



“I’ve heard **GREAT** things about you!”

How to inspire a grateful army

By Troy Forrest

“I’ve heard **GREAT** things about you!”

Why write it? Why read it?

I'm a student of science and I love trying to understand cause-effect relationships. My shelves groan with remarkable stories of *“here's-how-I-did-it-so-why-not-copy-me”*. I sit in the corner of a swag of sales, service and leadership professionals out there today, doing it, throwing themselves into business experiments to trial and error. I analyse the patterns of what does and doesn't gel. I'm no Robinson Crusoe here - people like you and I, the want-to-grow-ers, put in the effort to figure out how.

And for all the logical clichés, the real feedback and the 42-step textbook methods, it's still so elusive so much of the time. How to inspire the words up top. To create the cascade that predates you standing before a stranger, who says they've already heard about you, had their expectations hothoused by someone you delighted to the point they happily said to a chum *“you've just got to talk to them!”*

This collaboration will try and sort the trite from the pragmatic and deliver take-homes you can use immediately. This is for leaders, sales and service professionals. If you don't think that's you, I'm really not sure where you fit in the modern economy.

I hope you read it because you want the scale that comes from a swelling mob spruiking freely about your help. Because you're too busy delivering the help to spend much time telling more people about it. Because it's good for the soul. And because it triggers practice evolution in the next wave.

This book has been a collaboration, factoring in the experiences and practices of generous sharers. That's valuable because they're valid and others are looking for a map that's been successfully traversed. In sharing, contributors tell me it's had the happy side effect of refreshing and galvanising the stuff they know works in their *own* days.

I don't think there are many who wouldn't want those six words said to them (coy and superficially embarrassed though their first response may be). It's hard to inspire them, consistently, for mixed company. I'll see if collectively we can give you some reminders and rollerskates that get your reputation preceding you... in the right way.

Thanks for reading and passing it along.

Troy Forrest

25th February 2013

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The will to be generous

You don't need market research to convince you that people like a bargain. Who doesn't want more than they paid for? I'd argue it's even more enjoyable to be on the receiving end when you know the other party has wilfully chosen to bequeath some generosity specifically for you, rather than feeling like the advantage you're enjoying snuck through generically and unintentionally. We like and are inspired by those that choose to give us a little more than we have any logical right to expect.

The sales rep who spends the extra half hour putting together some customised user guides just for you and then stays after the in-service training to catch the latecomer up because they can see you'd benefit from it.

The manager that pauses everything to deliver a specific, warm piece of positive feedback followed by a considered coaching moment to help their charge consider applying the just-proven-effective practice to a future fruit-filled scenario.

The supplier that freely shares a joke, a personal story, who takes the time to remember and ask about your family and your crook back and your new bicycle, then pulls you back to the business plan you co-developed to help you work together to achieve your goals.

The distant industry colleague who calls you out of the blue, tells you they met someone you might benefit from meeting and vice versa, sending out the mutual introduction email, no strings attached, just glad to help.

The team member that asks if they can help with something painfully laborious that's not in their job description and that will keep them longer than they need to be here... but wants to help you anyway, because that's what a team does, right?

The technical expert who, after their advice has been delivered and responsibility for results has naturally transferred to your users shoulders, calls again and asks how it's going, offering reassurance and refurbishing you with wise tips for young players.

The individual that offers you a leg-up without expectation of reward.

That connects you in ways you didn't imagine or would have thought to ask for.

Who takes you into their world, their home, their trusted circle purely because they thought you'd enjoy it.

And who gifts you their gifts beyond any contract or immediate requirement for mutual reciprocity.

"Generosity" goes beyond free keyrings, trade price and corporate box tickets. It can be gifting your time, thoughtfulness, affection, humour, wisdom, effort, structure, noticing, bravery, bridging the professional:personal divide, connectivity, change massaging, empathy, customising, reassurance, advantage, positivity, inclusion or just an ear. It's sharing an article. Thanking someone a little more. Going in a bit earlier to tidy up. Staying back a bit later for a debrief. Smiling. Generosity is being the partner they dreamed of but couldn't really expect (so squashed such fanciful thinking about in a cool transactional world long ago).

Army inspirers (the term we'll use hereafter for those awarded the words "*I've heard great things about you*") have a diverse family of generosity brands they choose to gift, who they give it to or why. The 'amiables' might dole out generosity to all and sundry because it creates goodwill and harmony. The more commercially hard-nosed ply their best prospects with top shelf bonuses because they understand scale and concentration and that these VIP's deserve it. The party butterflies delight in the look that illuminates people's eyes when they open their parcel of extras. The scientists love teaching and growing knowledge pots.

Sometimes it comes naturally and easily, "*just what I do*", a hard-wired or long-ago-learned habit. Sometimes it takes deep breaths and remembering. Sometimes it's letting 'do the right thing' win over 'do the easy thing'. And whether it stems from a belief in karma, the power of reputation, because it makes their journey more enjoyable or because they said they'd help (and in their mind, these added bits are just an extension of what they promised), those that make the choice to be generous each day enjoy more of the mighty market-permeated words.

The daily choice of generosity is a load-bearing piece in the jenga tower of army-inspiring disciplines. It's Frost's road less travelled, which as Kid President says, leads to awesome.



Border Crossing

A decade ago, a product manager in the technology business I was selling for listened to my frustrated pleas for help. My client had spent good money on some hyped-up kit and they weren't happy with it. From my and the client's viewpoint, the amount of coin involved was significant, however in the scheme of what our global business did, it was rats and mice stuff to the bosses.

My colleague stepped over a line to help. He went to the US parent company, right to the top, to the inventor of the product, a worshipped elder who travelled for no-one, certainly not little fish in the antipodes. My colleague broke his shackles. He broke some long-standing 'way we do it around here' mindsets with bold front, persistence, compelling arguments and by making the plea personal. He got a big cheese on a plane to the sleepy burgh I call home and sharing Oxygen with my gobsmacked clients to speak and listen and assist.

My colleague didn't have to go this far. The lines and processes and culture were sufficiently visible and justified to say no and give me a second tier alternative. He disregarded the barriers.

The side effect I've observed line crossers trigger is inspired onlookers also choosing to be bold. In the aura of my colleague's bravery, a cluster of us followed the leader and started work on breaking paradigms and setting new high water marks when it came to service and delighting. It wasn't all brews and candy. The trigger act caused my colleague some backlash challenges - the other kids in the family that didn't get the same ice cream cone I'd enjoyed screamed for one as well. Precedent! Unfair! But even that foreseeable barrier to bravery didn't halt his march.

You might've had a boss that went into bat for you when it wasn't yet payrise time.

A techo that took your problem home at night in a 9 to 5 business just so you were right to go tomorrow.

Someone who tuned out to the *"you can't do that!"* noise when they knew they could and they knew how valuable it would be.

A forgiveness beggar that acted before permission was granted because they saw how ineffective protocol compliance would be.

These individuals don't always make great friends higher up in the short term. And you've got to be careful not to confuse them with reckless cowboys that break rules for the fun of it. Border crossers are distinguished as values-based leaders who make decisions to do what they believe is the right thing for the goals they see you trying to achieve. They have a longer term view.

Choosing to be The A Team that colours outside the lines because it helps is hard. And it inspires the words.

Fit.

A commonality of sustained inspiring performers is they've achieved a tight fit between their character and their chosen professional space.

Take the creative problem-lover whose day job is all about finding, building or applying plentiful clever solutions.

Or the i-dotting, t-crossing team player whose position needs them to take on the resident trainspotter role to enable their posse to connect the dots.

Or the flesh-pressing, snappy-dressing, status-quo-messing perspective shifter that's handed the keys each morning to drive a shiny new audience to an engaged, applauding place. "Ladies and gentlemen, if I can have your attention for just one minute..."

Picking a role to suit your loves, strengths and in a stream where there's sufficient money and happiness to be shared among stakeholders, can be derided as a luxury in tight markets or when the bills mount. It is however prerequisite if you're serious about delighting and leveraging the growing grateful army for any period of time. "Fit" doesn't mean every moment of your day feels like it was tailor-made for you, nor does the love need to bubble 24/7 for every task on the checklist. It *does* mean that the lion's share of your KPI's and the possible paths leading to the goals your job needs you to achieve are congruent with the things you do well and the moments you love. It might also be that you tackle the role with a completely different swagger to your predecessors and still get the same or even better results. To a large degree, "I did it my way" can and has to apply.

The trap many dream job seekers with stars in their eyes fall into is confusing 'process fit' with 'mission fit' or 'outcome fit'. I'm very pleased your dream is to help the 3-hat restaurant kitchen keep its stripes, blaze new food trails and gets its own TV show, but if you're not willing to peel potatoes or wash dishes or cop a spray from the prima donna at the pass, sorry, it's going to be a poor fit. Likewise, fit is cultural. Culture is people, and the People #1 is the boss. Jack Welch's observation that you have two choices when you don't see eye to eye with a boss - live with it or leave - backs the Gallup organisations' research that people never really change. Seek fit with the fellows who aren't leaving the playing field, be they clients, crew or bosses.

The good oil is to identify a role that offers lycra-tight fit with an organisations' purpose, processes *and* people if you want a better-than-most batting average when it comes to inspiring the army.

The other part about fit, once you've found it, is preserving it. That takes effort. When you joined, maybe it was sufficient to drive around, shake hands, show glossies, phone through orders and entertain over prawn cocktails. And that's what you loved - the ability to do your best work and achieve outcomes for clients that really pushed *your* buttons. And now they need you to plug in Salesforce® data each night and you've got to complete your own tender documents and the stable of saleables has gotten a whole lot more complex, and how about that growing competitor swarm....

The question that grateful army inspirers seem to keep answering in the affirmative is "*Despite constant change and evolving expectations, does what I can achieve here, by being ever-greater at what I do and continually topping up the talents I'm pretty handy with, still fit with my goals, my personality and my day-to-day loves?*" Answer yes to *that*, and you seem to be able to find the juice to implement steps that keep your fit 'fit'.

Established rock stars that choose to keep learning and refining will always be relevant and have an audience. Hold your lighters in the air...

Panoramic customer vision.

Walk into the lobby of your customer's premises. On the counter, their business cards. Anyone you know that might benefit from speaking with them? Grab a couple, jot a note in your diary to forward the details to Fred tonight.

Their framed mission statement sitting to one side - good words, looking stale and dusty. Could they replace it with a \$50 digital photo frame that's dynamic, include pictures of happy customer outcomes interlaced with corporate words and promises and happy client feedback? Make a note to plant the idea seed with them.

Notice the images of their production facility on the wall being used as marketing visuals to signify history, size, competence. Think about the conference you attended last week that had a breakout speaker giving updates on lean processes and technology waves rolling through manufacturing spaces - maybe send the link to this customer's production manager? You've still got the handouts - pop a copy in an envelope. Note to self. And what was that global sourcing company's name again that might save them some coin on cogs and frets from cheaper suppliers? Forward the contact details - scribble. How about that online news piece or video you got tipped into last night? How might that....

And we haven't even got to what *your* products, services and value-adds can do in greater quantum for them yet...

Transactional suppliers with both eyes on their own widgets and the cash exchange process they're negotiating with the customer sitting before them seldom inspire the love and gratitude that a broad terrain scanner with a customer's greater good in mind will enjoy. Looking more broadly and continuously for moments and gaps to help a customer in ever more efficient, meaningful ways takes concentration and reminder prods. Thinking panoramically. It means listening deeply in conversations, making notes and diarising the time to think about implications, even if you're not good at connecting the dots on the fly and need to do it in the car for 5 minutes after a conversation or back in the discussion pit with your crew. It's using great mental questions like *"What's the most pressing problem this client perceives they're facing right now?"* and *"Who or what could help them achieve their goals, other than me.... and am I giving them everything I can of me?"* It's the concierge mentality.

Anticipating. Thinking. Connecting. Delighting.

Army inspirers take this customer-serving oracle behaviour internally too. Thinking about the peer who looks like they need a tyre pump. Taking a photo of a building on the weekend because you know your colleague likes that style of architecture. Watching the boss go through painful conference call after painful conference call and considering how you might assist. Paying attention to the direct report who, despite brave front and grinding away, you can see hasn't got their mind in the game and so you take them for a cuppa & shoulder. Army inspirers pay attention to tone, subtleties, side-bar conversations, the feeling in the air, the impact of what's happening two degrees of separation further away than anyone else considers. It's thanking, praising, offering, congratulating, surprising, inventing, recognising... being a servant to the goals of others, a pain reliever where you can for individuals and crews you've got the ability to touch (but few do).

Trying, even the really simple stuff, never forgetting that 'remarkable service' is defined by the recipient. Considering the question, *"what else would they really value?"*

The rhythm method.

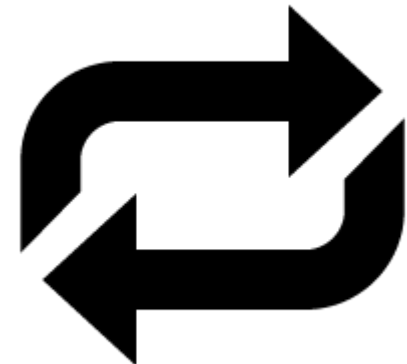
When I interviewed *The Sales Rainmakers* several years ago and asked them how it was they managed to summit and stay atop their diverse professional alps, a recurring theme among the most successful was the use of routine, rhythm, process. The real estate dynamo that got their 35 prospecting calls a day done before 11am, rain, hail or shine. The medical device MD that pre-call plans each day's meetings on paper first thing. The FMCG team leader who makes not one, but two appointments in her diary after every conversation - one denoting the next planned meeting, another to send an extra follow-up note. The rep that parks a few doors down the road from their house every night to fill in the CRM for 10 minutes before clocking off to be with the family.

Aside from the sense of calm, organisation and structure these self-directed routine appliers said they enjoyed, a side-effect of these solo disciplines presented itself. Customers, internal and external, picked up on the cadence practices. They regularly asked them for more, spent more, told more about the experience. They got it that, simple as the practices were, this was special, this was folk who took it seriously and knew how to get stuff done. Their suppliers' rhythmic acts weren't service initiatives per se, but the confidence a customer enjoys when dealing with a disciplined process applier is magnetic and addictive. It serves everyone's purpose.

Professional discipline and daily habit metronomes can be diarised daily appointments, with oneself or as an 8:15am huddle with the troops. They're co-developed business plans with key clients that lock in the series of regular relationship review meetings. They can take the form of a regular coaching or mentoring or support group relationship. They might be words atop the call planning forms to pull your focus back to the important, or the customer promise on the counter that can't help but catch your eye 10 times a day. CRM, used well, is a process metronome designed to repetitively ensure that the right homework, the right fact finding and logical next-steps get covered before, during and after the meeting. 24-hour email follow-up commitments. Non-negotiable process checklists. A time-homed moment every day to create, think, deliver, go +1.

Because repetition doesn't look great in a bikini, it's easily overlooked as it power-walks up and down the daily choices beach.

Doing the simple hard stuff again. And again. And again. The grateful army sees and wants it.



I know what I want and I'm not afraid to ask.

Trying to get their salespeople to ask 'closing questions' well does many a sales managers head in. The bulk of sales-confirming styles are either over or underbaked, sometimes completely absent, relying on the client to fumble their own way to the handshake. When the question is forced, too early or some desperate Hail Mary, it feels awkward; polyester. The reason is that the pinnacle sales conversation moment takes us salespeople from the comfort of rapport-building and situation-understanding. It whips the veil off to reveal what's truly going on here. The whole dance has been a preamble to swapping marbles. And you as the salesperson are being paid to ask the question (hard as you might think that is).

The simple math is this.

If you set a sales goal for every prospective sales conversation.

Then ask for the business in the right way at the right time.

Then you sell more.

You collect more no's along the way.

You still sell more.

More clients start enjoying the benefits of being your customer.

And more clients start telling others about you. The army.

People who ask for more ultimately get more people saying great things about them.

A lack of confidence in 'closing' (and it's not a word I love because of its connotations about finality, but you know what I mean) stems from a lack of clarity and conviction in what you want or can achieve from the conversation. Heck, if this is just one of many future conversations that might one day lead to a sale, then what's the real impetus to ask a question today that you know will trigger a customer's fight, flight or right-let's-do-it response? It might be uncomfortable! There's always tomorrow, let's just enjoy the now with them...

The tragedy of not asking enough is threefold.

You don't trigger the cascade that gets the client *becoming* a client - enjoying the benefits of all you've just worked through with them, alleviating pains and maximising pleasures and recruiting them into the grateful army. Selfish really.

You pay an opportunity cost that impacts you, your business and another prospective client who, on that day at that moment, was ready to say "yes, let's go!", who never saw you because you were shooting the breeze with a distraction. Double selfish.

And by not committing yourself to asking for the business in every conversation, you passively choose avoid the scanner that assesses whether this is the very best use of your time in order to help you achieve your goals. And that underpins the key to it all.

Having clear goals. The hallmark of army inspirers.

The focus and conviction and work rate and willingness to go above and beyond for others to achieve clear, meaningful goals each day is inspiring. They don't have to be vision board, fridge-mounted, prize winning 10-year dreams. They do, however, need to be good enough to act as tyre-chains when it snows. They need to go right down to a conversation level. A goal for all meetings. Clear goals give rise to the right questions. Not just closing questions - *any* questions of yourself or others that will help you understand and progress along the best path to your goals. "What if...", "Could we...", "Who can...", "The next step is... - shall we?"

Army inspirers muster the courage each day to connect the questions they ask to the goals they set repeatedly.

Read that again.

Know what you want to achieve - your goals. Consider the questions that need asking and answering to help you achieve them. Put them together in the same conversation, whether that's in your head or aloud. Watch the sales - and reputation - bloom.



Tougher, lither, nimbler.

I've observed a perverse trait in those that inspire grateful armies to spread the good word.

They seem to like a little pain.

Not in a long-suffering or martyring way; not that will genuinely limit them from doing great work. Contrarily, they view furnaces as a chance to forge their characters. To test their mettle and hold out longer than competitors can bear. They take a view that difficulties are a wonderful opportunity to strip away sloppiness and bad habits. To get more concentrated, back to first principles, to revitalise their cores that get covered in ivy with time.

The team leader that posts slumping quarterly results and you can just tell they're smiling on the inside about the disciplines + innovation conversation they're readying to facilitate to turn a ship around that no-one else thinks they can.

The rep whose customer just told them there's a problem and they're unhappy, whose eyes light up when quick as a whip they connect the mental dots between 'problem to solve' and 'opportunity to delight'.

The team that, with 3 months left in the year, had a revised-upwards number dropped on them by head office because they're over-performing and the rest of the business is stinking it up. The bring-it-on mindset that those used to lactic acid burns and eye-stinging sweats carry. The one who says to themselves "*I don't have to outrun the ravenous lion - I just have to outrun you ... (but I think I'll try beating you both anyway)*". Who starts getting tingles just imagining pushing further into the pain cloud than they know you'll cope with.

The flipside of 'tough' is that no-one wants to really brush up against it. It's callused. Prickly-cold steel. We like to shake velvet gloves covering the iron fists. To know that warriors aren't Sherman tanks bogged in valuable real estate or who've dug down so deep in fixed opinion and habit foxholes that they're unshiftable in your lifetime. Clients also want flexible thinkers, supple situation adaptors, fast movers that don't knock people over in the corridors. Ballerinas graceful to watch; Scalextric cars taking sharp turns low and fast; front rowers pounding and rebounding and readying to go again. Bruce Lee. Bethany Hamilton. Apple. Sherlock Holmes. Barack Obama. Banksy. Ita Butrose. Mr Squiggle. Penny Wong. Charlie Teo. Coopers. Nassim Taleb. Michael Jordan. You'll have your own tougher, lither, nimbler role models. A boss. A teacher. A parent. A spouse. A competitor. A client.

Individuals who possess grit and gravitas. Who can bend and move to keep progressing toward their goals as change winds erode their planned-for landscapes. Who go. Who are a pleasure to watch. We want more of them.

We'll tell more about them.

Gotome.

Last play of the day. Money and premiership glory on the line. Pressure like no man's business. Who wants the ball? When everyone else is sweating fear, who freshens the air with strength and genuine confidence?

The one that know they're atop the tree.

The one that, with hours and scars carved on their belt, can actually convert.

The distinction between Kimmy-look-at-me attention seekers with unfounded delusions of adequacy and genuine pinch hitters with the moves to successfully negotiate the big moment? It's skill. The ability to do well what needs doing. The complex package of knowledge, application and touch. Whether they took Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hours of dedicated practice seriously to get elite at their craft or because they picked a performance stage that suits their unique gifts, the army inspirers bring a tested package to underpin their confidence in rocking centre stage.

The rep happy to put their hand up and role-play in front of the whole team ('cause they know they're smoking hot at it, and practicing just makes you better.)

The engineer that wants to sit before the unhappy client because they know they're the best person to understand, resolve and re-rail the problematic carriage.

The manager that willingly pilots a new program while their leadership peers pull up the drawbridges citing "numbers to make!" or "too distracting!" or "under-resourced!"

The coal-face grinder that volunteers ahead of the meek to take the big boss out for a road trip because they're not worried about critique of their performance, of falling short because they're a phoney.

Skilled individuals did the homework. *Do* the homework. They read, play, tinker, apply, test, deliver, learn from burnt fingers, flex, stay ahead. They make their skill come out every day. Individuals that inspire positive word-of-mouth tsunamis consider skill from 5 surfaces;

1. Understanding what's required from them today and tomorrow.
2. Mapping & following a continuous development timeline to get it high and keep it sharp.
3. Grinding. Studying. Asking. Learning. Trying. Putting in the hours.
4. Putting it into play at every opportunity, for profit or for fun, for the benefit of others.
5. Practicing like the sun won't come up tomorrow if you don't.

Skill isn't fakeable longer term. There's no poker face for it and others figure out if you have it pretty quickly. Michael Jordan might have wanted the ball, but his team mates wanted him to have it too. Skill gets seen and desired soon enough. When it's crunch time, we want the best in the driver's seat. We want those that want to be there, that know they can deliver. Skill sells.

Maps for periods, places & people.

"Don't worry, I've got it all in my head."

Nuh, uh.

Consider those that consistently inspire. Consider how much they achieve, what they must have to do, how many they do it for. Do you really think the best rely on memory and a natural talent for names?

The quiver of maps the efficiently effective routinely employ include;

- **Goal documents** (Objectives, Missions, Visions, Targets - raison d'etres)
- **Plans** (strategies, tactics, resource allocation, learning, efforts to leverage the network, daily disciplines) - actions they'll implement to achieve the goals. Co-developed wherever possible
- **VIP records** (constantly updated notes on who's who in the zoo, what they're aiming for, what they're spending & where, partnership potential and next-steps for progressing mutual benefit). CRM, key account profiles, staff records, prospect & customer lists,... notes on the folk who need attention & focus to achieve the goals (yours & theirs)
- **Time allocation** (diaries, calendars, prioritised & time-homed to-do lists, 12-month activity planners, seasonal coverages and repeat visit plans based on merit and potential and promises made (not on 'ease' or 'habit' or 'because that's what we've always done')
- **Checklists** (simple bullet-point reminders and progress markers to keep miles tracked and next steps in perspective all the time)

Army inspirers employ maps and map contributors (help in the form of a boss or peer or supporter or clients as map co-authors) to negotiate their finite commodity of 24 hours a day, their limited supply of effort & want (plentiful, but limited) and as highway cat eyes to prevent drowsy drifting at the wheel. Maps that remind them they're always at the wheel.

The disciplines of pre-conversation contemplation, records review, ideation and note jotting before *every* meeting (internal and out) support their confidence. Their regular re-orientation drives their continuous progress in the right direction and it creates a sense of "*man, why can't everyone I have in my life be this organised?*" in their quarry.

Their ritual of post-meeting follow-up that's thoughtful and fast and forward-action-defining leaves their partners in no doubt things will happen. Non-flaky.

Most impressively, their application of Ingvar Kamprad's famous "I-divide-my-days-into-10-minute-units-then-never-waste-a-single-one" mindset via scheduling and advance time-homing the most important tasks (judged against their goals) as far ahead as they can means they make better choices. They're better able to assess potential opportunity costs. They're not inflexible. They just have a good null hypothesis, while everyone else judges the urgent thing that just hit their inbox against a vacuum.

The inspirers (co-)create and fully own documents to guide their choices in the direction of what they really want. They swallow the simple truth, this pen out-mightying the sword idea. They write and read. And they don't waste valuable real-estate trying in vain to keep it all in their head.

Using my religion.

One of the most successful & liked pharma reps I ever worked with was unconventional. Before the wheel clamps went on the wining, dining, free-pen-gifting practices the industry was famous for, my gregarious peer hosted an ever-expanding roster of GP's at a suburban restaurant each Friday between 11 and 3. His unique talent - and sales love - was discussing the merits of his Proton Pump Inhibitor over Pad Thai and Spring Rolls. He'd park his significant self in the corner, host a procession of potential prescribers and leverage his MC talents in a space he felt comfortable in. It paid handsomely in sales and reputation. Not many could have or would want to have done it like that.

On the flipside, a strategy employed by many an introverted success story is 'divide and conquering' - leveraging their passion for and belief in the power of rapt one-on-one conversations, filling their diary with more intimate, planned chats than their extroverted colleagues could be bothered with. They'll actively avoid the 2-birds-1-stone efficiency opportunities that working group forums might afford in favour of grinding to make solo connections. The introvert hates the crowd so puts their listening skills to maximum effect by investing attention to a singular opposite that wants it.

Successful leaders that love being teachers will invest more time creating forums for knowledge sharing and seek out opportunities to train and demonstrate expertise at the expense of admin or planning tasks that the paperwork-strong manager might thrive with.

Sellers that believe in the impact of the written word will build local marketing flyers and email bulletins and client testimonial newsletters and advertise-for-our-customers vehicles to band the loyal followers to them. They'll blur the lines between selling and marketing, and the smartest and most disciplined will strike a task balance that few could, that works for them, that fuels their enjoyment, that pays longer term.

Putting your professional beliefs and the parts of the role you're passionate about into as much of your day as possible is the domain of the army inspirer. It seems to matter less that it's not always "right", not always the most efficient or short-term effective approach. With the acknowledgment the 'perfect' way doesn't exist, the best will put their perspectives forward in a way that they love and that shows they love it.

It's why unions and political parties and service clubs like the Odd fellows survive and succeed. Not for everyone - but conviction and passion is inspiring and magnetic to their target many.

A key to this '*my way, my loves*' approach working seems to be rigour and discipline. If you're going to deviate from the position description map of how to perform the role (or how the predecessor did it), you've got to go boots-and-all in and build it into the plan. If your belief in and passion for running trade expo's is going to pay, you've got to run an ever-better series of them over time. If you think and love system in your weekly meetings, it can't be a 'let's try it this week and then relax it next week'. Discipline - sticking to it - will support a convention-deviating approach to a role. It changes minds when crowds see its not flash-in-the-pan; not a fly-it-up-the-flagpole-and-see-who-salutes one-off.

Persisting with passions and your proven convictions in how you can successfully ply your trade gets noticed and spoken about. Stay on message. It's not perfect.

It *is* polarisingly magnetic.

A separate stomach for desserts.

Hands up, who likes desserts? Smile-triggering mmm-mmm lusciousness on a plate that you only contemplate after digesting your broccoli and beef? Isn't it funny how, full as a goog from mains, you find capacity to consume what your taut tum said *"Stop! Surely I can't!"* to, and put away a portion of pav or serve of sticky date?

As any 8 year-old will tell you, there's a separate stomach for desserts. You make room. It's self-indulgent. Decadence, just for you.

Try eating your dinner the other way round, saving the beans 'til after baklava.

Will you eat them?

Army inspirers go for hearty mains first, and then find room for pud.

The team leader that vigilantly collects, analyses & interprets the numbers, follows through on the list of you-promised 24-hour follow-ups and status reports, then pre-plans and pulls the crew together at the disciplined time for the disciplined daily huddle, all the while reminding themselves of the power of positivity even when they've got a head cold. Who grinds and ticks the important boxes and asks the crew questions that engage (but could easily be ignored or assumed) and visibly wears the flak jacket for their VIP's and stays on message when the bushfire in the corner really, really wants to be looked at. Who keeps in mind the *"I'm a role model so act like one"* mantra of the best and who shoulders responsibility while giving up the spotlight to enable their saplings to bask and grow and learn from the warmth. That eats the dry meat, the 3 veg and the sometimes lumpy gravy until their appetite for work is sated and their growth nutrition requirements for each day have been filled...

... and then who carves a moment in the day to do something just for them. Who indulges a mite and rewards themselves with a wafer of decadence to stoke the embers of their love of the daily game. The indulgent peer phone call, the early mark, the hobby horse newsletter they love fashioning, the turn-the-phone-off bit that keeps them feeling in control and makes the process sustainable. Getting on a soapbox for 2 minutes and preaching when it probably doesn't work (but they love it anyway). A tiny withdrawal from the super-behaviours account to make it seem like fun to them. A cherry on top act.

The rep that rises early to study, re-reads manuals and checklists, checks in with the prioritised client schedule and books an appointment string according to importance rather than ease. Who checks progress to target daily, considers the opportunity costs and decides on a day's goal congruent with the bigger picture oasis the whole crew's hiking towards. That pre-call plans from three vantage points - the customers, their own and their employers. Who does the requisite prospecting when the prospecting needs doing - not to tick a box, but to unearth genuine prospects who might give rise to more if satisfied. That methodically chews the hard, sales-sustaining proteins and swallows the customer-satisfying process minerals until their tolerance belt is fish-backside tight...

... and who then plays. Mucks, jokes, indulges, flexes, finds a little prize activity that'll release the tension and finish the day with a smile. That bookends a time-homed, broccoli-eating disciplined service day in a way that reminds them, *"this is kinda fun... why don't we do it all over again tomorrow?"*

Three rules about gifting yourself desserts;

1. They have to come *after* mains to be fully appreciated. Eat it beforehand, and not only do you kill your palate, your inevitable overindulgence means you never find enough room for the genuine sustenance. You go hungry *and* get fat.
2. You have to find and eat a dessert that you love *regularly* if you're serious about summoning the gumption to front up again tomorrow to face the brutal challenge of the mains. Only rewards you love work, and denying yourself them too long just makes you grumpy and unproductive.

And for desserts to be *truly* appreciated...

3. ... they're best shared with another. No-one says no to just a tiny taste of your sweets.

Army inspirers come armed with two spoons and a willingness to share the cream.



Crew & mates.

When was the last time you hand-wrote a thank-you card and posted it to the customer service person, based interstate, for being the front-line triage nurse and smiling kitty litter tray that absorbs so many frustrations and complaints? When did you last drop a 6-pack into the warehouse bloke that ran around chasing missing con notes and short-supplied stock that your customers rely on you for? When did you take an industry peer for a coffee and cake, on you, in recognition of a positive word they dropped about you or your business at a networking function recently?

They're not hard things to do, right? They don't cost a lot compared to what you can make if their continued efforts mean more happy customers, more grateful army recruits?

The truth is, these simple acts, logical and known as they are, get bumped every day by most. They're deemed less important than dealing with a cash-holder's bushfire demand for the day. Internal VIP massages sacrificed for external VIP legwork.

The often overlooked behaviour of many a lone-wolf success story, the one in a crowd that stands out, who continually has great things said about them, is they're remarkably diligent and efficient in keeping their extended support crew rowing for them. In building and nurturing mates that market on their behalf.

They employ little situation-specific behaviours like asking peers and contacts about their children's weekend sport, sending through links and articles about their equivalent's pet project or hobby, making 3 coffees instead of one when they're in for the weekly meeting. They take a moment to mentally ask themselves how the other person might be feeling today before dropping a request on their plate.

They diligently undertake reactive practices like replying to every email from every colleague every time, within 24 hours, always beginning with the word "Hi" and ending with "Thanks". They send out short post-meeting notes of gratitude and with clear next steps for all enunciated. They set themselves a challenge to find one value-adding touch for each individual they interact with, always considering how they can stay a nose in front in the credit stakes.

The gold standard is the proactive disciplines of staying in high-touch regularly - building a call cycle not just for customers, but peers, network contacts, competitors, industry luminaries. Diarising time to walk in the other parties shoes, go the mile to learn their learns through asking good questions and attuning great ears. Choosing to leaning into their VIP's challenge winds and see if they can't find or make something to alleviate some of their pains. Recognising the crew when they weren't expecting it.

With a crew who are continually surprised and delighted in their corner, the army inspirer isn't backwards in coming forwards in looking for moments to bring their bud's brilliance to the fore for their own benefit. A techo colleague that isn't paid to (but could really help) their best customer? Ask if they'll help. Make it happen. A network chum that possesses contacts the boss might appreciate? Pick up the phone and bring them in. A cluster of clever mates that might bring unique wisdom perspectives to a perplexing issue that a client would love solved? Pull together the posse. The credit earned in nurturing professional friendships doesn't have an infinite shelf-life, and the disciplined crew corraller braves up often and candidly to seek the quid pro quo.

The best recognise their crew are there to perform a role. Thinking about how not to get in the way of it - to help them be even more effective and efficient at it - is a key part of the army inspirers daily self-questioning. The other key is looking for professional-mate-circle extension opportunities and, in time, catalysing payoff moments that realise the dividend from being in credit.

Staying in front with the crew (but not so far the credit expires) forges valuable alliances and, over time, bolsters reputation.

Someone's going home today.

How many things are vying for your attention today?

The job-specific to-do list alone has 42 items on it, most of them reactive follow-on things that got bumped, extended or rerouted from yesterday. The proactive, planned innovation time's in there somewhere too. Maybe it's not written down.

What about folk? Maybe the VIP stakeholders have their rightful time billings, and there'll be a fair number of shirt-sleeve tuggers in there too, wanting your 20c worth to help them closer to their goals. How about past partners and prospects - contacts, colleagues, chums, clients, once-were-crew... they haven't all made the named 22, but maybe they're sitting there as subs?

Then the life stuff. Family stuff. Bombardment by new opportunities and footpath spruikers and goat track mental trails you indulge in as you imagine other futures and me-time and YouTube and coffee and North Korea and hello-what's-that-internal-memo-say?...

Army inspirers - those that put the concentrated time in to gain memory traction with good oil sharers - fire attention subverters *daily*.

The to-do list. Assess it. The least important item on there as it relates to goal progression?

Fired. Gone.

(Don't be deluded. It's there. Until you fire it.)

The client or network colleague on the roster least likely to result in mutually beneficial ROI's?

Voted off the island. Was fun. Now, done. Hand in your torch.

The kinda-fun-but-doesn't-earn-a-place-in-my-goal-focused-24-hours task or time sponge?

Sorry son, you can come back again and try for the team next year.

Individuals that hold their nerve and focused attention on the most important and finite amount of work they can get done each day *get more done and get more appreciation*.

The courage and discipline to say no to a task that others keep because it's dressed up as 'service' or 'might pay off eventually' or 'it's helping someone' or 'but that's just what we *do!*' isn't to be confused with work dodging or Teflon support practices. Army inspirers want to help. Want to work hard. Want to get lots done. They're just so much more conscious that they don't have a magic diary that fits more and more into each 24 hour period. So they make choices. They don't wait for them to be made via explosions or inevitable ball-drops. They choose priorities and run a time budget that gets them to their goals via the concentrated attention on a fortunate few (rather than the expectation-disappointing efforts the majority try to pour on the majority).

Whether you plan for it or not, someone's going home today. It's not getting done. They're not getting seen. The VIP's deserve to see the '*closed to distractions*' sign go up behind them. The best choose to hang the sign rather than waiting for the doorway to jam it shut full of junk.

An investment too rich for most.

Before Financial Planners and Stockbrokers give an investor 20c worth, they try to understand your *risk profile* - how willing you are to chance your arm for gain while running the gauntlet of potential losses. The profile factors in your *nature* - your inherent gung-ho or scaredy-cat-ness. It's likely part *nurture*, based on experiences you and your influencers have enjoyed or been bitten by. And it's heavily influenced by your *timeline* - how soon you want or need to cash out of the game. Even the most daring dice roller thinks twice about risking the farm if they're about to retire.

There's a type of risk profile associated with grateful army inspirers, and it's got to do more with their willingness to pay opportunity costs rather than take on blue gum or alpaca shares.

I've observed 7 risk profile categories in which the word-of-mouth enjoyers score significantly higher than anyone else.

- 1. Willingness to forgo veg-out time** - firing TV, getting up earlier, canning smoko and applying more waking hours to goal-focused effect than lazy-mo's. They're awake more.
- 2. Comfort with ignoring scuttlebutt** - Choosing not to indulge in idle gossip, actively blinkering themselves to the negative can't-be-done's of the also-ran's, deciding to run the experiments for themselves from scratch and not being satisfied with what someone else believed.
- 3. Desire to break & harness routine** - continually confronting their own habit patterns and frankly assessing them for relevance, redundancy and sharpening opportunities; process-ifying the disciplines that don't come naturally (but pay) and stopping stuff that used to sustain but now just sucks.
- 4. Burning desire to give credit** - praising others widely, thanking often, continually looking for ways to share their spotlight, recognising partner contributions and exposing themselves to potential ridicule or even criticism in the cause of championing another.
- 5. Embracing of plans** - electing to forgo whimsy and craving-satisfying tasks and replacing them with grinding, bite-size disciplined success steps that others have traversed, breathing and implementing plans rather than saying "*that's done, now what?*", helping others plan.
- 6. Spending on better thems** - deciding on what a better-them looks like, picking the training courses, study tours or reading fodder, paying the tutor, prioritising the time and fire-proofing it from distractions and cancers.
- 7. Locking away the time** - staying later and arriving earlier repeatedly (because it's quiet & more efficient), cancelling free time, filling the diary and scheduling *everything* (including buffers) in the finite hours needed to achieve and inspire and reach goal summits.

It's a difficult-to-grapple menu.

It's why not many can master it or are willing to pay the degustation prices.

It's what the most admired do. And it has no short cut. Just pick a course, start chewing and keep eating.

Fast fast.

Whenever I ask sales and leadership teams to share their most memorable example of unbelievably good service, "fast" comes into about 3/4 of the anecdotes.

"They fixed the problem really quickly, then and there. That day. That minute. The very moment they knew about it."

"They took responsibility immediately - no "I'll have to check with the boss" or consult the policy manual before moving to help me. They just up and did it."

"I sent them a note, or left a message, or we had a meeting, and before I even got back to my desk, there was the reply in the inbox. The material arrived the very next day. Who does that?"

"They said they could come out soon... they booked a time earlier than I'd dared hope... and they turned up 5 minutes early. Never before!"

"We bought some new kit, and within days, these little bonus things turned up I'd never asked or paid for....a call the next day, asking about our experience and satisfaction. You could tell they'd really thought about us, wanted to make us feel really special as quickly as possible."

Fast comes in the form of reactions to problems.

It's speed of shouldering burden and showing you're accountable, irrespective of whose problem or fault or to whose benefit it really is.

Fast is proactive communication even in no-news winter periods (and there's always news).

Fast is reading situations and moving on them. It's planned perceptiveness and armed-to-be-active.

Fast is detecting change and getting on the bus when you know the successful future means pitching a tent further down the track than the soon-to-be-ghetto comfort zone you're squatting in right now.

Fast is owning it.

The other *fast* is not eating.

Two days ago I spoke with a client trying to get purchases of their products moving inside a cumbersome multi-layered client organisation. An opportunity presented itself to use a mole - a friend of the client working in a position of influence inside the behemoth. They were gifted a chance to try some arm-twisting and short-cutting the change curve that the prospective buyers like their suppliers to work their way across. Sorely tempting – the cashflow would be marvellous.

My client said no to the opportunity.

They wouldn't compromise the friendship. They wouldn't try white-anting the continuum the purchasers were intent on traversing (frustrating as it is). The short term gain wouldn't do the longer term trust - and much bigger future purchases - any good. They passed on the amuse bouches and are holding out for mains, even though they're realllly hungry.

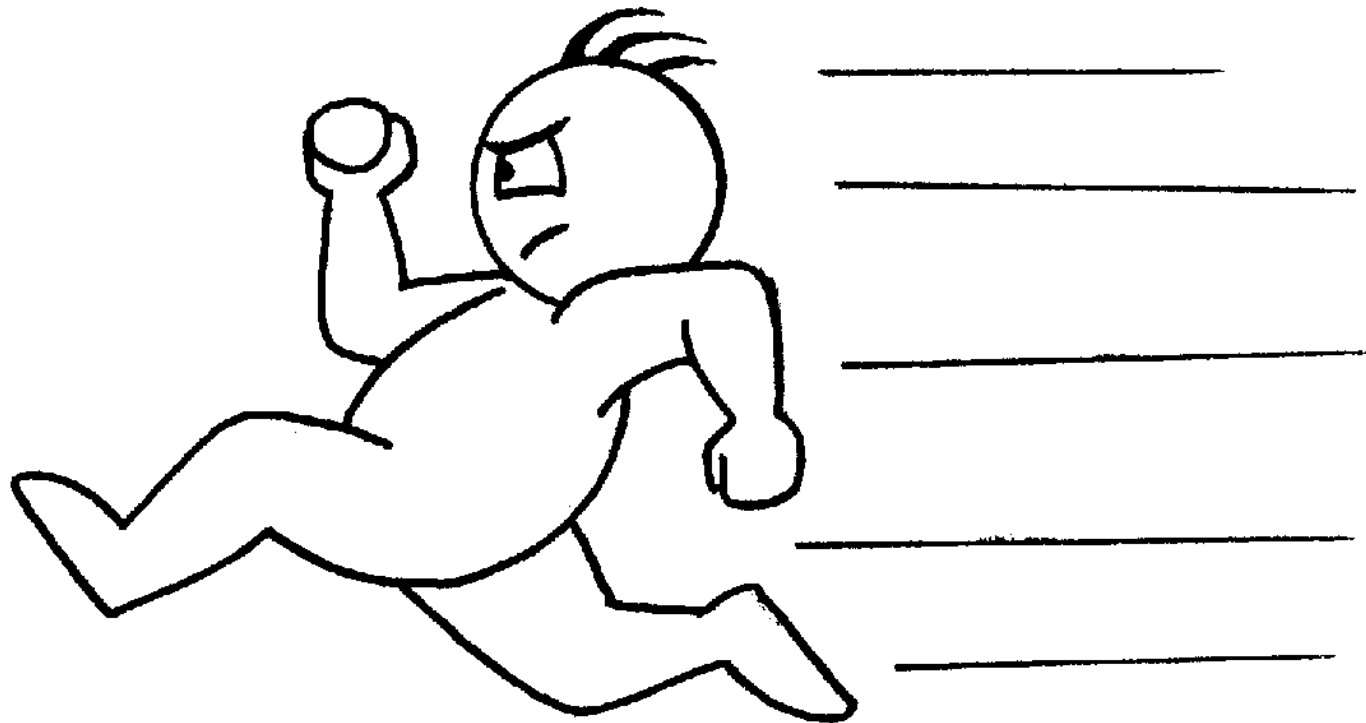
Fasting means delaying gratification.

Culling non-long-term-goal actions off the daily temptations list.

Hitting reset by stopping some tasks you're no longer sure are effective for a period before assessing the impact of not doing them awhile (or measuring them against the things you filled the resultant time holes with).

Fasting means going a little hungry and letting your sharpened instincts sort out what's really important.

Move quick. Cull extraneous. Disciplines of the army inspirers. Fast. Fast.



Playtime.

Not everyone works in the Googolplex with pinball machines, bean bags, Twister on the lawn and milkshake makers by the copier. "Fun" and "at work" don't always spend time together in sentences as a pigeon pair, unless separated by the words "...would be not spending so much time...".

Then go watch the grateful army inspirers carefully.

Note the wide-eyed joy with which they map out their goal and goal-attaining-activity pairings to create self-confidence in how they tackle their days.

The energy they put into innovation conversations to help a VIP through a sandpit.

The glee with which they tackle challenging chats, knowing it's an opportunity dressed in drag and that they've got the chops to get the bleating mule calmed, fed and pulling again.

The smile that flashes as they race past cul-de-sac'ers, sweating and diary-full as they move to the next beneficiary of high level, high capacity them-service.

They're having fun. Playing.

The best - the ones that make you want them more, that you tell others about - *like* the hard work they choose to indulge in. To them, their work is fun.

They don't do the job for the junkets or the Friday 5-o'clock session or the free t-shirt or because they need the super top-up.

They do it because the process is enjoyable.

MVP's release fun into their worlds in a few ways.

They give themselves permission to get it wrong. To not let 'fear of less than perfect' get in the way of 'trying something new'. It won't ever be perfect anyway, so they blaze and create and test. And wrong means an education, a character test and 'now closer to right'.

They remind themselves of the power of their platform and the pull of their prize. They reflect every day on just how fortunate they are, what circumstance and years and hard work have afforded them to use today, and whatever it is that means something to them that they'll gear their best and most positive efforts to try and achieve.

They aim for smiles and delivering satisfaction and contentment and wellbeing to recipients. Hearing a prospect say "*I've heard great things about you*" lives in their goals. They understand positive feedback loops and so work to upskill / debug / kickstart a VIP's dream progressing vehicle at every turn, striving for a look of realisation, relief and excitement in each individual they leave (temporarily).

And they do the fun math in their head, continually. Self conversations that go;

"What last put a big fat contented smile on my dial? Was it a result or a process?"

"If it was a result, what did I do to achieve it? What if I did it again, more, even better, faster? Could I double the fun? Triple it? Exponentiate it? Hoo hoo!"

"If it was a process, how could I repeat it? Sharpen it? Treat more people to the benefits it brought me? Could that perpetuate and magnify the fun? Yeah, baby..."

"And if I don't think about what brought me a buzz - if I just react to the reactive list instead - what's the probability I'll blindly stumble across a fun-starter (given how morose the also-ran reactives all seem to look)? I don't like those odds, so....."

Army inspirers choose to spread their zest with the fun time tables.

One's fun is fun.

Two's fun is petrol money.

Three's fun is catalytic.

Four's fun is a performance bonus.

Five's fun is an army whispering.

And then it gets really fun.

FUN.

+1.

The foundation mathematical concept you're taught is numbers. The first and easiest, one.

The most basic mathematical function you learn is addition. Add something to something, get something a bit bigger.

So you'd think "*going +1*" would be a concept most educated professionals would grasp and apply for their benefit & success as frequently as possible, right?

Here's your biggest army inspiring opportunity.

Most don't.

Laziness, forgetfulness, a birthright mindset, a job description that seemingly negates the need to, prioritising other things for other people, I already ticked my boxes and hit my target, an inability to correlate the extra labour with a proportionate benefit... who knows why. I saw a visiting merchandiser in a supermarket yesterday, asked by a customer which aisle the cat food was in, answer "*I don't know - I don't work here.*" We choose not to go +1 so many times every day. Yet time after time it's little extras that precipitate big reputations and the rewards they bring.

I spent the last 2 weeks in parts of Vietnam where wages are low and small sales are life-impacting. I got +1'ed many times every day.

"Here, let me carry your bag to the taxi sir. No trouble at all."

"There's your t-shirts. Are you looking for shoes while you're here too? Let me make a call to my friend's shop, they can help you. He'll come pick you up if you like!"

"I'm sorry Sir, our restaurant is full. But I'll call our sister restaurant and they'll send a car for you, no charge, and you'll be there in 10 minutes."

"Please, have some cold herbal tea my wife made, no charge. Good for digestion - I hope you like it! Would you like another?"

"You're from Adelaide? My sister lives in Henley Beach! Here, for your girls, a small present, because I love people from Adelaide!"

In a basic hotel with a sign that said "*Please do not tip our staff unless you truly think they deserve it*", we were laying by the pool and every hour a staff member would bring out a complimentary tray of different local delicacies for guests to try. No charge. No tip asked for.

Ah yes, the cynics in the crowd - "*Yeah, but they just wanted more of your money!*"

So what? Don't you?

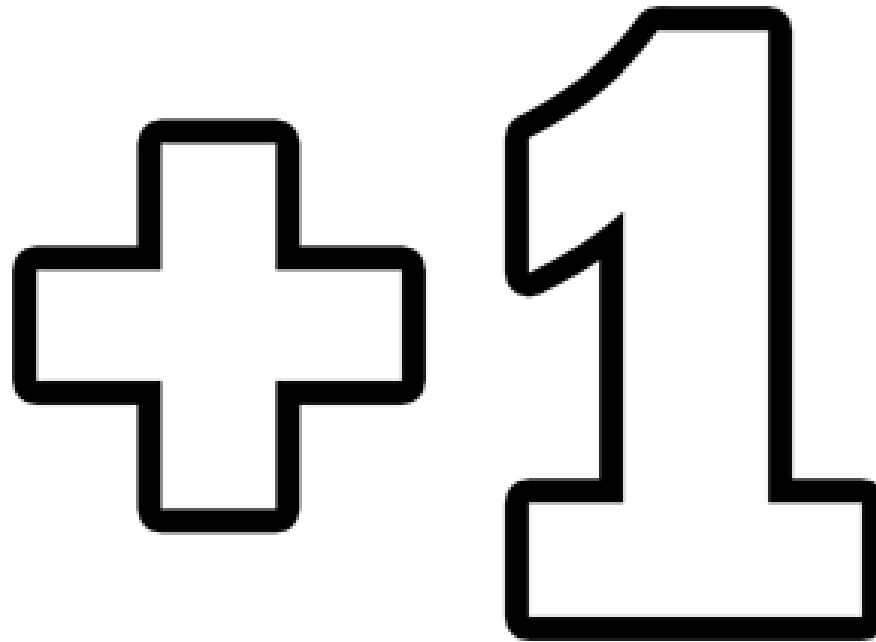
Willing - hungry enough - to go +1 to inspire people to feel justified in giving it?

+1 is particularly powerful for organisations when it's cultural - a collective mindset applied from the top to the bottom by a critical mass that love their business and what it can do for others so much that, irrespective of their job titles, will all go a little further with icing and cachous and a ramekin of strawberry coulis to complement the value cake. Leaders that hire and train for and support and role model what it is to go +1 have the most remarkable reputations of all.

It doesn't need to be the leader though.

Adding can be done by 3 year olds. One means just a smidgen more. Grateful army inspirers simply look at how many times, how many ways others in their wet market are going a little above and beyond...

... then + 1 it.



You're not changing spots.

Philosopher Alain De Botton wrote a great book called *Status Anxiety* - a look at why we usually clever beasts are always trying to 'keep up with the Joneses', and analysing the stress we feel undertaking this ultimately futile exercise. As a professional pig singing tutor, I see as much as anyone the frustration that stems from hardwired, deeply conditioned individuals trying to heal their (avascular) Achilles Heels and be more like Mike or Mary who seem to have all the answers. Who can get the VIP's saying "*I've heard great things about you!*" by applying skills and talents they're not (yet) a master of. You *want* to be great in those areas, but as of now.... you're not.

Gallup's #1 research finding is pretty big and compelling - we grown-ups *don't really change*.

Sorry. Time to review the life partner you swore you could permanently break in. I'm afraid you don't have the technology.

The rebelliousness you displayed towards authority as a 12 year old still bubbles barely beneath the surface of your pin-striped professionalism. The feeling that you're right, they're wrong and stuff 'em all isn't going away. Sure, the battle scars of life and maturity means you now appreciate that it's not always rational or right, and you've learnt a range of game faces, but you can't seem to shake the voice or tolerate it without blood pressure rises.

The save-it-to-the-last-minute study tendency that saw you skate through exams on adrenaline and the push of pressure? It's followed you into your career, and now it manifests as "just-in-time" deadline-meeting (you love that they made a business term for your procrastination). At times, you'd give the world to be the advanced planner than Amy and Andrew are (and the serenity they must enjoy when they're ahead of time), and you went to the training course, and you've started using the systems, and it begins OK.... but....

You were a wallflower, or maybe a little braggadocio at parties in your twenties. And in your forties... And your

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the research is wrong. Maybe you might spend your life trying to prove the opposite - that we can un- and then re-wire your predispositions to doing work and time management and conversational approaches and introversion or extroversion.

Self-improvement (training, coaching, educating yourself)... does the I-won't-go-changing standpoint mean we shouldn't bother trying? That your time and energy would be better invested in putting your nearly-set self into more situations where you'll thrive and help others with what you already have?

Well, in part, yes.

There are 3 reasons I think you should also try anyway.

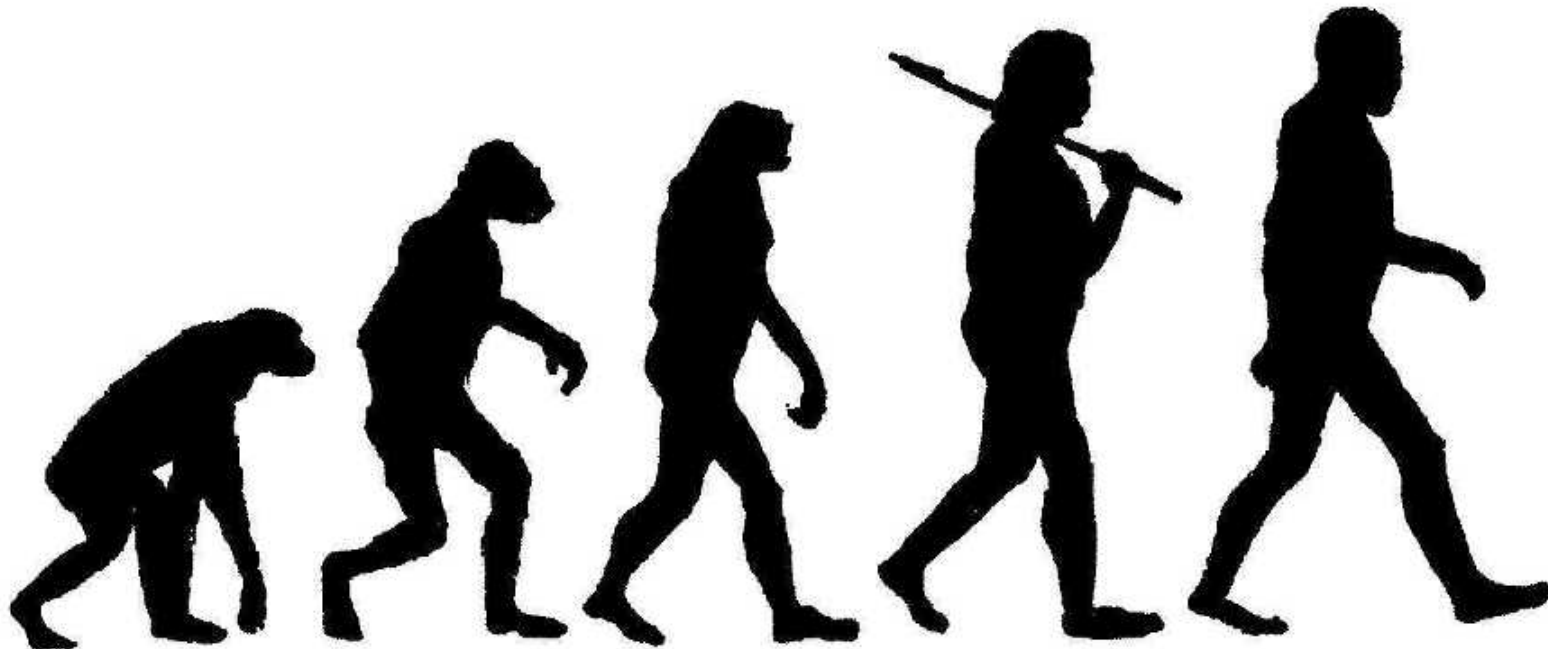
1. Just because it will never come easily or naturally doesn't mean you can't do a serviceable & valuable version of it. It just takes more planning, more discipline, more practice, a process to follow, a pre-event-checklist to consult, a rubber band to snap on your wrist to remind you not to break character when being in character is needed. So what if you don't have Buddy Franklin's natural football ability? Neither did Greg Williams. Couldn't run. Too slow to play AFL. And he won 2 Brownlows.

2. **Just because you'll never be easily great at it doesn't mean you shouldn't understand what's involved in it.** Demystifying the art of the successful that's eluded you your entire life is a powerful step towards a mindset of "*even though I can't do that incarnation of the trick, I get it, and now I'm going to build my own, better version of it*". To be sure, your chosen VIP's love *their* super-powers and neat tricks - even if you don't share their mastery, why not show them you're interested in and impressed by them?

3. **Because** (and I apologise profusely for bringing Delta Goodrem into the conversation here...) **we're born to try.** Maybe battling and nosing the grindstone and chewing the everlasting gobstopper is part of character definition. Maybe it's about scar development and experience and recalibrating your tolerances and reminding you that you've got other paths to consider and appreciating talent in all its flavours is vital to becoming the grounded, collaborative, self-aware and respectful cornerperson every VIP craves in their camp.

That's it, right there. **Self-aware.** That's a fundamental of army inspirers. They know their spots. They know how they help. They pour energy into them, not wishing and praying for stripes. They work to understand stripes - self-directed educators are inspiring just for that practice. They strap with stripe splints when stripes are really valuable. They have smaller, toned stripe muscles. And then they go spots-on-'roids to deliver their very best.

You won't change. It doesn't mean you shouldn't try evolving.



You look good.

As part of their commitment to *"build women's self-esteem"*, moisturiser company Dove recently conducted a project called *Real Beauty Sketches*. It got a bunch of women to sit behind a curtain and describe to FBI sketch artist Gil Zamora what their face looked like. He based his remarkable drawings purely on their answers to his questions. They then left the studio without him laying an eye on them. Then, in random order, he asked some strangers that had been asked to study the faces of the same women to describe the faces they'd seen, and he made a second sketch of each woman. Then he invited the models back in to view their two portraits side by side.

In virtually every case, the model's self-description was much less attractive than the impression created from a second party's perspective. Fatter noses, more protruding chins, scars that no-one else could really see (but bothered the wearer so much they felt the need to describe it in detail for the artist).

Most were overly harsh judges of their appearance to others. Focused on a beauty they didn't possess and overlooking the glorious bits they couldn't quite appreciate.

If we're not really changing (despite a commitment to pursue evolution), wouldn't it then make sense to get OK with what we've got?

There is a brigade of what I'd call "temporary army inspirers" that aren't yet comfortable in their own skin, but still manage to elicit testimony and positive WOM from their VIP's. They overwhelm with effort as they overcompensate for what they perceive as deficiencies in their game - desperately racing to be seen as more attractive than they believe they are. I say "temporary" because the exhaustion and disgruntlement working hard to be something you're not - to deny your own unique posture - *always* catches up. These individuals ultimately & inevitably bow out of the race, or fall behind as their pretence becomes unsustainable.

Pretending to be something you're not to inspire an army is unnecessary. You do look good being you. The bag of tricks you're proficient with *are* valuable. The bit you've got to reconcile - the domain of army inspirers - is to a. get OK with your unchanging skin, b. figure out who loves it (it's never ever for everyone), and c. put it in the right game for the right effect enough of the time. Being OK with your lot empowers you to then commit to doing the best with it you can.

Just as we're rubbish judges of our own attractiveness, I think we're also pretty blinkered in letting our past roles tell our heads what sort of cats we are. *"You studied accounting, so you surely can't be creative!" "You were brash in class, so you mustn't possess sensitivity, perceptiveness or great social intelligence!"* Visit Martin Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* website and do your best to take the Pygmalion blinkers off your self-perception by taking a free online strengths test.

With an acceptance of the talents & personality dress coat that *doesn't* make you look fat to the right VIP's, the challenge for the committed army inspirer is to keep the company of individuals, processes and environments that help them stay toned and remembering a "strengths first" mantra. Consider;

*a regular appointment with yourself to review & refresh how you're putting your best foot in to help others

* catalysing a culture of 'uniqueness appreciators' in your crew by choosing each day to point out your colleagues' strengths and how they really help (reciprocity will come)

* asking for positive and improvement opportunity feedback from happy VIP's, digging for specifics particularly on the positives (galvanise your positive view of yourself via others 20c worth)

* picking one potential beneficiary of the bit you're so good at each day, and brazenly putting it forward to help them counter their lack of it

The things that will make the right VIP crew say *"I've heard great things about you!"*? They're in your possession already. Be frank with yourself about what they are. Love the positives that are with you. Find and prioritise those that will love them too.

And work it.



The irony & the staplegun.

If you've come this far, I'll perch on the limb end and postulate that you want to do what it takes to inspire more folk to say "*I've heard great things about you!*"

Of course it's not achieved by the reading. Recipient delighters aren't spending their waking hours paddling in self-help manuals, and grateful armies don't barrack for theorists. Referrals aren't doled out for cosseted knowledge possession. Academics and wisdom repositories are only desirable if they've proven they can apply their cleverness to fixing problems. We share awe-filled stories of builders and creators - movers - not navel gazers and stagnant accumulators.

So how to take any of the patterns seen at the point end of the valuably-serving brigade and put them into *your* daily craft (bearing in mind you're not changing your spots, and that understanding theory is in-and-of-itself just potential energy helping no-one)?

History says a thick chunk of you will do nothing with these ideas and prods beyond shelving them at the back of your bonce with a sense of I-read-it satisfaction. So this next bit is for the minority who've already found themselves at the behavioural change tipping point - that most alive of places.

Grab a staple gun. And a vine. Staple your hand to the organic swing. Right through the flesh. Yes, it'll hurt. If you're in two minds about the pain of proactive practice change (squeamish about your own professional blood), take a long hard look across the chasm between where you're at right now and what you could be enjoying if more of the grateful army were spruiking your value. Imagine the song to others who might pay your desired currency for a little of your great things in their lives. Now appreciate that the chasm is deeper and wider than it looks. The vine of practice change is slippery, easy to lose grip of. And you might need to swing back and forth 3 dozen times to get the momentum needed to bridge the gap. That's why you need the staple gun.

Get your diary out right now and lock in a series of 10 minute appointments with yourself to progress an idea, sharpen a practice, start a discipline that you believe will start the chants. I mean, right now.

Stand up, walk over to a colleague, engage them in a 5 minute conversation about how serious you are about developing a better support offering that will get the happy shouting, and get them in the change posse with clearly agreed hold-you-accountable duties.

Take 12.5 minutes to write down the top 3 things you've considered reading these 21 chapters and how you'll start them before 5:15pm today. Then stick it on the note board.

Forward this to a friend with a commitment. Ask them to consider the same.

Staple your rolling-boil intentions to a defined act, a partner, a public declaration NOW. Do it before the cool breeze of reactivity blows your "*I get it*" attitude into the dark useless recesses of good ideas that you used to know.

Army inspirers - the ones we talk about and follow and love in our lives - don't mull on ideas until the sun sets and the dew forms. They **go**. If going is going to be hard (it is), staple your hand to something that'll pull you & hold you in the growth light.

There's no perfect way. There's no right act. There is just having a crack. Grab the vine, Tarzan. Don't forget your staplegun. The sting of the staple fades quickly.

The army's endorsements ring long and loud.

Tool 1 - Planned Differentiation.

The first step to actively eliciting more glowing testimony from the grateful army is reviewing who they are, what they love and what you're doing for them that's giving them the warm fuzzies.

Consider Planned Differentiation.

Step 1 - define and prioritise who's already in the you-camp. Select a satisfied client cohort or key account - a subset or individual you know you're making happy in some way. Who are they, what do you know about them, what space are they in, what are they striving to achieve, what worries them at night? Profile your priority VIP, be they clients, partners or staff.

Step 2 - consider what drives their wellbeing. Beyond 'happiness' or 'satisfaction with our products & service', what kind of relationship do they enjoy being in? What do they love speaking about or acting on or investing their finite time doing? What brings a smile to their dial? What, should they achieve it, will get them in the mother of all good moods?

Step 3 - be frank about what you're currently doing for them that's making them a relatively happy camper. Don't rattle off the stock-standard brochure benefits of doing business with you - for this VIP, in their world, with their goals and challenges and wellbeing drivers, what are you doing that's genuinely making them a supporter? You should be able to see a correlation between their wellbeing drivers and what you're doing for them here.

Step 4 - imagine and play around with some potential +1's. What, thinking about these folk and their goals & situations and wellbeing drivers, could you do more, better, that builds on or leverages your strength to even greater effect to bolster their thrill of knowing you're in their corner? What might have a proportionately higher 'VIP happiness' ROI than the effort investment you might need to make? What have you done, or seen done, for someone else that this VIP hasn't yet had the pleasure of? What could set the bar an inch higher than their reasonable expectations and get a little WOW into their WOM?

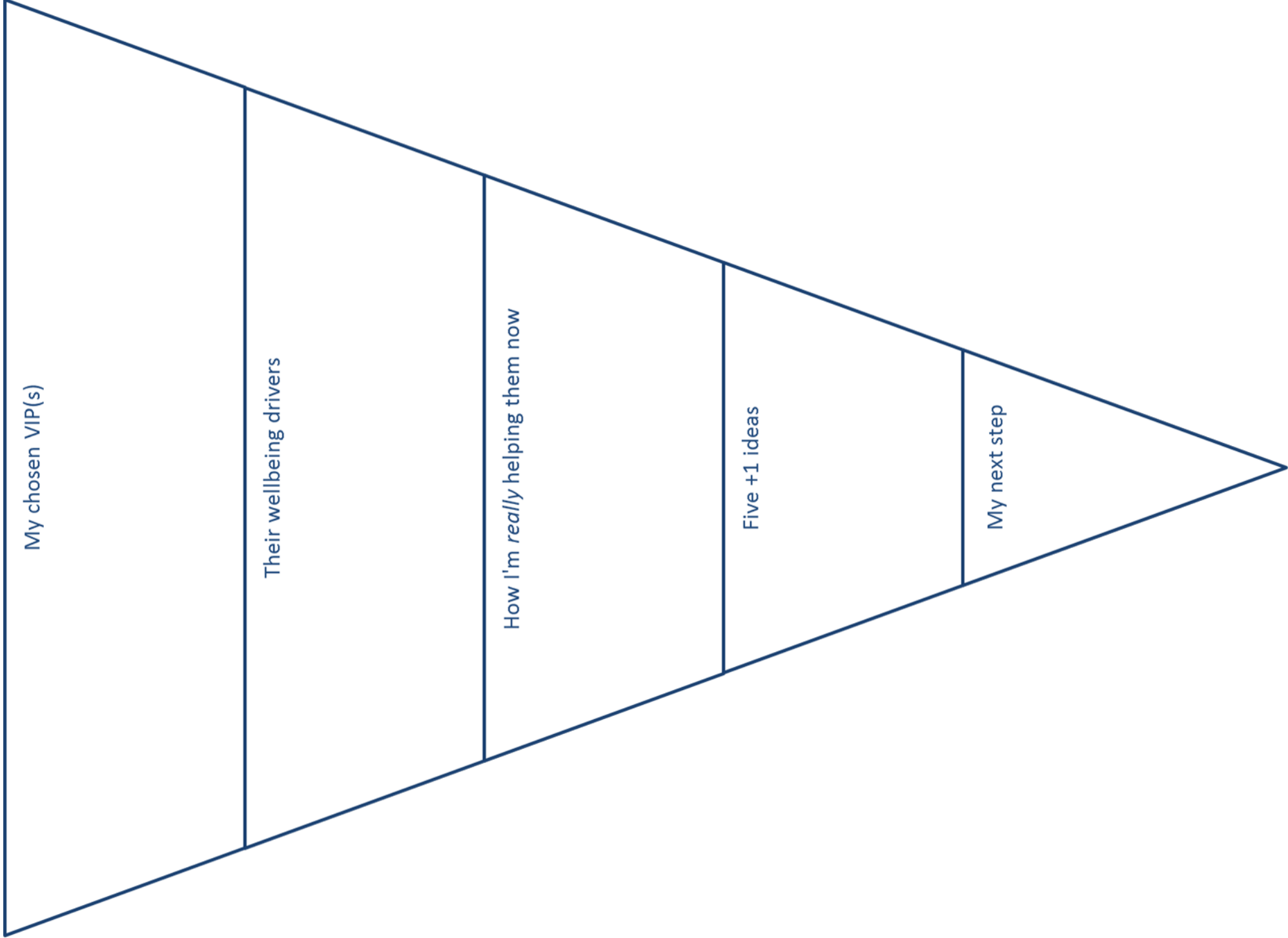
Step 5 - make it real. What specifically will you have to do to make one of these +1 concepts happen? Super specific - a physical act, by you, in a distinct time home, with a clearly defined outcome that will give rise to super-specific action #2. Get out your diary, translocate the action into a diarised time home... and off you go.

Use the date prompts at the bottom of tool to remind yourself this is not a 1-off activity. It's a step in a continuum.

Also use it to remind yourself it's yours by putting your name on the bottom.

And you can never write and reflect and concentrate on your #1 professional goal enough - that's why you're going through this. Write it along the bottom. Write it better.

Tempting as it is, I've deliberately not made a space for "Doppelganger Prospects" to appear on this tool. Doppelgangers are others you think might enjoy the same delight factors as your focus clients; targets you might try getting your grateful army to spruik you to. My rationale is that asking you to reflect on future business opportunities or the not-yet-wow'ed just splits your focus and dilutes the concentrated planning you're investing in the VIP. It takes a measure of your faith that diligent concentration on delighting those already at your servery *will* have a WOM effect. It's a magnetic strategy rather than a rolling recruitment drive. (And we'll get to the next cabs soon...)



My chosen VIP(s)

Their wellbeing drivers

How I'm *really* helping them now

Five +1 ideas

My next step

Tool 2 - Professional Disciplines Checklist.

The two best-dressed enemies of self-discipline are 'forgetting' and 'short-term gratification'. To strip a little sheen off these glam but cancerous WOM gaggers, you can use a simple tool that helps you pull your eyes back to the daily fundamentals you know will travelate you to your chosen podium.

The Professional Disciplines Checklist - diarise 20 minutes before 6pm today to develop a draft.

1. Don't rewrite your job description - this isn't a test on every duty you've been hired to complete. Instead, consider the differentiators - the simple but fundamental tasks you know will reap great long term rewards for others and then you. Small, prudent, service-based acts you get the merits of (but sometimes sneak off the radar). Practice things, skill development things, stay-in-contact things, build-deeper-understanding-of things. Bits and action bytes that'll remind others how valuable you are and that inspire you to want to go +1 on the next day.

2. Refine it - now you've developed the essay version, strip it back. Take out the things you do on autopilot or that don't have a massive impact on your outcomes. Cull the floralness and the reasoning ("Call 2 VIP's to tell them how much I value them so that they want to spend more...." becomes "2 VIP gratitude calls"). Keep it sharp and then touch the blade of each discipline - is it going to help you cut through? Do it every day, and will you stand out in the right way? Will the continual implementation get where you want to go faster... sustainably? Big nods needed now.

3. Time-home them - give every discipline a distinct, repetitive slot in your finitely-endowed diary. This does several things - it tests your willingness to commit and pay opportunity costs to ensure they get done each day. It lets you brand the disciplines ("Sorry, can't schedule the meeting at 9:15, that's my XXX time"). It lets you employ the dings and flashing lights of technology to put the recurring appointment up in lights each day. And, as you reflect on & analyse your discipline performance at the end of each week, it enables you to see where things fall off the radar and reschedule future days accordingly. If you don't time-home it, it's not a discipline - it's a perfect day wishlist.

4. Poke your own conscience with questions - come up with 2 or 3 questions you know will sting your conscience and inspire you to rediscipline. "What would (competitor that I'm highly envious of) do?" "How much do you want (the holiday / the cash / the medal / the grateful army words)?" "Is the short term gratification worth putting off these things you know will get you to (the boss's chair / the President's Club / the good graces of the client you're gunning to recruit)?" They're really personal questions - consider them, write them down and use them for good each day.

5. Rewrite your goals - again. Better. Sharper. Really? Better.

6. Diarise the review time each day. And do it.

The triple-threat of the discipline checklist...

... its actions progress you.

... the fact you have one and use it is seen by and inspires others.

... while everyone starts playing catchup on version 1 - the new market standard you defined - you're onto 2.0 (and the embryo of 3.0 is coming together in your head).

Name -

Professional Disciplines Checklist

Daily non-negotiable activities to maximise my value & sustain my progress

Every day, I will

- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .
- ... at .

3 key questions to ask myself each day ...

-
-
-

The daily discipline is to achieve **my goals**.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Review this list at

every working day.

The army awaits your inspiration. Give it to them on a discipline plate.

Tool 3 - Today.

There's only one absolute you need to inspire more people to share their love of your special service sauce. And that's *some time today*. Everything else is BYO. Hours though? A fixed serving you can either chew thoughtfully, leave to curdle on the side of your plate, or toss around with reckless abandon in the fun-but-costly bun fight of the reactive masses.

If you want to win today, then use this tool - Today.

Step 1 - Block off the 10 minutes. *Your* 10 minutes. The 10 minutes that successful people invest in themselves and passengers continue to squander.

Step 2 - Print a blank copy of "Today", write the date atop, then start being brutally honest with yourself about what you must and will do today. Broken into 15 minute increments, put the most important stuff (the disciplines) in first, followed by set appointments, followed by the hygiene tasks you know you'll take (food, travel time, badminton practice). Then consider all the things on your to-do list - what should get done today? When can you put it? What about the really proactive stuff no-one else is considering - what can go in where? Buffer periods for the reactive tsunami you just need to deal with each day? Get it in there.

Step 3 - Go to the bottom and, in 3 x 3 words, **write your goals**.

Step 4 - With a time-homed action list in place, write down who the **primary beneficiaries** of your action will be. A key customer? Your colleague? You? Your Aunt Hilda? Some guy in accounts payable? Then consider the **secondary beneficiary** of the action - who else stands to benefit if it's done, and done well? (Every action of the army-inspiring professional needs at least secondary, if not tertiary and quaternary beneficiaries of every action step on their list. That's how reputations spread).

Step 5 - Re-read the list and give each item a ranking according to its ability to help you reach your goals. Is it negative - actually taking you further away (then it gets a -)? Is it neutral (n)? If it's positive, how positive? Progressively, you're aiming for a balance sheet chock full of plus signs. And the -'s and n's? Are you sure they can't be bumped for something carrying some +'s?

Step 6 - Go about your day. Use the sheet as a recalibrator throughout. At days end, just before you throw the dog in the ute and douse the fire, give each action a "y" (yes, I did it!) or "n" (no, chose to sacrifice it for something else). Consider the impact of your chosen compliance or deviation, and think about how you can build on it tomorrow.

Don't say you don't have enough time. There's 68 lots of 15 minutes there. Want an army talking? Use a good chunk of them just a little better than you did yesterday. Then again tomorrow. It starts today.

Today -

My action	1° Beneficiary	2° Beneficiary	Goal impact? (-, n, +, ++, +++)	Done?
5:00am				
5:15				
5:30				
5:45				
6:00am				
6:15				
6:30				
6:45				
7:00am				
7:15				
7:30				
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8:15				
8:30				
8:45				
9:00pm				
9:15				
9:30				
9:45				

My goals:

Tool 4 - The remember wall.

Glowing testimonial inspirers remember some things more often than the also-rans. It doesn't take an impressive mental repository or a Sheldon IQ to do it. You can help your remembering, the same way an honour roll in your lacrosse club recalls past Presidents or a photo montage on the cafe wall showing celebrities cuddling the beaming owner reminds guests that Shannon Noll and that woman who used to be in *Cop Shop* dined here.

You can make your own [Remember Wall](#).

Step 1 - Print the bricks.

Step 2 - Consider what you might scrawl on the wall in each of the following areas

... **Quotes** - what's your favourite borrowed saying? What, each time you read it, reminds you to be bigger? (ThinkExist is a good website if you're stuck, as is Googling "Quote (topic)"). Write it on the wall.

... **Role models** - who's doing and achieving and living as you'd like to? Who inspires you to go +1, to brave up a little larger than your current shirt size? Give them a brick.

... **Values** - what's fundamental to every task you undertake? What are your self-imposed rules of engagement, the things you hold dear and vow not to breach? Tag them.

... **Words** - we're talking about the great words you'd love the grateful army to be sharing about you... what are they? What do you want to be famous for? Synonymous with? Invaluable to be? Write!

... **Rewards** - the cash'n'prize showcase that floats *your* boat, that you'll put in harder for, keep going longer to pocket? Bold letters - it's worth remembering.

... **Your best WOW! initiatives of the last few years** - what's a project or initiative *you* drove that paid off like an Apple IPO investment? Your resume champion acts - paraphrase them, brand a brick with them, remind yourself just what you can achieve.

... **Your target inspirees** - who are the VIP's you really want to spruik your good oil? Who needs your continued focus and attention and best efforts and front-of-mind table service?

... **Books/movies/moments** - what changed your professional life? Which theory or story or practice or case study did you read or watch or listen to that shifted your thinking? Remember it frequently.

... **Your name** - it's a mirror. Look at it, remember it's the only vehicle you've got 100% control over.

... **Your goals** - Because you can never, ever, ever lose sight of them if you're serious about changing things.

... **You decide**. What do you want to – need - to remember, day in, day out, easily forgotten, but is the masonry to support your career extension and reputation elevation?

Step 3 - Graffiti the wall.

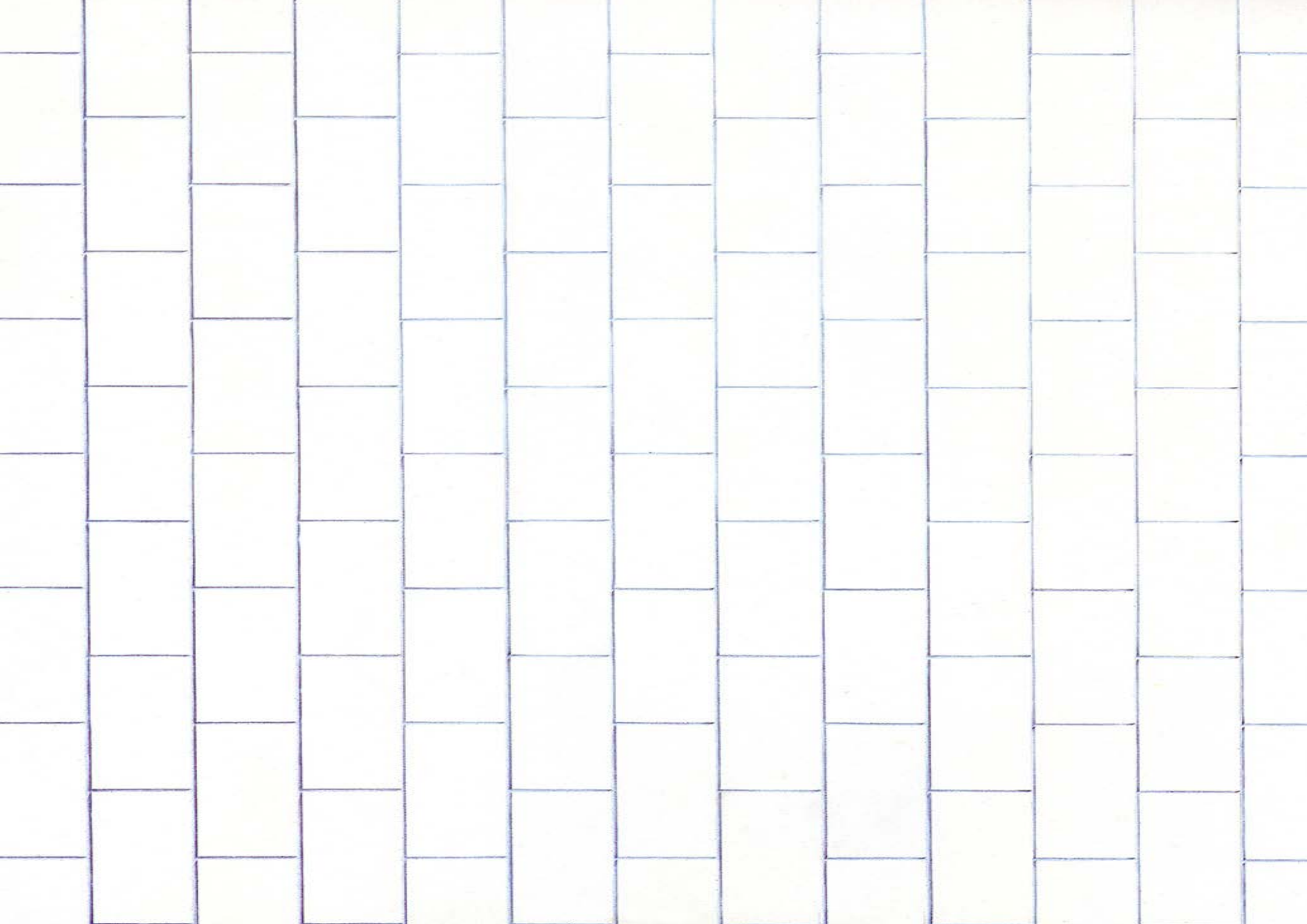
Step 4 - Stick it where it will shirtfront you every day. (To be doubly sure, add "60 seconds scanning Remember Wall" onto your daily disciplines checklist at (your chosen time here) and set your daily alarm to poke you)

If you're into vision boards, stick pictures on there instead.

You won't remember these must-remembers for you to inspire the army.

Let the wall advertise them to you every single day, Banksy.





Tool 5 - Rank your service.

So you're considering taking steps to build a louder background chorus of "*I've heard great things about you!*" Or you want to analyse whether what you're doing now is enough to get the words flowing. How to judge?

Use a simple scale - Rank your service.

Step 1 - Print the axes.

Step 2 - Think about what you're offering / considering in the context of all the other services your select VIP's are receiving. If you don't know enough about "the competition"... I hope you've cottoned on that it's OK - sorry, imperative - to go find out.

Step 3 - Start with the worst - what have you seen (or, gulp, occasionally done) that lives down in the dungeons of decaying service? Actively bad. What turns noses up, what's cancerous to careers and reputations, what puts businesses into receivership and offenders on the dole? Consider the frequency or impactees of this - the bigger the number, the worse the consequences.

Step 4 - Now to the benchmark. What's the best you're doing or seeing, and where does it sit? Don't be too generous here - is it really, actively getting enough people saying the IHGTAY golden ticket words? If it was reaaaally good a year ago, have rising tides now resettled it at "Good" or "OK" or even entry level? Is it because it's no longer impactful enough, valuable enough (y axis)? Or is it because it's not being done enough, or for enough people (x axis)? Chart it.

Step 5 - Pepper the grid with the remainder. Think about all the services your amore has offered up to them on a given day, where they all rank in terms of value and delighting. Get yourself a scatterplot of services, a cloud to compare yourself with.

Step 6 - Now to *your* idea. Take off your rose-coloureds. Pull out the ruler and compare measurements with the top right hand corner guys. If you're not better, more valuable, more frequent, more tailored, more considered, killing more birds with one stone.... why would they say the words?

Step 7 - If you need to...(and you do)... improve it. What'll shift you up and right? What can sharpen the service pencil and get it creating art in more people's lives?

Use this simple framework as a reality check and prod for all your service offerings, be you boss, sales rep, business owner or creative. You operate in a crowd, even if you think you're unique.

Want to hear the words and all they'll do for you?

Sharpen up and fly right.

Rank your service...



Customer Service Initiative

Army inspiring

(Daylight)

Excellent

Pretty good

OK

Threshold

No tangible value

Poor

Soon-to-be
unemployed

Volume / Frequency / Recipient #'s

Over to you.

This is the point our partnership gets really exciting. And you've got the com.

If you've taken anything from these chapters - an idea, a practice, an inspiring line or word or example or principle.... a skerrick that, injected, ridden, flogged to within an inch of its life, could deliver you just one more VIP saying those remarkable words - well, now's your ignition moment.

I'm staying with you, because this is a partnership. My words and intentions are here for you to read and re-enact for the rest of your professional days. Come back and visit anytime.

It's just that now...

... you need to stick your hands in the clay and turn the pottery wheel.

Me? I can only remember ever saying those 6 words maybe 3 times in my professional life. To a coachee, a sales colleague and a manager (and no, they don't walk into a bar...) I wrote this book because all three lived up to the hype. All delivered on high expectations with interest. All got me spruiking on their behalf with their actions.

Just *three times* though? How sad is that! I'm sure it's not that I hadn't *heard* lots of great things about maybe a thousand other people I've come into contact with.

I just hadn't heard enough.

I hadn't been so overwhelmed with freaking WOW! word-of-mouth. So blown away by the volume and vehemence of the spruiker who was obviously madly in love with what the server had done for them. I hadn't been sufficiently buoyed to overcome a natural shyness or cultural barriers to being gushy to put myself out there and say such an outrageous thing.

"I've heard GREAT things about you!"

It's a staggeringly big thing to say it aloud. It's a conditioning so easily disappointed.

Imagine it though.

Imagine what you've actually gone and done to earn that.

Think about what it's done to the heart of the person that said it. The head of the person that heard it. The commitment and oomph you'll steel yourself to invest on hearing someone say it to you.

Imagine how many others heard it too.

It is completely in your court to get more people saying those words. To actively displace yourself from the lovely flock of extras that surround you, in your market, your business, your peer group.

Decide if you want what it will bring *badly enough*.

Over to you.

Thanks for reading & mighty disciplines,

Troy.

July 11th 2013.

The **BIG THANKS**...

To the contributors that shared their stories and practices – Ben Coombe, Tim Richardson, Phil Farrer, Gavin Kerr, Rob Frost, Guy Perriman, Clare McAdam, Genevieve McEvoy, Toni Frost, Owen Williams & more – **thank you** (it's a beautiful thing to know you're not always shouting into a headwind). To the individuals that walk this army-inspiring talk each day, who formed the mental picture that inspired my words, *onya* and please keep going. To the organisations that have let me peek behind their success curtains – Nufarm, Jeffries, Hoshizaki Lancer, Coopers, Olympus, 3M ESPE, Bayer, Sanofi Aventis, Stryker, Square Holes, Safetyquip, Mercedes Benz, Weathersafe, Dale Wood Business Sales, Vodafone, Medvet, FSU, MEP instruments, Nova 919, Sarah Constructions, Johnson & Johnson Medical, Hamilton Laboratories, Laerdal, AH&D, Premiere Global, Hair Co-op, Henry Schein Halas, Advantage One, IMVS, Subnet, Solarshop, Nobel Biocare, ViaMedia, Annesley College, Advantage One, Surgical & Medical, Cardinal Health, DePuy, Home Ownership Company, Tyrolit, Coltene Whaledent, CropCare, Vili's, GC, Croplands, Janssen-Cilag, Morton Phillips, Maxima, Clements, Lyreco, Hughes PR, McNeils Surgical, Plansure Solutions, IBM, Serve-Ag, Mettler Toledo, Harris Real Estate, Australian Olympic Committee and a few other liquorice allsorts I've met along the way – much appreciated. Finally, the long-sufferers of my slumber-interrupting early-morning house roaming - Mel, Aislin & Lucy - thanks for the love and sanity.

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