

ATTRACT BETTER CLIENTS

An Optimist's Guide for Consultants Who
Do the Work That REALLY Matters

BY
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Welcome!

You may have picked up this book because you are ready for change, to do new things, and leap ahead. Or you might be aware that change scares you and you are wondering what to do in your situation.

I have consulted in the Business Intelligence and Leadership in many industries for over twenty-five years, and I have seen many roles totally changed during that time. Most things valued when I started, are now obsolete. The skills that once helped you quickly achieve success are now automated or long gone.

Change is happening at an exponential pace. Now is the time to invest in yourself in the areas that might remain, even as everything continues to change around you.

Talents like professional behaviour, leadership skills, and focus are urgently needed more than ever. Investing in these things will lead to personal growth and bring profit to your business while also helping others get to where they want to be.

I optimistically think that being an optimist is the best approach for you. Yet, I am also optimistic that there are other ways to level up and do the work that really matters. If you think there is only one solution to a problem, you don't understand it well enough. It means experimenting with the services you supply and finding the work you must do to attract better clients. It involves identifying what that work looks like for you, individually, and for the organization with which you work.

Who are these "better clients" and why should they trust that you will get them to where they want to go? That is what this eBook is all about.

I recommend against you skipping the order we do things in this book. There is a method to the madness. Following this order will open you up to doing the work that matters. Your perspective will move from yourself to your client's view, and you will gain clarity on what you can do for them. Remember, it's NEVER about you, it's always about them. That said, we are all different. Continue in a way that keeps you motivated.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter where you start. It only matters THAT you start.

Your future self will thank you.

N O T E S :

Chapter 2

Recurring Action Wins

Early in my career, I thought knowledge was power. I believed that when you got that one excellent idea in your shower, it would propel you into the change you want.

Since then, I have met a lot of extraordinarily successful people, and I've never yet heard that this was true.

Sure, the ideas and design matter. What matters more is the action taken on the insights. The steps you take and the adaptations you make are what create the difference.

You cannot read yourself into a high level of confidence. Only your actions and the subsequent results will give you that. Reading books will, however, help you realize that you are not alone with your doubts or the lack of whatever it is that you think you need. Trust me on this. Others have overcome, so will you.

When reading this, make notes when something resonates with you. Don't wait until later. Life will interfere. Move into that action and write that note immediately. Please, do not just read this nodding along. Make a few notes as you read and act on it.

Thoughts alone will not get you there, either. You cannot brainstorm yourself to better clients. If you could think your way to success, everything you ever wanted would already be here. Better clients are on the other side of your emotional labour where you exert effort into helping them get results.

As you will see throughout this eBook, it's all about progress. Whatever big dream you have right now, once achieved, you will then dream up an even more significant accomplishment.

Eventually, your effort and the lessons you learn along the way will cause you to level you up beyond what you imagine right now. Don't block what's possible for you by staying in your head, hoping for a perfect day. That will never come.

Progress never occurs without action. Only actions create lasting change. To create change, you must also apply pressure or "tension", both on you and the affected party. Using tension in this way will not come naturally, or it would have been your norm already. Be kind to yourself and those around you and dare to face the pressure.

Challenge your definition of the work you do. Which tasks create results? You should measure and evaluate to ensure you are doing the work that matters for your clients. When you do this, be respectful of those around you. Everyone else does not see what you see or dare what you dare. Be kind and courteous anyway.



“A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week.”

George S. Patton



Anything done today serves you (and your clients) better than the best plans (which may never happen). There is great value in helping and sharing from where you are instead of waiting to learn just a little bit more. I have found that by facing your fears and putting yourself out there, eventually, we become OK with it. You can, too. You must keep taking action.

The question to ask yourself is:

Are you intentionally daring to imagine what could be? Are you taking continuous action to make it happen?

Actions lead to feedback which leads to learning. When you learn, that brings new actions which lead to new results. Lean into that. Standing still will not change the world. Taking the initiative to act just might.

NOTES:

Chapter 3

Becoming a Commodity

The forces that shape you into one

Right now, forces are gathering to make you a commodity. It has already happened all around you—Uber, Spotify, Travel-agents, and so on. The middleman is cut out, and a proxy service is censoring everything that does not adapt.

In the consultant niche, we have consultant brokers, offshore resources, Distributed Work, A.I services and a lot of other great things to help clients get their solution delivered, all of which may bring a proxy service to their front door.

A.I. (chatbots and computers) is already replacing call centre personnel, help desk people, and some I.T. functions. That will continue. There is a saying "software eats everything", and I think I'll add "analytics and A.I. will eat software, thus changing part of everything, eventually".

Just think about the applications you use yourself. They're letting you accomplish more and more automatically where before it required a few different hands to get it done.

Life changes, and so does business. Everything evolves, so can you. It is a lot easier to learn and change when you are slightly ahead of the curve than when you are forced to leap by another's downsizing — forced to jump at the same time as most, in the same direction, pushed from what can be perceived as the same shovel.

Services are popping up everywhere doing smart things. What used to be an excellent 3-year taxi education is now competing with Uber. Food Trucks are competing on availability and price. Software has become smarter, more automated, and easier to use, making barriers to entry lower. And brokers help their clients by commodifying contracts, aka YOU.

When that change came years ago, a lot of managers got upset and feared the change. Yet, we know that business is always changing. Instead of resisting it embrace it and ask what is possible with this newest change.

Virtual Reality, Artificial Reality, Big Data & the Internet of things, New Privacy Laws and Voice these are making many brands way less visible.

Do you remember, in Star Trek, when someone said, “Computer... bring this,” or, “What's X?”, they did not question the algorithm that decided the best choice, or the analytics making it in the context they were asking, right?

When dreamed up by Gene Roddenberry, Star Trek was his imagination of the future. We now live in that future, in part. Currently, existing voice solutions do the same things that were once a dream. If you ask any of the voice services out there to “buy this” the algorithm will base the one suggestion to your past purchases which did not resolve in returns, resales, or bad reviews.

If they have chips and other activities that where logged, it can even see how much you have used it. For example, Kindle books continue to turn their marketing towards you. You won't notice that they replace ALL of brand X with their brand. After suggesting it to you a couple of times, you often choose the cheaper alternative. And once you are addicted, you won't notice that the prices are slowly rising again. The A.I. is making brands a commodity to you. This is happening to you and your services, as well.

If you dare embrace the new, however, you will often find that your business blooms because most others won't do this. If you can add your services to the new thing taking over the market you will do better than your competition. Myspace never feared Facebook because they were busy watching Friendster, Geocities and a lot of other players all now long gone. Just as a non-consultant comparison of the old quote “The future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed”.

We think that 2020 quarantines helped teach restaurants to add delivery to their services. The truth is that your favourite “themed restaurant” is already competing with the trend of removing the store-front part of their business.

This was already happening long before the quarantine made a lot of businesses urgently aware and then more ready for this change, and it's a great benefit even if, of course, it is in a sad context. And just like that, the work you're doing is also forced to change. And just like that, you can change too.

Embrace Consultant Brokers

If you don't create your work and assignments by direct contact with customers who will benefit from your help, embrace your choice of consultant brokers. Accept the fact that they form one river of opportunity to the world's abundance of opportunities. You are not forced to use their tools, seek their client's positions, etc. you are most likely doing that out of convenience because you'd rather fish in their "big" river instead of going out looking for your own.

A lot of the positions you will see floating by you in the river will appear in other streams, as well. Thus, it might seem there is more "work" in the river than there truly is. If a broker other than yours fills that position, it will vanish from both places. If you choose to go via brokers, do not complain about THEIR methods. See it from their perspective. Don't chase them for status or complain about their choices. They do not owe you an explanation of why you didn't get chosen. Forcing the issue will only push them away.

Get to know your proxy services/consultant brokers. Make it EASY for them to talk to you, and you are more likely to get a second chance. Push too hard once they have identified an opportunity, and you will most likely have to stand in line like everyone else. If you try, instead, to continually build a relationship with them, you might not even have a queue behind you for that position when one appears. Because sending you to their client is a safe bet.

- Positions – expect no loyalty to individual contractors even, of course, if they often sound like that.
- Game window – a young start-up heavily depends on knowing their consultants than a billion-dollar company who is more into filling positions.

- Positions – expect no loyalty to individual contractors even, of course, if they often sound like that.
- Game window – a young start-up heavily depends on knowing their consultants than a billion-dollar company who is more into filling positions.
- Project intense periods and pauses – aim to help and make life easy for brokers. From their side, they have multiple positions and multiple candidates. Help them do their job instead of pushing them for statuses, and you will stand out (which helps you in the long run). Share what you learn of opportunities, consultants you know, clients you know, trends you learn of etc.

A gift can't really be too small. For example, if you just send those you want to keep in touch with a link to something relevant and helpful in a timely way - you will stand out. Be the person who cares about their needs. This is rare.

- Everything is decaying. Be mindful that those you get to know will move on to other companies. You will need to re-learn the companies over the years.
- Beware that you are NOT in direct contact with the need. Positions get “pulled out of the river” all the time because the client learned they need to re-word the ad, or the broker misunderstood something about the need. Of course, this makes it harder for you to “choose” your clients since you don't know what they need. Likewise, it is hard for you to be aware of which positions have become filled and which jobs just "got re-positioned".

Step Outside Commodity's Grasp

Creates the map for others benefit, not to just point to where you are on it

- Dare to take responsibility for what other people will not
- Dare to explore outside the norm, outside the conventional routes.
- Dare to experiment with multiple ways of doing things to come up with a better way.
- Dare to say yes to a project that has never been done before.

For jobs requiring you to work without a blueprint, there will be more freedom. For projects requiring you to draw a map for others because none exists (yet), you'll find a niche with way less competition, and for most, it'll be way more fun.

Convey trust – fly outside control, show that you embrace learning

This is harder than routine recruiting.

- You'll need to identify your strengths and how to communicate those.
- Identify The good, the bad, the ugly.
- Embrace where you are going.
- Do reality checks because we all imagine we are bad at stuff that we're not and great at things that we're not.

There is a reason you know what you know. There is a reason you don't know things you don't know. If you feel you need to know something you can either invest time OR money into learning that. Perhaps you can use a personal trainer to get fit or a private teacher to become aware or motivated around a topic. Maybe you have not yet reached the cash flow to invest in those time-saving activities. Then you can always invest time. Whether you spend a little time, or a lot of time is not as important, just be sure to evaluate whether it's getting you closer to where you want to be.

N O T E S :

Chapter 4

Ownership

Taking ownership is key to getting better clients. I've heard it said that, in healthy organizations, leaders take responsibility for the system, and people take responsibility for their actions. In unhealthy organizations, leaders blame the people and the people blame the system.

Create Results First

Lead others in a simplified way. It will help you help them get to where they want to go. It's not about what you say. It is about your promise and the integrity in your delivery of that promise.

In the Internet age, this means being small and niched down. There is power in it. If you are well-known for an area of expertise, having helped a lot of clients reach success in that particular area, no one can compare. You won't have to compete with the other candidates for that position.

However, you can't expect the right clients to come running to you without first giving them a reason. Make this choice easy for them, either by building trust that you will deliver the future they dream of or by having results which prove that you've already effectively done for others what they are asking you to do for them now.

Of course, having both trust and results is best. Yet it's hard to have trust before we have a relationship. That's why it's so important we dare to only work for the best clients, saying no to everyone else.

Own Your Position

Owning your position does not work if you try to squeeze and turn your resume towards the area of the moment in which you are seeking an assignment. Owning means I was here before you were

looking, and I will be here once we successfully complete your project together. Daring to choose your area requires awareness and results that you are proud to share. When you do choose, make that area of expertise very narrow. Own that niche. Experiment with the way you describe your results. Do this until your past clients cheer at you for your accuracy in describing what you did for them.

Identify your ideal client

Invest some time in thinking about the future. It's totally OK to dream at this stage and make a list of dream clients. Write down your list, AND your reasoning. Then, identify what it is this dream client wants and needs. What are the ways you can help them? Start from the client's perspective.

- Write down your list of dream clients. Alongside that, list the reason WHY they are a dream client.
- Write down your thoughts, on what THEY want, ask yourself WHY three times and answer yourself. Yes, I know you don't KNOW what's in their mind. Give it a try.
 - Identify what the client wants and needs (from their perspective). What is it like walking in their shoes?
 - What is your client's mission and vision?
 - What jargon do they use to describe their success, their challenges, their colleagues, their tools, their gains, fears, and hopes?
- Please write down your thoughts on what you think you have or can do to help them make progress towards their goal.
- Now write a sentence or two from THEIR perspective on what you can help them accomplish. Don't focus on you or your tool. Focus on THEIR transformation using your tool.

The most important thing about getting clients is deciding who you want your clients to become. Help your clients to level up and do better for themselves and they will become better clients for you.

I don't recommend thinking that "everyone" needs your service. When you talk to everyone, you reach no-one. "Everyone" is too broad for somebody to feel like they can relate to you. Most people will never feel like you are serving them. To most, everyone is "everyone else, not me."

When it comes to what "everyone" needs, there will always be someone out there who is willing to do that for a little less than you. Focus on doing the work that matters for those that matter to you. If you're reducing your prices just to make revenue, you'll always find someone willing to undercut you on your spiral downwards. If you're into the business of continuously making things better for your clients, including the hard efforts to make that happen, you'll have far less competition. You'll be proud of your accomplishments. And your clients will always come back for more.

Choose Your Clients

If you want to avoid becoming a commodity, you should actively choose your clients. That means MORE effort from you now, not necessarily later. Eventually, your effort will be mostly fun work that you will feel you get the luxury of doing, AND you'll feel generously rewarded for helping your clients.

Choosing who you will work with (and who you won't) will make you more successful than just helping everyone who asks for your help.

In The 80/20 Rule, Tim Ferris says, "20% of your clients will cost you more than the 80% combined."

And I would say it doesn't cost you only in money. It's also about your energy, your reputation, and everything else.

Some people have a considerable need for feeling heard. They will most likely never think that you are paying them enough attention. And the placebo effect is enormous. They will see proof of that everywhere. The alternative cost of that is considerable versus a client that is thankful for the attention you give them and the result it yields.

Second-guessing is draining. Investing and focusing on creating results is energizing. People who have the power to take the actions you recommend will make themselves more successful, thus making your results look even more significant.

NOTES :

Chapter 5

It is Not About You

Your clients, those you currently aim to help now and those who you will help in the future want to believe that you will get them through the transformation they seek. If they didn't want something to happen or they weren't seeking change, they wouldn't ask anyone for help. It is your job to ensure they see and trust that you can repeat the results for them. Have empathy for your client's situation, and you will be on your way to building a better relationship.

While I fully endorse dreaming and bringing those dreams to completion, high effort is not a result — even if we imagine it should be. Be aware that our brain is biased. It wants the effort to be rewarded. There is no such thing in the universe. Learn how to see in yourself, and others, the disconnect between the level of effort you put into something and the results you create.

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“There is nothing as useless as labouring to do, with high efficiency, that which should not be done at all.”

Peter Drucker

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The reality of business is that it is not about you. Embrace what your clients need, not what you think they need.

Repeat that phrase to yourself often. You might carry gold, yet for some people, that “gold” will be considered spam. Yet, others won't

be able to thank you often enough for your help and the freedom you've given to them. When you realize that it's not about you, that helps you receive a "no" without taking it personally.

We can all find ourselves suddenly feeling judged, not worthy, not good enough to belong, etc. instead, focus on the actual feedback they are giving you. Focus on learning whether you should say things differently or whether you should choose a different client.

The truth is, no-one wants to buy your skills, your fancy artwork, your cool car, or gadget. It's never about you. Fight the feeling of insult, hurt, and having stepped on toes. You are like the rest of us. We are loyal to those we know, to what we know. Your friends and customers are loyal to you, too, yet they did not start that way, did they?

No customer ever beamed down in front of you saying, "Thanks, Scotty. Can I give you my most hard-earned, valuable money so you can use that to get something even more valuable for yourself?"

Understanding the other's way/path/side

YOU must swallow your disappointment and pride if they say no. Pushing that on your client or consultant broker WILL NOT help you get hired. That will push you further away compared to someone who does not do so. Pushing that disappointment on your client or your consultant broker just because you cannot carry it will never make your position better.

Disappointment can defeat us, yet we CAN choose to let it drive us, fuel us. Disappointment's gift is to make it more evident to us what we want and do not want. It will show us what will happen if we don't do something different. Often, that "something different" is putting in more effort. Usually, it's just stepping back, rethinking it and doing something else.

Find an outstanding company that understands how to separate your business message from you as a person. You are a wonderful person with a business proposition that didn't resonate with your target client. It's OK.

Be kind to yourself, accept that you are disappointed and invest more effort into describing the gain in a better way for the next potential client. Don't chase them asking why they didn't buy. That will just make you appear needy. Instead, experiment with creating something slightly different, for someone who believes in you. And eventually, those old prospects might come back to you asking for that new thing you helped a client with or that old thing that they now understand how they would have benefited from before.

We Trade to Gain, Not for the Status Quo

We don't trade 1hour for 1hour, 1money for 1money, 1time for 1time, or 1resource for 1resource.

We trade to GAIN. I give you something of value in exchange for something that I value more, hoping you will also appreciate what I give you more than what you give me. We NEVER trade on an equal basis. We trade to gain, all of us do.

I like to imagine myself as one of the most generous guys around. Though, when I am helping other people for free, doing pro-bono work and all that, I'm doing it for internal, selfish reasons. It makes me feel good. It's part of the behaviours which I am proud to display and the person I want to be. Read that sentence again, please. It's all "me, me, me" – even if the acts are all to help someone else. It starts from within.

Note that sometimes it can appear to people from outside that we are trading one hour of doing this for one hour of doing that. What we are doing then is a win-win.

For example, if you would do wonders for my home renovation and I would do wonders for your business profits, trading one hour of my time with you is like both of us swapping one hour for twenty hours. Because, if I do the renovation on my home, I am probably causing as much damage as I fix, which means, ultimately, I must hire you anyway. And if I hire you, you will get twenty times as much done in an hour as I could, and you will do it with much better quality.

If we can get deals where we both gain, business booms. Of course, trading time is not scalable and mostly used for illustration. It could also be that I trade X money for a product that would make my work results Y times more effective. Thus, I have generated money from our product after Z time working with it. At other times it is just a feeling I am after, and I'll gladly pay the cost.

We even donate for personal reasons. Giving to Z makes me feel great. I know I can help cause Z with this and I will regain that in selling X products or working X hours. I am happy to spend the effort for that cause.

It's Rarely About Information

When speaking publicly for clients, I sometimes hear people complain about their customers, not knowing any better. "If only they knew benefit X" or "became aware of cost Z in not taking action..."

If it were only about the information, we in the information age would all have perfect abs and perfect bodies. We'd have a fortune in the bank and the happy life we want. Information is not enough.

You also need to share your belief on the subject. Work on that. Help me see it your way from MY perspective. Don't help me understand it your way from your perspective. And above all, explain it to me in simple terms and with enthusiasm to help me, not as though you are bored or from a position that "everyone should know this, then the world would be better". Don't make your customer feel stupid just because you learned this when you were a kid.

For all your clients, it will be the feeling of "I gained some" on this transaction. The cost of the deal, of the risk, was worth that gain to them.

Everyone who becomes a customer of yours will gain something, or they should walk away. They might not say it upfront. You will notice it by their lack of action – by the lack of transaction.

Clients who do not feel they have gained something, will not become repeat customers, and they will not spread the word to

others of how you helped them. It's your responsibility to help your customer see the gain, not theirs.

Perhaps you have worked in the industry for 25 years and know what will happen next, yet they don't know. It's not their fault for not knowing, just like it's not yours for not knowing what you don't know in their field. Describe the gain from their perspective, with their knowledge, walking in their shoes.

Embrace Listening

You have to own their hidden expectations, as well. Otherwise, they won't be happy. Listening is the way to ensure that. Listen for what isn't being said, too. This is the most important lesson of them all. Listen with empathy for where they are, where they come from, who they care about, and the work that matters to them.

Enthusiasm – REALLY Important

Showing enthusiasm for your clients is SO important. It's not just about getting the job done or completing the project successfully. It's also about the energy before, during, and after.

If two candidates show the same repeatable results, the one with enthusiasm for the client will get the assignment. Note: that means in the “artificial reality” of an interview, you have to be enthusiastic for all involved, not just that developer you're awestruck about.

N O T E S :

Chapter 6

Be Present in All You Do

One thing I have found to be true is that your reputation will always precede you. Yet we cannot live in the past. If your reputation requires repair, there are things you can do to move forward. First, make sense of the past and then let it go. Then, claim the present for a better future.

I wonder though, are you intentional about truly being present in all you do?

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“Few are those that see with their own eyes, think with their own head, feel with their own eyes.”

Albert Einstein

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The truth is you are biased. You will never see the present form in full, past the placebo, past your perception and expectations. When is your bias serving you and those for whom you care? When isn't it? Your bias will fool you. Try to be open. Mind your bias. Seek diversity of input. Dare to be present today, and also dare to imagine what may be. It is lifelong work. Be generous to yourself then dare to question yourself and your bias again.

Tension

Guard your attention and your tension. Controlling the tension is one of the most powerful ways to be present in a way that affects change.

We have within us the ability to regulate the stress we feel and the pressure we apply to others.

Owning Tension

Start by owning the result you promise others. Be sure of what you CAN promise (and what you cannot). Dare to face your eventual customer with a promise that will help them, will benefit them, and the certainty that you will deliver on that promise. This doesn't have to be a wholly done thing. It can just be "I don't know boss. I promise I will invest 2 hours of effort trying to learn more and get back to you on Thursday at 10'oclock with what I've learned". Don't over-promise hoping to wing it.

The next step is to become aware of how we best help other people. What are the three most important things you do to help people? And then, in turn, we must become aware of what that is worth to them.

Just to illustrate worth, if I go up to someone who is exiting a store with a new purchase and ask if I can buy it for the same amount of money they bought it for, there will be no transaction. No business will take place. There must be a gain-gain for it to become a business.

On the other hand, if I say, I have the same pair of sneakers signed by their favourite celebrity they might be happy to swap. No additional features required. They might even pay me extra now.

Yet most of us don't step out in this way. Instead, we follow the masses, and we do what everyone else does.

Don't Confuse Comfort with Safety

The lizard brain has protected humanity for aeons, just like it does with animals. Look at the zebras in their yearlong circuit move around Kenya and Tanzania. They are all continually squeezing into the middle since, in the outskirts, there are dangers.

We behave just like these animals. We believe that being with the masses is safe. Analytics has changed that. Until perhaps 20 years ago, keeping up with the Jones' felt safe.

My generation was trained for that in school, as were a few generations before me. When I grew up, everyone raced toward the goal to "get a gold watch when you are 30 years into the company". Before that, most humans were trained in that feeling of "Don't stand out. Don't be the tall poppy (or wheat)".

The world is not like that anymore. Now, the same company might get bought out and moved to another country. Sorry, no watch for any of the loyal, wonderfully hardworking people who are deserving of one, having waited long in line for "their time" to get one.

Our brain is incredible. Biologically speaking, it is incredibly old. I have read that we fear public speaking, big decisions and most of all we fear change because the instinctual part of our brain, called the lizard brain, makes everything near black and white, safe or non-safe. New is unsafe.

Thank your lizard brain for the input that probably would have saved you from eating bad berries thousands of years ago. Today, when we don't face bad food and scary sabretooth tigers that often is just one form of input. Thank it. Be happy you've got it then move on, listening to other sources of information to make your decision.

Be aware that all the people you meet carry this behaviour, as well. Don't intimidate. Don't confuse people. Always try to explain things. Be impressed by others' achievements.

As you are about to see, it used to be safe being "hidden among the thickest part" of the bell curve, knowing with certainty that there will be someone needing your skills. That is not true anymore. Competing on ability alone is hard when analytics and services make outliers find each other and topple big companies very quickly.

The new safety lies in the outliers of the bell curve, in connecting with other outliers where you can move fast and have an impact. It is, by far, no comfortable place to be, yet it's a lot safer than being one of a thousand people let go on the same day because the

the company no longer resides where you can reasonably apply. Or your company cannot compete with someone willing to cut out something you cannot afford to cut out. It may not be comfortable being on the fringes, although, in today's world, it is safer.

The Turn of the Bell Curve

The illustration on the next few pages demonstrates how and why we follow the crowd and how the trend towards “the edges” is the new safe place.

When I speak on stage, I ask the audience to clap. Eventually, without fail, the crowd will clap in unison. There is a level of comfort there. Its human nature.

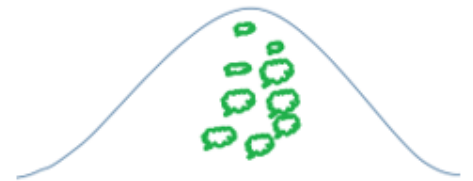
For most of us, when asked to stand up and talk in front of an audience, we are instantly back in time, like primitive men out in the open. We are alone and easy to hunt and be eaten. Even though we no longer live in ancient times, those emotions remain, yet the threat has evolved.

The Turn of the Bell Curve

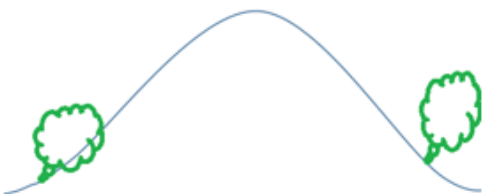


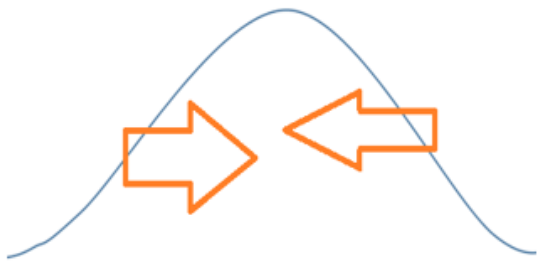
You see, everyone has a lot of bell curves built within them. Something easy for some is scary for others. Likewise, different industries have a history of bell curves over the years. (We are here talking concepts to help you find YOUR edge, your position.)

When at the peak in the curve, everything is now made more comfortable and secure. Things move faster and faster. That means it's easier to hire for it or it is already automated. This area of the curve used to be a "safe area". It was the "tension-free" area.

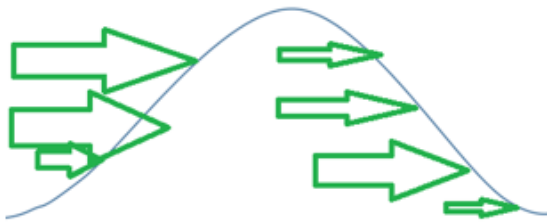


Today, analytics, Internet, social media, and technology have changed it into this new curve where the benefits are on the fringe of the curve. We must embrace the tension of being on the edges, to connect with others who value what we value. The individuals and businesses who embrace the edges in this new connection economy are now the ones driving all the change-making in the world.





Said another way, these are the **OLD** tension arrows. Note they are **not** working for a change, quite the opposite. They are mostly pushing everything into the middle, with “a safe way to be” until eventually, evolution created someone lucky enough to gain a competitive advantage with a different behaviour, and the new normal emerged.



Now there isn't **ONE** recommended way to behave to succeed. When I grew up, I was a nerd and slightly ashamed of it since they were known to be somewhat scarce. Today, there is no scarcity. You can connect instantly to all sorts of deep-down focused areas and people who will recognize and appreciate those things that others might call weird.

Accepting that there are infinitely many ways for you to accomplish your goals, for yourself and those you care about might make for some hard choices. NOT doing them will not be less difficult. You will just be pushing them into the future and following along.

As I said earlier, we all have many bell curves of scary places within us, and life is continually changing. You will have to remake that choice a few times during your life anyway, so I encourage you to start thinking about this now. It is not permanent anyhow. It's natural to desire to lean on the current that is pushing you inwards (along with everyone else) into the middle, like the orange arrows. Yes, this is comfortable. However, do not confuse comfort with freedom.

Ask yourself this question:

Do I want to connect with the fringe people of the bell-curve?

Sometimes the people in the middle are too bland to care. Who do you care about above and beyond everyone else, and why? That is your edge. Help them level up.

Don't Be Too Comfortable on the Edges, Either

It's lovely to be on the edges surrounded by people who value what you value. Your jokes hit home with them. Everyone will volunteer great ideas, and everyone is cheering in unison being with "people like us who enjoy doing things like this."

The business trick is becoming aware if you are there to feel like you are rested and enjoying a vacation or if you're there to help and do business. Usually, that means you will have to apply tension. You need to do something that does not happen automatically for "people like this."

If there were no tension, there would be no opportunity. That would be the new normal. Embrace tension. Listen and learn, and you will be on a unique path to helping others.

My Quirks Honour Yours

I suppose shame is a big reason why people cling towards conformity like the orange arrows show. When we embrace the multiple green arrows, we open ourselves up to other people. Suddenly, being different is a lot less scary, and your methods might work great, even if it's not my approach.

Being upfront with where we stand, then focusing on listening to what other people appreciate is a great way to start a relationship. Dare to be vulnerable in what you love, fear, struggle with, and the things you are on a mission to accomplish, and other people will have an easier time opening up to you.

I recommend listening more than talking. When I say dare to be vulnerable, I do not mean dumping everything into your client's lap. Briefly share who you are and what you do and invite new clients into the discussion by asking them what they are about, too. Being vulnerable, for me, means daring to be seen. We should not try to make ourselves bigger or smaller than the effect we create for those we serve.

Time to Be Present

You only have 24 hours in a day, like most of us. We all have a choice what we will do with the time that we are alive on this earth.

What are you ready to give up so you can focus your effort on creating what you want? What are you NOT willing to give up so you can get what you want?

“

“Man! (surprises me most about humanity).
Because he sacrifices his health to make money.
Then he sacrifices money to recuperate health.
And then he is so anxious about the future that
he does not enjoy the present; the result being
that he does not live in the present or the future,
he lives as if he is never going to die, and
then dies having never really lived.”

Dalai Lama

”

Sometimes a “no do” list helps us to gain focus. WHERE you invest, your time is really, really important. Become aware of where you choose to spend your time and how much of that time effectively builds anything. It's so easy to think, "I was just about to check up on a thing," and then suddenly an hour is gone. And these hours add up and could have made a massive difference for you in a way that no online video ever will.

What are you doing presently? Be deliberate and purposeful and genuinely present in all you do.

There is one caveat to all of this, when it comes to being present, don't be TOO present all the time. For example, when you do great work, you will be forgiven for declining many meetings.

Yet if you attend many meetings, and you won't be forgiven for not having done the job. Are you present in those sessions? Yes, however, that type of presence does not get the work done and results, my friend, are the bottom line when it comes to business.

This mindset applies to email, as well. No one will tell you, "Oh, great! You've kept up with emails. It's OK that you haven't done the work," nor will they say, "Oh great, you've kept up with all the meetings." Yet, if you're doing work that matters, you can say, "Sorry, I can't keep up with all the email."

The earlier you apply these concepts to what your client prioritizes, the more you will accomplish important work that matters both to them and you. Sit with tension. Be at peace with resistance. Connect with your natural curiosity, and you will know when to leap or push, and when to embrace the pause or the play. You cannot get change without tension. If there were no tension, that would be the "new normal." Sometimes it helps to remind ourselves of that.

N O T E S :

Chapter 7

Eustress and Stress

When we are trying to get into a new habit, like working out, we find all sorts of resistance. We get sore muscles. It is hard to fit it into the calendar, etc. yet eventually this habit is the new normal, and then we reap the benefits.

We quickly find we have gained hours of productivity by investing in our training. Suddenly, our calendar weaves around our training appointments instead of us trying to squeeze them in. Amazingly, we realize that when we miss training for some reason, the result we generate that day also drops, despite technically investing more hours into the work.

Several studies show that our mindset towards stress determines if we get energy or if it takes energy from us.

“

“Stress is the entrepreneur’s word for fear.”

Tony Robbins

”

I’ve found countless times that delegating task X to Y causes passion, where transferring that same task to another would have caused stress.

Stress used with awareness is good. Not being aware of the stress, and how we apply it, is terrible. Know when you want to apply pressure and create tension. And when you want to release it, release it to spring into action. When you need to regenerate, allow yourself time to rest so you can be ready for the next opportunity.

Likewise, without awareness, you will unconsciously push your stress to others at the wrong time. You should choose if you carry the tension. Take responsibility and drive to get the project done. Or know when it is time to push that tension on another party who can bring about the needed change. Knowing who should be the right carrier is vital.

Sometimes it helps to remind yourself that all stress is “inner stress” – it is worth asking yourself what the source is every time. The cause is not always apparent once you start to question it.

One of the most de-stressing activities you can do is realizing you are carrying something that is someone else’s responsibility. Just push it right back. Or, decide to claim responsibility for it immediately, and the stress goes away, even if you might be still doing the same thing.

Make Time for Regeneration

For ages, humans have tapped into stress to ensure survival, or to effect change. We have not yet adapted to today’s ongoing environment, though, and that can feel stressful. Stress is not a permanent state, fortunately. That would cause tunnel vision, health issues and other effects that you do not want.

You must find ways to rest, relax and reflect so you can tap into your eustress and push yourself when needed to make a difference. Sleeping well, eating well, having fun, and taking care of yourself in all kinds of ways are vital to remaining successful. Binge-watch T.V., play a computer game, hang out with friends, are great stress relievers, too. Do those AFTER you are proud of your accomplishments — especially if you're tired.

I have never met anyone successful who says, “Well, I start my efforts by regenerating energy for a few hours, and then I leap.” Most leap first, and that leap enables them way more “regen” time should they still want it.

This regen time is vital. It gives you mental strength so you can ponder the ways to be remarkably valuable to your client. It affects work results way more than you think. That said, I often encounter

successful people who have plenty of time intentionally used for just having fun so that they will have plenty of energy when an opportunity comes.

NOTES :

Chapter 8

Permission and Trust

Earning Trust – in Ourselves and Our Clients

And then we come to trust. It is your job to build trust with your client, so they will believe that getting your help is gain. In that way, they will give you their money, trust your methods etc. Money is a “certificate of appreciation,” as my mentor, Cliff Ravenscraft, often says. Without trust, they will NOT part with their money for the results you promise them.

Tension without trust is cruelty. That is not helping anyone. Know when to apply a push and when to not to. Care from you does not automatically mean trust from your recipient. Listen to it. Own your mistakes. You will grow confidence better that way.

You can build trust by delivering on your promises. You should always do what you say you will do when you say you will do it and be transparent whenever possible.

A vital ingredient to trusting and being trusted is integrity. One question I ask myself regularly is, “What have I done today to match my self-identity and integrity with myself and my promises to others?”

Permission and Trust from Your Client

Build trust and everything else will follow. Yet if you lose the faith of yourself or your client, the rest will fall. You must have a relationship of trust, both in yourself and from those that matter to you.

Your reputation is what makes this stranger trust the claims you make. Metrics in place or shared result costs are even better for building trust.

Dare to be honest with the value you ACTUALLY bring others and own that. Then, hold the tension of letting go if that value is less

than the amount you want to earn.

Then you must take on and own the pressure of figuring out an easy, short sentence explaining the value you provide in THEIR WORDS, as perceived with THEIR eyes. If they are not aware of their potential or pain points, you have a tough sell. If they are aware of the alternative cost of taking no action, you are well on your way if you have made your offer quite clear to them.

If you do not make this easy for them to understand, you are forcing them to take on that stress instead, and that might be the first thing that leads them to choose another over you. Make this process easy for your clients.

If you help them enough, they will take arrows on their backs to protect you. No one will do that before knowing you, knowing what you have done for them already, and more importantly, what you will do for them.

Earning Trust Within Ourselves

Fear is good. It is a healthy response to real threats. Without fear, you wouldn't exist now. We all feel fear from time to time. Brave people carry their fear and do it anyway. Your concern is there for a reason. Acknowledge it. Thank it, then tell it you are going to do the work that makes a difference anyway.

It's scary to step outside of our comfort zone. Putting this kind of pressure on ourselves can certainly be daunting.

This has definitely been true for me when it comes to exercise, which is why I hired a personal trainer to help me. When training for running, my trainer coaches me to lean forward toward her so much that I either fall OR I have to run when she steps away. Such is the perfect angle to be running in, yet I can't see that I won't fall when doing this. I have to trust myself before I start.

Typically fear comes from experiences we have labelled as failures. Probe your feelings around failure. Ask yourself, "What is this feeling all about?"

The lessons are yours to find in all failure. There is ALWAYS a gift in them if we can face the tension and truths behind and beyond it.

Emotional Labour

Understanding ourselves and the individuals we lead or serve requires effort. Without that awareness, we can easily misunderstand what emotional labour is. It is different for each of us.

For example, I enjoy brain dumping my knowledge onto a paper so my successor will have a technical know-it-all documentation. Doing that work for me gives me no stress. It gives me pleasure knowing my successor will have all the knowledge at hand should situations emerge. The massive information overload generated by its recipient who now feels they have to digest all that documentation might create a lot of stress. I have learned I resist keeping it short and to the point. I fear I will cut out something that “might” be helpful. On the other hand, I realize that too much documentation means its never read at all. Still, I’m unable to do that emotional labour of culling my own documentation.

By not doing so, this pushed that same emotional labour on my recipient who totally won’t do that work. They will skip reading it, making all my labour pointless. The lesson here is that we’re different.

If I pair up with someone who has a talent for writing, we make magic. Together we do the emotional labour of reviewing, trimming, and formatting and until it can be used by another effectively.

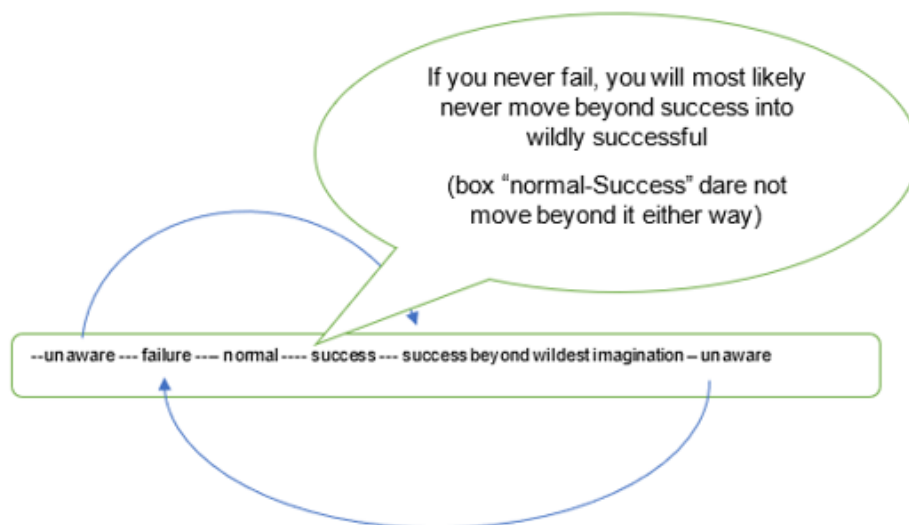
You can do this, too, in whatever field you’re facing this kind of emotional resistance. Don’t think you should do it all, because that mindset forces your emotional labour on the persons you’re trying to serve. That said, be generous to yourself, this is hard mental, emotional work.

The Enterprise of Failures and the Wildly Successful

If you only play it safe, you will never become wildly successful. If you are not listening to what behaviour gave you success, you won't know what caused the success.

Sometimes it is the opposite though. Our simulation motor that runs amok and the slightest "no" or failure causes things to escalate worse than a lousy movie about stepping on a butterfly.

Look at your metrics, your progress when that happens. Do reality checks with your friends. Catch yourself and get back into doing the work that matters, and you will see yourself back on track soon enough. It happens to everyone from time to time. Be kind to yourself and find ways to get back into work.



Side note: This image is so named because a friend of mine said that it looked like the Starship Enterprise.

Where do you want "to boldly go where no one has gone before?"

Seek to learn. Test the boundaries. Jump the fence (in a respectful way, of course) and discover things for yourself.

Fear of Loss

We are surrounded by a lot of noise these days. Much of that plays on our fear of loss. We are regularly assaulted with predictions of loss or we simply FOMO at every turn (experience Fear of Missing Out).

“Don’t miss the discount.”
“There’s a special event, this Friday only!”
“Doors close tomorrow.”

Disconnect. Shut down the noise. Focus on completing what you intended for the day FIRST. Then intentionally allow yourself to take on some of that noise with awareness. Do not click the clickbait. That will just increase your noise.

Fear of Rejection

Sometimes your inner thoughts will ask, “What will happen if I invest in this, and then I’m not successful?”

I ask, “What will happen if you don’t?”

The world we live in has taught us since birth that “no” is dangerous. A no response should be respected fully. It is just feedback, something from which to learn. Apparently, my message was not spot-on. Perhaps it was not for you. Maybe you were too busy to pay attention. I may have misunderstood your level of understanding, and perhaps I need to invest more effort to make more change for those I serve. All of that is feedback. All of that is impersonal thoughts of an idea, product, or service. Now you have gained the learning that the no gave you.

Safety surrounds those who dare to face the fast-changing world in which we now live. Predicting the future is not safe, yet it is safer than remaining in the old. Remaining still used to be a secure position to take. That is no longer the case. Your fear of rejection is the lizard brain talking. Sure, you got rejected. That doesn't mean that you don't belong. It doesn't mean that you aren't welcome at the dance or that you smell or wear ridiculous clothes. It just means, "No – your story was not right for me right now. If you help

me see another story where I can be the hero, I MIGHT just give you a new chance to be heard.”

There are a lot of things you can do to make things safer. Daring to leap is the safest thing in a dangerous place. Be smart where you jump. Train so you can land. Time your leap well.

The work that matters will always carry an element of fear. Otherwise, you are not working for something valuable enough to you. If you are not feeling stretched, everything is “rinse & repeat” on your end, and you are not growing. You are not reaching to become better.

Start small. Build up the trust that you can take care of yourself during a change. Don’t start climbing the tallest cliff, then if you fall you might hurt yourself badly and not want to continue. Instead, practice and learn with smaller things first. And once you are happy with your success rate, learn forward into more significant projects and keep doing that until you find yourself where you want to be.

N O T E S :

Chapter 9

We All Live in Illusions

What is Self-Worth to You?

When talking about self-worth, it does not mean bragging rights or loudness. Be proud of what you accomplish. I often find myself in fear of “launching before I’m ready”, not daring to leap for fear of failure. There are no guarantees in life. Yet if you are willing to give yourself a try, I am sure your feelings of confidence and self-worth will grow.

Taking actions and focusing on clients are ways to achieve a level of confidence. I don't have all the answers to life. Other approaches might work better for you. Experiment with the actions offered here and make up your mind. Do not wait for things to change by themselves, because it rarely occurs.

If you are like me, being proud of your work, is something outside your comfort zone. No one else other than us knows how hard it was. The only way to know is to evaluate it for yourself.

One source of self-worth comes from intention and results. If you know you will achieve what you intend, then you will be proud of yourself. If you accept a perspective of growth and learning, you will be kind to yourself. If you misstep, remain steady in the trust that those efforts will still bring change. Sure, you didn't win this time. Though with effort and insight, you will gain what you consider valuable versus the effort you put in.

My main advice on this is, don't fool yourself with pointless metrics because they sound better. If you find that you are successful in most things you do, it's time to aim higher and take more significant leaps.

If you find you are mostly NOT where you want to be, or you consider yourself less successful than you'd like to be, then take

smaller steps. Keep making short strides until you can proudly say, "I did what I intended to do and accomplished what I intended." Or at least be able to say, "I've gained feedback and learning, so I'll do better next time."

Either way, keep reminding yourself to take steps of experimentation. It is that simple. We just over complicate things.

I want you to be in the "value-adding business" not in the cost saving-subtraction business that uses commodities for quick wins while they're racing to the bottom. If you adopt the "race don't chase" mindset, you'll feel better and thus perform better because you're running your race serving those you choose to serve instead of those that are also busy running around comparing themselves to others.

Learn to Learn and Let Go

Being a beginner is a great way to embrace reality and to stave off becoming a commodity. We must permit ourselves to be beginners again, to look foolish when stumbling and trying to learn. We all are beginners when we start with something we have never done before. If we pressure ourselves to look good while at it, we are stealing energy and attention from learning the lessons.

Claim responsibility to learn right away when others hesitate. Once that project is up and running, share the credit.

I do not have any studies to back this, yet I recommend to you what I do for myself when I falter. I mentally step away for just a second and ask, "Am I in a learning state right now? Should I let go of something so I can learn more?"

Sometimes I get into a blocked state because of shame.

"Who do you think you are? Can you sing? Can you dance?"

Or I feel guilty because I did not predict a need for someone who is now attacking me for not solving it for them. Instead of addressing the needs of my client and taking steps to resolve it or setting a boundary in not solving it, I block off my feelings. It keeps me from learning anything now. Thus, it's likely I will repeat this "mistake."

Likewise, it's essential to become aware of our patterns of behaviour. For example, our intelligence is not constant. Ask yourself when you were tired the last time. Or when you were hungry or needed to pee. When were you afraid to jump in and help? Or why didn't you invest effort into studying before the exam when everyone else did? You're no less smart because of that.

What we need to learn is how to get the most from our brain. For lots of people, that means their most productive hours are early in the morning. If that's you, then invest your mornings for doing the most important work that matters. Don't squander it by reading other people's email to you. Once again, focus on the learning. Learning is most often about investing the effort to level up. Let go of your illusions.

When I was a kid, I remember being called a prodigy in math and a few other topics. I didn't invest any time whatsoever in preparing and studying. I could just show up and give my answers to the instructor's questions, as though I had studied for hours. It made me feel talented and smart only to be shattered into tiny, shameful pieces once I hit the wall of reality a few grades up when this was no longer enough. Instructors were wonderfully generous, wanting to help me learn, investing their free time into me. Silly shame blocked me.

I told myself, "I should be able to handle this without studying. I'm just a failure," instead of letting go of that old illusion of myself. I should have been saying, "It used to cost me little effort to perform well on the tests, now it requires a little more. It does NOT mean I'm stupid. It just means it requires more study".

We must let go of all that other stuff we put on our shoulders and focus on learning. It's hard to know that when you're a child. When we grow old, it's also important to know when we should let go – so we can focus even more on our strengths.

The successful people I know, they don't focus on developing their weaknesses. They focus everything on their strengths then ask for help doing the stuff they're weak at doing.

I dare you to continuously challenge yourself, asking, "What should I let go of so I can learn more?"



Knowledge is learning something every day.
Wisdom is letting go of something every day.

Zen Proverb



Self-awareness will go a long way. Don't pretend or deflect on weaknesses. Don't over-invest effort training weaknesses. Focus on developing strengths appreciated by your current clients AND yourself. Where do you find fun currently? For whose benefit? Often fun isn't in what we do. It's for whom we do it or why we do it.

Let Go of Labels

Whenever we feel a need to label something, we're most often diminishing it. Don't get me wrong. We need to categorize things to make learning easier, to make storing easier, to make leaps easier. Yet labelling and generalizing always comes with a cost. Find the right mix, and above all, work hard to not hide or fool yourself behind a label such as "I can't" or "they would never", or "that's impossible".

Replace those words with, "HOW could that be made to happen? I don't see it right now. Help me understand," or, "I prefer to invest my time elsewhere." Likewise, be aware that when you label others, you're reflecting things immediately back to yourself. Everything is a projection of you when you comment on things. Think about that next time you're calling someone stupid, or you're frustrated because something didn't happen the way you intended.

Someone with the inner story that says they can grow into anything has an easy time to see growth in others, independent of their current standing. Sharing opinions on anything shows your inner thoughts and feelings way more than you think.

You Can Learn from Everything and Everyone

There is always something to learn from your situation. Instead of thinking, “What’s happening to me?”, shift your attention to, “What can I learn? What does this enable?”

Instead of saying, “Pity me. I broke my leg, and I can’t ski downhill.” Invest that downtime into building your business – you just got free hours.

There is always someone worse off than you that would LOVE your opportunity for change, and they would take it.

Equally valid is the fact that you can learn from anyone. I'm not saying you should hang around the worst boss ever. While you're taking steps to move somewhere else, it's an excellent opportunity to learn what's NOT working for you regarding their behaviour.

Your future self will thank you for learning more about what kind of person you want to become and for learning about the type of person you don't want to become. Making this shift in your attention can transform your relationship. Suddenly, instead of choosing to be frustrated by their behaviour, you might invest in learning from them. So, you learn more and, most likely, make it easier for you to set the required boundaries, more so than if you're “just frustrated.”

Above all, remember, no-one can take away your learning from you.

N O T E S :

Chapter 10

If You Want Something Different, You Must DO Something Different

I recommend that you think of it this way. It's about Your Results + Relationships. When it comes to your results, wrap yourself around your latest accomplishments with the format “Repeatable Results” as they would apply to the person you are talking to, sending your resume too, etc.

Write your resume with your top achievements in a way that it's easy for the reader to see that they are repeatable results that MATTER FOR THEM. Reuse that core message for your communication with your customers. Then, level up your conversation by thinking about which customer you want. What is your ideal client interested in and what should you add in that repeatable results statement? Be 100% honest.

The relationship is equally important, ONLY if your results will help your client achieve the transformation they seek. If you have got one of a kind results for your clients, your exceptionality, even if you are among the best relationships, will also be a part of the equation.

Anyone Can Improve with Effort

Skills, results, and achievements come more from commitment and effort than from genius or talent. Don't shut a door because you tell yourself you don't have the expertise or because you see someone else being a genius at it.

With effort, practice, and awareness, we all become better. If you

look at most top 1% players in a sport, most successful artists or business people you will find that 60% of them only reach their level by hard effort — WAY more energy than most of us are willing to invest. Then, boosted by others seeing their talent, they focus even more effort, and the circle of greatness continues. Effort FIRST, THEN TALENT. Start now, and you too, will be called talented by other people.

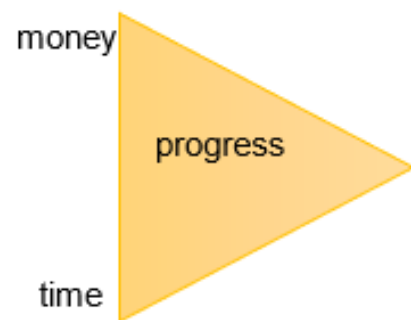
Likewise, the media loves calling out overnight successes. Yet when you talk to these people, their story is usually more along the lines of, "I've been here doing the thing I love for 20 years, I was here when it was a lonely, outlier place to be. Suddenly, people noticed, and then I was ready and prepared for it. Now it is a crowded place, and everyone wants in on it."

Anyone can invest more effort in creating change. Note that if you have the freedom to invest money in learning things, that is great. If you don't, most of us can at least invest time. Take time from something else; the world generously gives you another 24 hours tomorrow. Set your intention to invest some of that into building your skill sets, growing your network — anything that your future self will thank you for doing.

You must apply tension to get change.

**Set the intention to learn something today, and you'll find tension greeting you. "I don't have time", "I don't have money."
...all leading up to "I don't **KNOW** it will work"**

And you don't. All you know is that without either of these, no change will happen. No progress will be made.



With an open mind for that, anyone CAN improve with effort. It will make your contact with people better.

It's important to also keep in mind that YOU can't change anyone else, nor does anyone else owe you to improve themselves. You

I may wish that things were different. Do not confuse that with the effort you or others have taken to enable that change you want. Not everyone is willing to fight the tension required to bring change.

Power for Change

When you're at the end of your rope economically, it's easier to accept clients you usually wouldn't, making it harder for your clients to be successful enough to help you attract even better clients. It's harder to say, "I'll wait for an offer that works long-term for me."

If the client knows you have other clients who are happy for the chance to work with you and are already paying more than what you are offering, that changes your story tremendously. It makes you more valuable to them.

Value

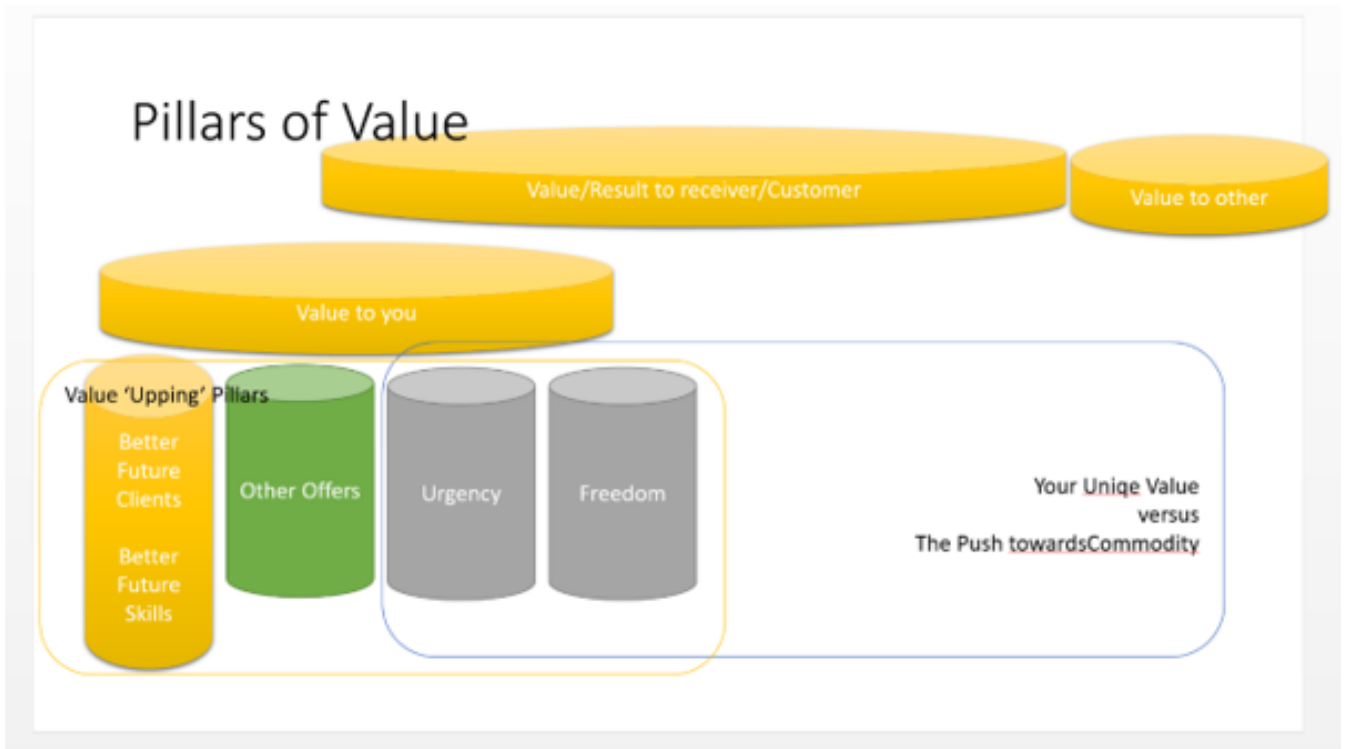
What does value mean to you? Value constantly changes. It is always subjective.

Perhaps:

- You valued your bronze medal more than your gold one because you know you faced harder challenges and overcame it?
- You value the rain because it helps your garden, precisely at the same time it ruins someone's clothes?
- You trade a high-value paper-money-bill for a low-value coin to unscrew something with, or pay the parking-machine within an urgency?
- Often someone values time more than money and give money for time.

You do not set the value of things, services, or feelings for others. They do. Just like no-one can set a value for you, only you do.

See the Big Picture of Value



From where do you get revenue? Where does your customer get their income? Are you delivering enough to help them grow? This picture is not complete. Add your metrics and be realistic. No-one will pay you more than they think it will bring them. It's your job to help them see the transformation you bring them. Painting it out like this can help you understand the flow and benefits of money.

Professionals Charge Based on What They Are Worth

Clients pay you based on what they can get. It doesn't matter if you are calling that a hobby, fun or boring. It's about the result, the solution, benefit, or removal of pain first.

One way of getting better clients is by increasing your price. Why?

- Better clients open up doing more meaningful work, having your more work impact more, having your skills to future versions, etc.
- Charging a higher price gives you more free time to invest in ensuring you're doing the necessary work, not just the work that you need to feed the family (AND WE ALL START HERE, so be kind to yourself if you are here currently)

Be sure to note that better is better than more; more is not better than better. Don't get too many clients, get the ones that matter to whatever cause you want to serve.

Free carries little impact. If you get advice for free, you probably won't follow it. Yet if you paid \$10,000, hard work, or sweat to get it, you're more likely to follow the advice. And if you don't act on the information, there will be no impact happening. Thus there is nothing for you or them to show how great your advice is.

Getting Client Results

If what you learned as a child in front of the computer when you were five can make me millions, I'm happy. Don't feel guilty for charging me for something natural or evident for you. Apparently, it's not that for me. Otherwise, I wouldn't part with my money to get your help.

Likewise, it's your job to help me see how your elite skills can make me money. Just because you learned it as a kid or have a lifelong experience in doing something that alone does not mean I'm interested in hiring you. However, if you do have a skill that will serve me in a way that makes the experience better, sure, I'm in.

Adding Value

Work hard to understand their perspective. Your co-workers, your managers, your customers, your consultant brokers – everyone adds value, or they wouldn't exist for long. Even if you do not see it,

look for it, and you will have an easier time connecting with them.

You can add extra value to any interaction you make. Be courteous and polite. Ensure to make each person's day better and make their work easier. Work with excellence. Ensure that they get what they need, not just what they think they need. Help them get the credit for what you accomplish.

Losing Value

Forget who holds power in each situation. For example, you are damaging the relationship with the customer / coworker / manager / broker agency / supplier if you, just like everyone else, nag too much about the urgency of getting status. That tension is yours to own. You choose who you work with, in showing them what behaviour is important to you. If they don't listen, you move on. If they listen, you help them level up those behaviours.

Be aware of trends and cycles. Whole niches are eaten up by software, regularly. Knowledge decays and becomes irrelevant. Stay Relevant to your customers!

Resume Keys

This is just my personal viewpoint. You decide if it works of you. In my experience, a resume turns you into a commodity. It makes you compared to everyone else. Clients will then just choose the cheapest person because everyone is the same. "Choosing" to use a resume is choosing to play the commodity game.

I have a resume and am in NO way above using one yet trying to pretend otherwise doesn't help. Understanding the rules and embracing them enables you to get recognized for how you can help clients. And it equips them to make the best choice.

If you are going to make a resume, here are some tips to follow that will help you stand out:

- Show the reader as plain as you can what you did and how well you did it.
- Don't use more pompous words than needed, not use jargon most people won't understand to appear better etc.
- Don't talk about the team's accomplishment. Talk about how and what YOU did to help the team accomplish it.Ø

Your resume is important. Keeping this document up to date is a challenge for all of us. We get busy in our lives, busy delivering value. Keep yours up to date. Include a simple, short intro to yourself and who you help.

A resume is NOT a one-time event. It's something to have ready quarterly, written in the language for your ideal client.

That said it's not the complete you, nor the entire "channel" on which you compete on assignments.

I also recommend you find a few strengths that you combine into your resume. My recommendation is that you choose two or three positions which combine. The further apart they are the better. For example, I'm a VERY technical data-nerd. I understand computer server performance like others breathe, way beyond the point of boring for most normal people. I also combine that with my empathetic listening using my love for helping people learn to see and embrace themselves and reality. For most, those two topics are widely apart. My job is to combine them into a resume so that it makes sense.

What different positions and strengths can you highlight - again from the value of the client, not yours.

NOTES:

Chapter 11

Professional Freedom

Freedom is a Lot Easier to Secure BEFORE You Need it

Freedom is best created before you need it. Invest in yourself now. Don't follow the lure of easy pickings. That's the path of becoming a commodity. What's in this ebook does not require buying anything. All it asks is that you become aware of where you invest your time and ensure that you invest it well. The amount you spend is up to you. Doing nothing will leave control of you to someone else.

Freedom is many times harder to create when you need it compared to achieving it before you need it. There is ALWAYS more to the story than what meets the eye. What we are unaware of controls our options more than we will ever realize. For example, when you are walking the plank of a pirate ship, it is hard to negotiate if that is the full story. If we add to the account that you have earned the trust of the captain AND you reveal you will take these pirates to the treasure, then you can change the direction of your story.

You need to find these things BEFORE you get to that point. Likewise, if you are in control of a bigger ship which comes up to the plank, boarding and overtaking the current boat, THAT'S freedom.

Thus, if you are of the mindset, "What should I say or do if I get an offer that I don't like?" you have missed the best time to swing the bat. Sure, even with many people offering enormous amounts for your work, you'll still be approached by people wanting massive results for pennies. If you have established yourself and found true freedom, then this matter won't be an issue for you anymore.

Why Do You Want Freedom?

It is a fundamental question to ask yourself since the answer is unique for all of us.

Only you know the answer for you. Don't let anyone else answer this question for you or allow anyone else to say you're "wrong" to take the position you take.

For most of us, freedom is an energy generator. Use it. Don't let anyone mess with your energy generator without having ample evidence that they have plenty of energy themselves, and already have the kind of freedom you want. There are a lot of people who will secretly be afraid you will reach your independence when they did not.

Saying No

We also need freedom to be able to say no. Magically, when we feel free, we come across as less needy. Rightfully so, we can choose to show up for someone generously because we believe they are better off following a particular direction. Equally, we can also humbly say, "There are infinite ways to solve any problem. Anyone telling you otherwise doesn't understand the problem well enough." Being confident when you state that makes you perceived as less needy.

Fishing in the same river as everyone else might feel like freedom and tension-free, yet if that is your only source of income, then you are not truly free. For example, the steady stream of brokers contracts and positions might seem lucrative, though if your only source of income is via brokers, then you depend on them. They own the rules for everything.

If you are not free to walk away from someone trying to encourage you to do something other than the position you've claimed, that was most likely not the position you should call your own. I respect that, from time to time, we all need to earn money to feed our kids and such. That is a beautiful priority. It's totally OK to do that while we work on figuring out our position.

Saying no is a great way to build trust. You just have to say no in a way pushing the responsibility back on to their shoulders. So, the decision is back in their corner if they want your help, they will get the help you wish to give in the way you want to give it. You're not just say no permanently. You're saying no in a clear way that leaves

them free to find alternatives and you to focus your attention on what matters. No one doubts the clear no. Keep making the no shorter and shorter for those who ask repeatedly. Start as generously as you can.

Daring to Say Yes

If you are not getting butterflies in saying yes, you are not stretching yourself enough to make a difference for the people you want to help. That said, of course, you should know you can take full responsibility to deliver on the position you own. Otherwise, you do not own it.

Freedom to Let Go

Search within yourself and find the freedom to let things go when needed. When you are free to let go of things, this gives you the power to give to those who are in need, the ability to set healthy boundaries, and the power to change things for the better.

Don't Fool Yourself When it Comes to Freedom

What might feel like free and easy now does not mean it will be later. A commodity might feel free in the short perspective. Most often, we are trading current convenience, giving others control over us in the process, and that is not helping your freedom.

Strangled by Convenience

For instance, we use proxy services because it's so easy and convenient. We should embrace all the fantastic things these services are doing for us.

However, while we're helping services push prices towards the bottom, we're also making it harder for ourselves. For example, we

can't buy a low-fare ticket for next to nothing and still expect the same service we used to get by the old-timer standard of service where the cost was 40 times higher. When everyone is buying the new cheap tickets, and the old company goes out of business, it's harder to find those high-quality tickets.

To ensure that you are building yourself in a way to eventually ensure your freedom to do the things you want to do, work with only the people you want to work with and only those times you wish to work.

Build Your Platform

If you are helping clients, you are naturally building their assets. You must also create some of your own. Don't fool yourself like when the banks say you have an asset in your home and then they encourage you to borrow more when 95% of it as a loan for your car and other things. It's only your asset if you own it.

What that asset is can only be explained by your clients and you. It could be a blog about leadership or a how-to. It could be a gallery of artwork. It could be anything.

If you are writing for a big client, ask what portion of that work you can share and what part you cannot. Respect that boundary, or you will not work for that client for long. This asset will also make it easier for your client to explain the cost of working with you to their manager.

You should also create a "delta" file. this is where you will note your observations for how to serve the client better. It is helpful in many ways. When you are introduced, it might save you from asking obvious questions yet capturing them in case they are still valid a few days later.

It also helps you see things in perspective when you have been serving a client for a while and you've assimilated the culture and forgotten how it was to be new to it.

The results you provide for future clients might bloom out of this file, as well. When building your asset, take note that systems like Facebook, for example, are NOT yours. Things can change instantly, making "your fans" vanish. Sure, they are still your fans, yet only a fraction of them will find their way "back" to you on another platform.

Your fans might also confuse what the systems make it appear that you do with what you do. And you might confuse what the systems choose to show your fans and not show your fans with what you "think" you have shown them. Just because you posted to a page, and they liked that page, it does not mean that the system will show it to them.

In short, create something you own that will become a portfolio to showcase what you do. This portfolio will be essential when meeting prospective clients.

Turning Pro

There are several things you can do to become more professional.

- Take responsibility for delivering what your clients need.
- Understand what your clients want and how to get them there
- Share the credit.

I now understand that if others don't engage with your work, then you're not a pro. That's a hobby. If your work doesn't make life better for others, that might be fun, though it's not sustainable as professional work. This is something I struggled with a lot when it came to "Turning Pro".

In the book, *This is Marketing*, I like what Seth Godin says about being a professional:

- My product is for people who...
- I will focus on people who ...
- I promise that engaging with what I make will help you get...

“What is your promise? And what action is required for clients to get it? No gain is instant and free. When turning pro we must also help them with their narrative, their mindset and everything required. Rarely are we just giving them a tool and we’re done. Sure, that might make you revenue but in my book that's not turning pro. That's just a hack that will soon vanish. Your work must make a lasting impact on your client in order for you to get better clients not only to pick up the few on your way down commodity lane because you're the closest, easiest, cheapest, etc.

I once read (I can't remember where), that a new employee at Google had started showing up at high executive meetings without an invitation. When asked to leave, they said, “I’ll take notes and send them to you ASAP” – so they started as a note-taker and before long they became a full contributor to that meeting.

Of course, it’s not a good trick if you claim results you don’t deliver on. Also, RESPECT a no. Listen carefully, so that you are adding value and not making people uncomfortable. And if you help people this way, give the full results to them AND give them the full credit. Please do not put your name in there; then it will look like you did that for publicity.

And be sure to set boundaries for yourself before giving. Don’t over-give of your time to people where you don’t see an impact happening.

Levelling Up to Senior Pro

Getting things done is not enough. Accept that you should also communicate your results along the way, continuously. No work is just working; you are always working for someone who wants to feel safe that you will deliver on schedule and budget. This person most likely has someone asking them for updates, as well. Update your client proactively without them having to chase status.

Every time they must chase status, it is an opportunity lost. You should already have that available for them in the format they need to deliver to their superiors'. If you do that, then you are making it easy for them to succeed with their managers, and they will like working with you. How you communicate does not matter as much. The important thing is that you update status regularly without being asked for it. In that way, you do more than most. Below is a simple way of doing it:

- 1) I understand that this is what you want to be done by when.
- 2) Inform clients proactively on your progress weekly, biweekly, or at a time interval upon which both of you agree — even if you say, "no info", that still builds the relationship.
- 3) Green is only allowed to be said when its 100% so and you can measure it. Any other should be red with an explanation. Never say, "I will probably make it 100%." Either you are going to make a specific deadline, or you are not. Explanations go into the back, not to the front of the status message.
- 4) The real professionals take responsibility for status proactively. And if it's something important for your client, follow up on X weeks after that, all is still GREEN. If you weave in ways to quickly double-check status when you are on a call together, your client will love you for this.

Levelling Up to High-Level Pro

Talk on their terms. Help make the people you meet connect with you. Be available, yet do it on your terms so you can focus on getting the results you want. Just be clear when and how you are available.

Accept that we are all using different methods, sounds, times, body language, wavelengths. Some people are readers, and others are listeners. If you've emailed the latest report to a listener, she or he might tell you they haven't received it because that's not their most effective form of communication. Then email and head over if possible, to give them a chat. Likewise, someone who is a reader might miss something told to them over their desk. Email a note after your chat. Summarize your conversation, especially if you said anything along the lines of "who will get what done by when".

You can always get to the next level with this way of thinking. Be mindful of when you are getting the best responses during a day. Pay attention to when you are the most effective and make a point to connect during those times. Block yourself off so you can get the result completed. Results most often trump everything else when it comes to relationship building.

Use simple words as much as possible. If your big words and smart terms make anyone feel dumb, you both lose.

Levelling Up to Heroic Level Pro

At this level, aim to help everyone, not just potential clients. Of course, set healthy boundaries for a time. Just like on the aeroplane, you want to ensure you "put on your oxygen mask" before helping others.

In business, you could translate this into investing your best hours into building your asset and that of your client. Then proceed in verifying that you have happy clients, leaving some room for margin. Margins come before any projects that are NOT needed, and it ensures what when you help anyone "pro bono" you've got time to "secure your oxygen mask" before investing a lot of time helping others with random requests.

Real Pro Mindset is About a Continuous Cycle of Active Learning

99% of the time, turning pro means going small and committing to it. Don't do anything thinking you are the 1%. If you feel that you are not it.

If you ask yourself "what's the BEST course of action" and that doesn't immediately translate into an action, you're most likely better off rephrasing that into "how can I make this better for those I serve?"

Better now is always better than perfect too late. We fool ourselves when we strive to do "BEST". It paralyzes us. Yet, EVERYONE can make some things better. Please make something you can have peace and fun with better in a way that matters for those you care about, and for those that care about you. Your "better" for those you care about it is enough. Grow from there.

N O T E S :

Chapter 12

When in Doubt, Choose Generosity to yourself, as well as others

In the all-important areas of life, business, and relationships, our inner game is our number one priority. It is a constant work in progress. And if you are anything like me, you may find that there are times when you feel inadequately equipped to do this work on and in yourself. When this happens, be kind to yourself. Progress is better than perfection.

Be generous with the grace you give to yourself. When you do this, I think you'll find, as I do, that giving yourself an abundance of kindness and mercy will form a foundation that gives you inner strength. That strength will prove to be a great asset in every area of your life.

When it comes to others, it is equally essential to err on the side of generosity. I strongly believe in this trait of generosity. One should give simply for the sake of giving. To me, giving is evidence that you care.

We all know choosing to donate is one way to give. When you contribute in this way, it can do enormous things for your business, since you will be known for supporting a cause (or many causes) outside yourself.

Another reason to give generously is this idea of flow. Some people believe that money will flow in any direction and so, by opening yourself up in this way, it will also open channels which send money back to you.

And it is a bonus that being generous can heal you. Several studies show that generosity heals the giver. I do not know if that is realistic or not. At the very least, the placebo effect appears to be true.

I have next to no sick days in my adult life living as a giver.

Yet giving to others can feel selfish at times. That is because giving to others brings good feelings. I give because I like to be a caring, generous person. That makes me feel good.

While I wholeheartedly believe that it is in your best interest to give generously to others, I also think that you should value yourself in the process. Accepting a lower price just because you cannot raise it is NOT giving.

For many, approaching this concept of pricing often causes bad feelings, such as self-doubt. These feelings often seem like a negative. However, they can work for us as well as against us. Having an awareness of this and placing these feelings within a proper perspective can make all the difference.

After all, constraints, like pricing, are your friend, even if it does not always feel like it. When you don't accept these restrictions, you give them a lot of power over you as you keep trying to stomp your way through them. It is best to work within your constraints to extend your reach.

Embrace every constraint in a way that gives you energy. Try this. Fake yourself a deadline instead of just saying, "I'll do it at whatever time is convenient."

If you are honest with yourself, you will agree. We often "have to clean the X," and we keep pushing it to later, saying, "It's such a hassle." Then our mother-in-law declares she'll be visiting and it's clean the same evening — no hassle at all.

Most things are like that. Embrace your constraints. Ask for them willingly from your clients and co-workers. If you know they need it by Friday, ask them what Wednesday would give them for extra time? Of course, this means shifting your priorities. That will leave Friday free for less significant work, and then you can replace that less important work with valuable work. Soon you will have high-level prioritizing skills, and you will have way less problems with calendar management than you used to have.

That said, accepting them is not the same as removing them. While I advise you to embrace your constraints, there are also times when you need to challenge them. Always examine whether something truly cannot be changed, or whether that is simply the perception in your mind. If it can be improved, do it.

Another thing that can get in our way is self-doubt. Self-doubt is not all evil. It has its value.

It will make you double-check things, and you will improve because of it. If self-doubt causes delays in finishing a project, sending something off to a client, taking the initiative etc. then it's overused, and we should work on finding ways to comfort and calm our nerves and complete the project anyway.

Self-doubt sometimes gets a bit of bad press, yet it has a real use, if not overused. Remember to thank that part of yourself either way.

Always be aware that everyone is different. Some people will love you for this side of your behaviour, and that can make it bloom out of control. Likewise, having this extra focus and attention because of your self-doubts can be precisely the thing that helps you establish a great connection with them, making this specific client love you even more.

At other times, your client will be in desperate need rushing us to get take on a project and quickly get it done for them. In these cases, it is not our personality or our ways that get us into trouble. It is when we are not flexible towards our clients' NEEDS, that is the problem. Therefore, it is so important to be generous with ourselves and others.

When we give ourselves compassion and acceptance, despite our flaws, this strengthens us. We won't take everything personally, and instead, we can then focus our generosity onto the needs of our clients and co-workers.

Whether to others or yourself, being generous is one of the most important things you can do. Show up to help, then learn, and evaluate the real-life results (not the thoughts in your head). Be kind to yourself and those around you - then stretch for doing better.

NOTES:

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Author Note

I encourage you to release your thoughts in this non-perfect world. We urgently need your wisdom and experience.

Perfection is not my goal with this document. It can never be fully ready since it urgently needs your wise words, as well. Please, feel free to copy and use this freely in any way that benefits your customers or yourself. In your pursuit of progress, don't aim for perfection. It's a goal none of us will ever achieve. Instead, find ways to serve your clients better using your abilities TODAY.

This eBook demonstrates that it's OK to share a random bunch of rambling thoughts to save others time and effort. You have some of those inside you, too. The world needs to hear your thoughts on how things can become better.

Your voice and your way of sharing those thoughts may be the thing needed to get someone else inspired to take action. They may not assume that action on hearing it from anyone else, only you.

Share your thoughts and wisdom with someone today.
They will thank you.

Go for it!
Share your gift.
Don't wait for perfection.



RIC LINDBERG