing is the easiest things to do. better to explore additional channels like building a brand through partnerships. Tie up with credit card companies and loyalty marketing companies.

He also suggested doing A/B TESTING and SEO/SEM based on analysis.

As per him, every company should focus on web analytics and business analytics.

You need to develop an eye for detail and analyze

Question and Answers

Revolved around – **Life time-value of the customer.**

In Alope Bajpai's words – **give little taste of the game and charge upfront. People can turn off subscription they do not want**

Q: How to find a good marketing channel?

A: Manish Vij responded that find inspiration, and do what is working for others to begin.

After a quick lunch.

We reached part of the venue where tweet up was scheduled.

Got to connect with Ajay Jain there and an interesting discussion came up – about **PAY WHAT YOU WANT** model.

Along with Abhinav, Sid Hegde, Myself – couple of others tweeps also joined the discussion.

Soon it was time for the next session of the day.

<FINAL EPISODE.>

I had to rush for an important meeting – so missed couple of sessions in between but got back in time for,

Keynote by Google India MD,



Rajan Anandan.

He started with exciting Google glasses video.

3 Key insights with inputs from my friend Abhinav Sahai.

SAAS products will be driven by great design.

Video, bandwidth, video analytics, social, are the 4 trends to look out for in the future.

IT services companies, go hire mobile app developers, says Anandan. India is a mobile-first country.

He sees future of computing in use of visual computing and AI. It is not in customer feeding keyboard with data.

He suggested the audience to build products that are friction-less.

To quote him, **"I do not want to go to your website and search. I just want to say – 8 pm dinner, restaurants."**

Next up was AppFame Awards Showcase. It recognized 6 apps. Details here.

The one i liked was **Game your Video**.

Rahul Shetty representing Global Delight, the makers of the app asked the audience, "Why photos are more popular than videos?"

In his words – the answer was – because it is really easy to play with photos. Not so much with videos. **The app "Game Your Video" is about solving the video problem.**

It makes video editing so easy that even a six-year-old can have fun editing videos and create very entertaining ones. The app brings users a totally new way of interaction while treating videos. The UI is innovative and the technology used is seen for the first time in the space of motion and audio.

Then there was this guy who showcased TXTLater, for Blackberry users – it has got good press worldwide and has seen 1 million+ downloads.

I stayed back for the **unconference about "Finding your co-founder"**.

Rajaendra Pawar, Co-founder NIIT said that co-founders should complement each other and fill the gaps.

He talked about his co-founder Vijay Thadani, who has a keen eye for finance and that he himself gets excited by looking at new things. Now after thirty years they can't do without each other.

One of the attendees **Nalin Savara**, said that your co-founder should also have same time horizon as you. If you are in it for the long haul then it helps that your co-founder think that way.

Once it was I said goodbye to my new and old friends there.

All in all an interesting day of learning and connections.



ILLUSTRATED E BOOK

FOCUSSED ON INFLUENCER MARKETING

FOR AMAZON'S 1ST PUBLISHING IMPRINT



30 inspiring stories from those who “Do the Work”

Inspired by the book from Steven Pressfield and The Domino Project

a brief note...

No Idling is a free compilation: Use it, print it, and share it freely. Please don't change or re-sell it.

If you're reading this before May 20th, 2011, you should know that the ebook version of **Steven Pressfield's Do the Work** is still available for free download. [Click here to get your copy.](#)

If you're reading this after May 20th, we hope you'll take a moment to pick up the [hard copy](#) of **Do the Work**. It will inspire and motivate you far more than we can here.

We think you'll love it.

See you soon,

The Domino Project Street Team

NO IDLING



INTRODUCTION

This manifesto is for all of you who want to do work that matters and are seeking a powerful tool for your Ship It arsenal.

Steven Pressfield takes Resistance head on in his latest book [Do the Work](#). This manifesto is helping readers take massive action and get their great work out into the world.

As a thank you and tribute to Steven, members of The Domino Project Street Team came together to write, design, and distribute **No Idling** in under two weeks. We hustled, reached out to the most brilliant do-ers we know, and did the work needed to ship an amazing ebook.

Each of the contributors responded to our call for a very tight turnaround. After all, this is a book about doing the work. These authors over delivered.

The result is the life-changing ebook in front of you.

The action-takers in this book put a human face to the trite sounding clichés. Their stories of overcoming Resistance provide a path from “Just do it” to mentally gearing up and forming habits to help you get things done.

They don’t mince words. “Expect Resistance,” they say. “It’s there. Waiting for you. Be smart. Prepare for it.” It’s our greatest hope that this ebook will inspire you to take on and overcome the biggest challenge of your life - you know which one.

You will be better for taking it on. Along the way, you will grow your discipline and steel your character.

The only way to fail is to stop. When you’re tempted, come back to **Do The Work** and **No Idling** to bolster your resolve. Remember that you took on your great work for a reason. Own it.

We’re now calling on you to step up and work with us. Let’s turn the idea of overcoming Resistance into a movement of action.

Dig into this book. Put its wisdom into action. Generously share it.

Do the work.

ANDREW WARNER

Sometime in my early 20s I was standing outside a networking event at the Puck Building in New York and wrestling with my insecurities.

“Just go across the street and meet people,” I thought to myself. “Everyone in there is running an internet company like you. You have a lot in common with them. It’ll be easy to start conversations. Do it!”

But, the other side of me thought, “you don’t know anyone in there. And they all know each other. You’ll end up standing around quietly while everyone else is having fun.”

Eventually, someone might even say, “That’s Andrew? The guy who runs Bradford & Reed? I didn’t realize he was such a dork. Ha. His company almost had me fooled. I thought it was impressive. Turns out it’s another nothing operation, run by a nothing guy.”

My insecurities won that day. I didn’t go in.

Can you imagine how much of a failure I felt that day as I went home?

I started a company because I wanted to build something huge; meanwhile I couldn’t do a little thing like go to a party. Any five-year-old can go to a party, but I couldn’t.

Years later that day still stung. Badly.

My friends don’t know it, but one of the reasons I moved to LA was to give myself room to learn to break out of experiences like that. I wanted to live in a new city where I could practice meeting people every day, and not stop until I got comfortable being myself.

The first thing I did was commit to a schedule of going out 6 nights a week, no matter what. And when I went out, my personal rule was that I had to talk to at least 5 strangers.

I screwed up a lot at first.

I remember one time walking to a group of people at a party and saying, “How do you know Deb?”

One of them said, “We’re friends of her roommate, Steve.” And he then went back to talking to the group. He didn’t include me in the conversation and I didn’t know what to do next, so I just stood there awkwardly



as they all talked to each other.

I felt like a fool. But I committed to talking to more people that night and to going out the next night and the next night and the next.

Eventually I learned a few tactics that helped me get by. Like, don't interrupt a group of people who are deep in conversation just to make small talk.

But there was something bigger that changed more subtly: I just learned to be more comfortable. Doing it every day, even on days I didn't feel like it, helped me become a natural at meeting people.

A couple of years after I moved to LA, I even hosted my own networking event. The night before the party, I became almost as nervous as I was on the day I stood weakly outside the Puck Building. But when I got to the event, I eased up. All my practice made me feel more comfortable.

I was in a room full of people and I could talk to every one of them. It felt great.

I thought about that recently when I started doing video interviews with my heroes on Mixergy, my web site. The first time Seth Godin came on, I said to myself, "You're not a reporter. You're an entrepreneur. You didn't know the right questions to ask. The guy wrote about a dozen books. You didn't read them all. You're not prepared. You're going to embarrass yourself and all of his fans will know you're a dumb entrepreneur who got lucky in business."

It's true. I was pretty bad when I started. Very bad, actually. But I committed to doing the work every day. Many people wondered why I insisted on posting a new interview every day, since it's more than most of my audience can keep up with.

It's because I learned that showing up every day and putting in the work can turn my life around. Haven't you seen that in your life too?

"I started a company because I wanted to build something huge, meanwhile I couldn't do a little thing like go to a party."

"Any five-year-old can go to a party, but I couldn't. Years later that day still stung. Badly."



“I think I needed to remind myself there were bright spots in the darkness. I think I needed a cold breath away from the hot swirling clouds around me. I think I needed a place where I could smile at the little things we all smile silently at throughout our days.”

NEIL PASRICHA

Getting to the light at the end of the tunnel

My world was spinning in 2008.

After finishing school in Boston and going on a cross-country road trip with my friends Chris and Ty, I moved to a dusty suburb to live with my brand new wife in my brand new life. Yes, we got married young, we got married quick, and after living on opposite sides of the border we were finally moving in to get busy living.

So I slapped on a crisp, fresh shirt and started a new office job while trying to settle into a brand new town where I didn't know anyone. My high school and college friends had long scattered like marbles so I was looking for a new place in a new world.

Now, my wife had been teaching for years so she had a bit more going on. She'd coach baseball tournaments and I'd stroll around waving at old folks on their porches. She'd play volleyball and I'd eat cookies and flip past reruns. She'd watch Gray's Anatomy with friends and I'd practice the fine art of taking long naps and playing video games.

I was feeling pretty lonely and whenever I flipped open a paper the news didn't exactly cheer me up, either. Polar ice caps were melting, pirates were storming the seas, wars were raging around the world, and the stock market was in a deep freeze.

It seemed like everything outside my window was just bad and everything inside was a little ... sad. Yes, although my wife and I had respect, trust, and admiration for each it was becoming clear after a few months that ... something was missing.

So one chilly Spring night in 2008, alone in our dark house, feeling cut off from the buzzing world of bright lights outside, I went online and on a whim started up 1000 Awesome Things. I wrote about broccoli flower to kick things off.

I think I needed to remind myself there were bright spots in the darkness. I think I needed a cold breath away from the hot swirling clouds around me. I think I needed a place where I could smile at the little things we all smile silently at throughout our days.

Over time our nights at home grew a bit quieter, our dinners a bit shorter, and our laughs faded into polite smiles. While 2008 rolled on we kept liv-



ing together but were growing further apart. She'd coach badminton and play on her volleyball team and I'd stay at home writing for hours about nachos and gasoline.

We kept trucking, kept slugging, kept soldiering on, until the rubber finally hit the road one quiet night while we were sitting on the couch. She looked me straight in the eyes and through painful tears summoned the courage to tell me she didn't love me anymore. It was heartbreaking.

Tears spilled all weekend and wet pillows, sweaty blankets, and headspins came in waves. By Sunday night I blinked bleary-red eyes and suddenly realized I didn't have anything to write about except crying. So that's what I did.

When I look back on that post it reminds me of heavy times at the bottom of a dark well staring way, way up at the tiny pinprick of light at the top. But it also reminds me of the pure joy and relief of letting awesome things cheer me up while I struggled to keep moving.

I guess I'm addicted to letting thoughts of new bed sheets, fresh bakery air, and wobbly couch cushion forts swirl in my head and lift my brain sky high. I love talking with all of you and reminding ourselves of the many awesome things we all have to share.

For us, we just happened to be two different people walking two different paths. Sure, it was painful as painful can be, but we need to grieve, we need to let emotions overcome us, and we need to choose to walk towards those bright lights in the distance. Even if that walk seems pretty far away.

So, come on: When bad news squeezes your lungs and the weight of the world pushes you underwater, let's always try to catch our breath by focusing on the best things in life. Yes, let's focus on hitting a string of green lights on our way home from work, getting free time on the parking meter, and flipping on the cold side of the pillow. Let's focus on beautiful pick-me-ups like getting long hugs when we really need them, laughing hard with friends, or the last day of school. Let's focus on all the magic moments, eye-twinkling memories, and small special touches that make every day so sweet and make every day worth living.

Yes, life's too short to swim in the deep forever so when it hurts remember to focus on the end of that tunnel and let those lights guide you forward and forward and forward and forward and forward and forward and forward.

AWESOME!



JAMES ALTUCHER

Forgive, Forget, Succeed



I'm a bad son. That's what started this line of thinking. I was thinking, "What am I bad at?" and the first thing that occurred to me was I'm a bad son. For the six months before my father had a stroke, I refused to speak to him. We were in an argument. After he had his stroke. I'd visit. He'd sometimes open his eyes. But he couldn't speak. Three years looking at a ceiling. I pasted a chessboard to the ceiling but I don't know if he ever really saw it. When you feel guilty about something, sometimes you avoid thinking about it so it doesn't consume you.

I haven't always been the best father. When my kids were little I'd work six days a week sometimes in the city and miss the whole week. Miss plays. Parent-teacher conferences. The whole thing. What was I so focused on? Who knows. It's ancient history. But I still have time. Maybe I'll make up for it.

The other day I dropped them off at school. And when you see these tiny little creatures with their own thoughts and feelings, trying to get comfortable in their winter jackets and backpacks, going off into the brick school, you get scared for them. Because being a little girl is a lot to have to deal with and I can't be inside their brains helping them through every step of it.

I haven't been the best employee. I've worked multiple jobs and businesses at the same time to make a good living. I've quit without notice. I personally think that just about everyone would be happier if they escaped their cubicles but I realize it's a scary leap for many.

I haven't always been the best entrepreneur. By my last count, I've been a co-founder in twelve companies but with only about four good exits. I've raised a lot of money. I've lost a lot of money. Every now and then, though, I've made more than I've lost.

I wasn't the best college student. I don't want to send my kids to college. I think it's an over-inflated waste. I can't remember even attending a

single class in college. I graduated in three years so as to avoid borrowing another \$40,000 for a fourth year. But I needed a 3.0 grade point average and I had a 2.999. I had to beg my Fortran professor to upgrade his grade on me from D- to D+ so I could get the 3.0. Thank god he did or... nothing. Nobody's ever even asked me if I've gotten a college degree. For all I know I don't even have one. I've certainly never seen it.

I'm not the best homeowner. I've owned twice. Both times it's been a miserable experience for me. Home owning is a scam. We have a trillion dollar banking industry that borrows money from you at 1% (your checking account) and lends to you at 5% (your mortgage) so everything in this country is geared towards hypnotizing you into thinking that owning a home is the American Dream. Otherwise trillions of dollars gets lost. Which is what happened in 2008 when the hypnosis wore off for awhile.

I wasn't the best boyfriend. Even from a tender age I would get jealous. I would sometimes be a little obsessive. Dating is a full time job. It's all about making sure you aren't spending energy in the wrong direction. You have to have goals and every day work towards those goals. And if anything deflects you from those goals, even for short-term gain, you have to avoid it.

I haven't been the best brother. One of the last times I saw one of my sisters she hit me in the face and I fell to the ground on the corner of 42nd and 5th. I'll take this line out if she wants me to. But she had her reasons. And she was much stronger than I thought she would be.

I'm not the best writer. Most of my books have been flops. Probably because I hate writing about investing. Here's the reality: most people should not buy stocks. Financial media is financial entertainment. If someone tells you you should buy a stock you should take that same money and go on a nice vacation instead. As someone who has been involved in every aspect of the financial media community for ten years I can tell you that most people have no clue what they are doing and should not be listened to except in special circumstances. And everyone, no exceptions, should do their own research and due diligence before acting on any financial advice.

But despite all of this, I want you to know that no matter what you've done, I forgive you.

CAROL ROTH

Risks and Rewards, Opportunities and Downsides



The call came on an early March evening in 1995, while I was wrapping up my senior year at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. My college boyfriend of a year and a half had been killed in a car accident by a woman driving recklessly to escape the police. Within two months, I was a 22 year-old college grad with a heavy heart and a wrecked emotional state, \$40,000 in debt and a plane ticket to a new city with a new job where I knew nobody. It was not an auspicious start to my professional career.

Within two years, another call came- my mother had been diagnosed with Leukemia- a battle she lost within 12 months. That was followed shortly thereafter by my stepmother losing her life due to lung cancer. And since tough things seem to come in waves, I then endured my own undiagnosed mystery gastrointestinal illness that at the same time bloated my abdomen to the size of a third trimester pregnant woman and sucked the life out of me, which itself endured for almost three years. The weight of each incident created a cacophony of emotions that I can't even describe, from depression to frustration and anger to exhaustion.

Over the course of a decade, I endured death- three of them- from three of my closest confidantes, but managed to also find love again with my husband. I went from the burden of debt to a seven-figure net worth. I navigated a new city where I hadn't one friend. I battled against an illness that no doctor could figure out, being a veritable guinea pig, until the debilitating sickness was no more.

But despite what you may think, these challenges were not my biggest roadblocks in life. My biggest roadblock was me.

In each of the above situations, I persevered by being willing to do anything. I didn't let fear, sacrifice or environment hold me back; I told myself that "no" was not an option.

I got past my grief to find love again by being willing to be vulnerable. I put myself and my heart out there, facing the fear that it could be taken away again.

In my financial situation, I passed over the everyday luxuries that many of my peers were indulging in and focused instead on paying off my debt and building my bank account. I was willing to live meagerly and sacrifice until the debt was gone.

With my illness, I tried just about everything that could be imagined. I took pills, I did acupuncture, I went to a real-life witch doctor who hooked me up to a computer and had me hold metal balls (they weren't brass, but that would have been fitting). I was so willing to be open, that I- the linear, financial thinker- even agreed to see a person called a medical intuitive. She told me that my stomach issues stemmed from, "the soul of an unborn baby that wanted to be born through my body" and that I had to have discussions with this soul to make it understand that that wouldn't happen. My first reaction was, well, not fit for print. But I did it anyway- I talked aloud to the mythical baby soul (it didn't work, by the way...). I kept on keeping on, until one day, some unknown combination of the dozens of efforts that I was undertaking worked. I pressed on when there was no answer to my problem.

So, how ironic is it that I got past the roadblocks in every other aspect of my life, but in planning the rest of my professional and business life, the things that would stop me would be my own ego and fear. It was a fear of failure, a fear that if I set a big, balls-to-the-walls crazy goal, I might not achieve it and then, ostensibly, something awful would happen (like people pointing and laughing in a fit of hysterics a la Tickle Me Elmo).

I apparently was MacGyver when it came to dealing with death, finances and illness, but I could not figure out how to get past my ego when it came to the thought of failure. I was not willing to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, perhaps because change had a recent negative history.

I realized that I wasn't happy. I was the "successful underachiever", accomplishing milestones like raising over a billion dollars in capital, but not feeling like I had even scratched the surface of contributing what I could.

So, eventually I asked myself what the downside was in going for what I wanted in my professional life. When I evaluated it, the downside truly was limited, especially in the face of everything else that I had endured. If I went for a big goal and I didn't make it, I would pretty much be in exactly the same situation that I already was in (and would be for the foreseeable future), with the real risk being not much more than a bruised ego. But if I did go for it, and even made it part of the way towards the

goal, the upside was immense.

That was my turning point and I haven't looked back.

I challenge you to figure out what is truly holding you back and ask yourself about risks and rewards, opportunities and downsides. Do the preparation, and if the risk/reward tradeoff makes sense, you must "do the work". Be willing to be comfortable with being uncomfortable for the situations that have enough upside to justify what you are risking.

Are you willing to do whatever it takes to make it happen? Will you let "no" be an option for you?

Don't let yourself get in the way of being all you can be.

JACKIE SAVI-CANNON

Life Threatening is a Matter of Perception

Crisis=Fear – an innate, human response learned through our culture. Reaction and adaption to crisis is purely individual. Hearing the words ‘You have Cancer’ feels like a sledgehammer smashing your safe, predictable world into millions of pieces.

I liken my diagnosis to being in a playground: a romanticized, heroic place by day; desolate, lonely prison by night - the pivotal moment when you are alone with your horror and only the shadows. My first instinct is to run. We underestimate our ability of handling something so monumental. Crisis was and is a call to change. It reminds us we are built to adapt and evolve – understanding moments of crisis are meant to be dynamic and impermeable. Much like our physical bodies.

So as I sit in my own perceived horror - tragic narratives of my life flashing by, I begin to notice the intense noise and aftershock giving way to quiet. Eventually it was just me, cancer and stillness. I was still here. Despite everything, I was still standing amongst the shadows. Now 5 years Cancer-Free, I stand side by side with them.

The real opportunity-cost of any challenge is not seeing the opportunity. The key is to let the crisis speak to you. Faced with your own mortality it's like staring into a black hole. Time morphs, barriers no longer obstruct your view of what is possible. You now understand how choice dictates perceived quality of life.

My crisis gave me the vision to create economical health and resource programs that are teaching people how to cope and adapt to life altering events. The quality of the content I create and practical solutions I offer come from a deeper, more profound place. When you absorb yourself in pure mindfulness, there is no room for something as small as FEAR.





NEIL PATEL

When I was 21 I quickly learned that business ideas don't matter as much as the people you are working with.

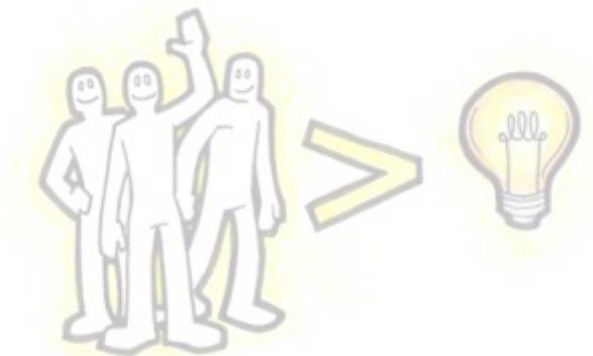
I had a few entrepreneurs come to me with a hosting concept that was similar to Media Temple's Grid Server before it came out. Over the course of a year I spent over a million dollars on the project and in the end I ended up losing everything.

My losses occurred not because of the idea, but because the entrepreneurs I was working with ended up taking my money and running away with it.

So in the end, if you are going after a business idea, make sure you are working on it with good people. Models change over time and you learn new things as your company evolves, but the one thing that needs to adapt is your team members.

Before you pick your team members make sure you get to truly know them, and how they work. Even if they are talented, you have to make sure they gel with the rest of your team and they fit within your company culture.

“Models change over time and you learn new things as your company evolves, but the one thing that needs to adapt is your team members.”





CONCLUSION

Thank you for reading this book.

It was produced at breakneck speed through an enormous groundswell of collective talent and efforts. Let's keep this wave of action going.

Think of five people who will benefit from the profound insights and tools generously shared by our contributors. This ebook will be of special interest to those who get in their own way of doing their best work.

Share **No Idling** right now with those who need it. Then use it, again and again, to push over the dips and through the walls as you bring your great work to the world.

Take that, Resistance.

More information about [Do the Work](#) and [The Domino Project](#) can be found at www.thedominoproject.com

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