

30 Ways to Bloom Your Online Relationships

Say No to the Glorification of More and
Deepen Your Existing Connections Instead

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This project is dedicated to all those who yearn for connection, community and a world where business is a force for positive change.

Revenues generated from the sale of this book support the much needed efforts to shift how we understand the challenges of mental illness in all its forms – but particularly that of depression.



*I am who I am because
of who we all are.*

– Ubuntu Proverb

Bloom (verb)

To release and amplify the
flavor of a spice.

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In Gratitude

Thank you to all of the participants who spent 30+ gorgeous days with us. There were nearly 1,000 who raised their hand with a willingness to learn and put that learning into action. Nearly half of those folks joined us in our private Facebook group, sharing the fullness of their experiences with us. Due to space considerations, we could only include a smattering of their responses here. They are:

Melanie Kissell, Sharon Hurley Hall, Gloria Miele, Holly Higbee-Jansen, JudyAnn Lorenz, Sandy McDonald, Martie Barth, Jane Manthorpe, Kirsten Foss, Crystal Pina, Beth Campbell Duke, Pauline Esson, Leslie Nipps, Caroline van Kimmenade, Virginia Small, Anna Holden, Carrie Pinsky, Tori Deaux, Lois J. de Vries, Blaze Lazarony, Gina Musa, Linda Luke, Mo Davies, Margie Goodchild, Tammy Vitale, Bonita Richter, Karen DeBolt, Maggie Dennison, Tara Leaver, Clara Soister, Kamala Murphey, Adel Brown, Jolina Karen, Linda Resca, Erin Obrien, Lee Drozak, Jeda Lewis, Nicla Williams, Jackie Levin, Susan Loughrin, Christine Sheehy, Bobbye Middendorf, Paula Tarrant, Cindy Clemens, Edith Swiatek, Annie Sisk, Jolina Karen, Katharine Jones Law...

A very special thank you to Melanie Kissell who became our unofficial group cheerleader. She spent a LOT of her own time and energy creating and sharing beautiful images that captured some of the wisdom nuggets of each leader's tip. It did NOT go unnoticed. Another huge bevy of gratitude goes to our illustrator, Leyton Parker, who generously discounted his work in support of our fundraising cause.

Others who helped enormously include: Chrissy Das (expert transcription of video and audio files); Colleen Conger and Melanie Kissell (proofreading) and Merwyn Dianora who designed our cover.

And of course, many thanks to our main contributors, whose wisdom is shared within these pages.

Introduction

This project was born out of frustration with the Glorification of More.

It's become mythic. There's a collective belief that to create a successful business, you need a never-ending supply of *more* fans, *more* subscribers, *more* partners.

But putting those numbers *ahead* of relationships is NOT the best way to reach your goals.

Because here's the truth: You're ALREADY connected to people. Probably more than enough of them to create the business you want.

It's just a matter of *deepening* those relationships. Blooming them. Like you'd bloom spices over a warm flame.

Thus, the name of this 30-Day Bloom-Your-Online Relationships Challenge. It was an experiment. Conceived as an antidote to those list-building programs bombarding you on all sides.

What follows is a LOT of fabulous wisdom and advice about creating and sustaining meaningful relationships online.

Some has been edited slightly from its original format in order to fit the confines of this book (video, audio has been transcribed; a few titles have been altered).

The order in which the tips appear has also been altered slightly to make more sense in terms of getting ready to act versus taking action.

Don't try to tackle these tips all at once. Do just what feels right and comfortable for you, right now. Breathe. Take things as quickly or as slowly as you need.

And remember, each practice needs time to incorporate into your life as a habit. It's work (and play!) that never ends.

And the more of us that commit to these, the better our world becomes.

bon appetit,
Lea

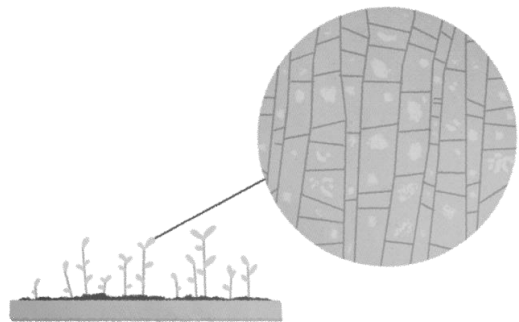
You're Already Connected

by Sandi Amorim

*We are all connected; To each other, biologically. To the earth, chemically.
To the rest of the universe atomically.*

– Neil deGrasse Tyson

*When I began my
business almost 15 years
ago, networking was
considered the best way
to build a business.*



I was a passionate new coach with a fire burning in my belly so I threw myself in wholeheartedly.

Breakfast meetings. Lunch hour meetings. Evening meetings.

I dragged my butt to all of them, and in return, they sucked the life out of me. I kept plugging away wanting to connect, but on a deeper level than what seemed possible.

I didn't want to exchange business cards within the first minute of meeting someone. I didn't want to speed through my elevator speech in the one minute allotted.

I wanted to find out who they were and what they were up to in life, what got them out of bed in the morning.

So I stopped playing the game the way I was taught. I stopped answering the question "What do you do?" and started asking my own questions.

Why are you here?

What interested you?

What do you love about your work/life/business?

*Attention is vitality. It connects you with others.
It makes you eager. Stay eager. — Susan Sontag*

I stopped going to all the events, and chose only those that resonated. This saved a lot of time and money that was better spent on more coffee dates with people I wanted to know better.

*Truth-telling moment: I still didn't love networking,
but I loved getting to know people and that's what I
focused on.*

The number of in-person events I went to decreased as my focus shifted to the online world, where I found the same way of relating worked just as well.

I reached out to people I admired, often by email or Facebook message. I did this not when I wanted something from them, but instead when I wanted to let them know I appreciated their work, or loved a blog post. I kept it light and human.

Most of the time they responded with a kind word in return, sometimes we'd take the next step and book a Skype chat, and once in a magical while, we became friends.

Now some people say that online relationships aren't real, and they even use the phrase "in real life" when referring to their offline connections. For me, it's all real life, and the only difference is I haven't met some of you in person...yet.

Face to face is wonderful and necessary, but you do yourself a disservice if you think it's the best or only way to develop relationships.

For example, in the past three years, I collaborated with two of my online friends to create programs together. We dreamed of meeting and hugging one day, and the fact that we were on opposite sides of the continent didn't stop us.

Relationships deepening into friendships turning into business.

Eventually everything connects – people, ideas, objects.
The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se. — Charles Eames

What I now know after all these years is that networking isn't about strategy, it's about connecting, one human being with another.

Why are we so afraid of this?

We do things because the experts with their blueprints tell us to, but I've found that most of this is mired in scarcity and fear-based marketing.

The truth we're afraid of is that there's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to relationship building and business growth.

But wait a minute...

If there's no blueprint or right way to do it, let's try something new.

Imagine that you live in a world where you're already connected.

You don't have to strategize, hustle, and be something you're not.

You only have to acknowledge the connection and reach out.

You have to remember and bring awareness back to the connection that is always there.

And it's there whether you're in person or far away.

It may sound radical so I'll say it again...

The connection is always there.

When you come from the place that we are always already connected, you open up a new view of life which opens up a new way of relating to others.

Instead of asking what you have to do, ask yourself what's in the way of you connecting to those around you right now?

This is an opportunity to connect more deeply with life.

Your Challenge: Feel the already existing connection between you and everyone who crosses your path for the duration of this challenge. Reach out, make contact and connect. Do this once a day as a practice, and your life and business will transform.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Loved Sandi's reminder that we're all connected. Like someone else in the group (I've read so many posts today that I can't remember who) I've got a bunch of online friends whom I've never met in person, yet we are connected nonetheless and have real friendships. It would be a great pleasure to meet up with my Blog Posse, Word Carnival*

bloggers, Writing Squared buddies and my original blogging tribe from 2005/6 one day, but lack of in-person contact doesn't detract from our relationships. I have a variety of interactions with them, from Skype calls and Hangouts, to mutually supportive emails, to shared jokes to tech discussions to playing Words with Friends. I value them all. On another note, I'm pretty sure I'll end up with some new friends as a result of #BYOR30, which is great!

Holly Higbee-Jansen: *I agree with Sandi regarding the business networking world. I built a lot of solid relationships that way, but after changing businesses, that sort of connection doesn't work as we'll for my current business. I believe our business can thrive online, I need to find those people to connect with who are like minded. We do photography workshops and I hang out in some of the photography social media groups. I comment on other peoples work, but have yet to really develop any relationships that way. I hope to get some insight into that with this group.*

JudyAnn Lorenz: *Time counts. Keep connecting and if you don't have a question, watch for things others are posting that you can comment on. Sometimes I will start something with a private message. There may be some questions or topics that people do not want to be public.*

Sandy McDonald: *Holly, I agree with JudyAnn. It's time and commitment. Sometimes a momentum will occur because you are in a group where there is a common cause or agenda, but otherwise it is just consistently being there to help, ask questions, be interested, care. Eventually people know and trust you and they will respond.*

IMHO, I think it is a two year process without a momentum of sorts. Is there an aligned cause you could think of that might get people interested in photography invested? I just watched a moving video on homeless people in the States holding up placards which displaced the theory that there were just derelicts and more people like you and I that had hit difficult times. Talking about how to create a photographic social enterprise project like that might inspire a different conversation. This group is amazing by the way and a testimony to the people Téa has put together, that there is such energy and conversation.

Host Yourself First

By Heather Plett

Knowing how to be solitary is central to the art of loving. When we can be alone, we can be with others without using them as a means of escape.

— Bell Hooks



In the group facilitation work I do (in The Art of Hosting and Harvesting Meaningful Conversations), there's a mantra that we repeat to ourselves before we enter the room to host a retreat, facilitate a planning session, mediate a conflict, teach a class, etc. It's simple – just three words...

Host yourself first.

What does it mean to “host yourself first”? It means, simply, that anything I am prepared to encounter once I walk into that room, I need to be prepared to encounter and host in myself first. In order to prepare myself for conflict, frustration, ego, fear, anger, weariness, envy, injustice, etc., I need to sit with myself, look into my own heart, bear witness to what I see there, and address it in whatever way I need to before I can do it for others. I can't hide any of that stuff in the shadows, because what is hidden there tends to come out in ways I don't want it to when I am under stress inside the room.

AND just as I am prepared to offer compassion, understanding, forgiveness, and resolution to anything that shows up in the room, I need to

offer it to myself first. Only when I am present for myself and compassionate with myself will I be prepared to host with strength and courage.

To serve the world well, I need to serve myself first.

How do I do that? I do it by being honest with myself about my emotions, by engaging in the creative/spiritual practices that sustain and enrich me, by working things through in my journal or in a walk in the woods, by engaging in self-care, by getting support from the right people, and by claiming my own power and authority before I step into the room.

A few years ago, I was frustrated over what was happening on social media and I started questioning my presence there. I was getting dragged down by pettiness, I was feeling pressured into “doing social media marketing the way the pros tell me to”, I was wasting too much time on mindless surfing, and it was all feeling rather icky. I was suddenly painfully aware that I’d let go of my authentic voice and my sense of purpose.

And then the words I’d repeated so often in my in-person work came back to me... “Host yourself first.” Oh yeah... right.

So I asked myself, “What if I apply this to my presence on social media?” What if, when I’m on Facebook or Twitter, I take myself more seriously and consider myself to be “hosting meaningful conversations” the way I’m doing in retreats and in the classroom? What if – before I post anything – I check in with myself to test the emotions around what I’m posting and to make sure it’s coming from a place of authenticity and positivity rather than ego and marketing? What if, before I walk into the “room” on Facebook, I make sure I’m clear about my own values and passions and boundaries? How will that change the way I interact?

I started experimenting with it, and it didn’t take long to realize that my online presence had shifted. I was returning to my authentic voice. I wasn’t just posting for the sake of being popular or funny or to make a sale. I didn’t

do anything just because the pros told me I should do it, but instead I did what flowed organically from who I was and how I wanted to be in the world.

To solidify my commitment to hosting myself first online, I wrote my social media manifesto, naming all of my intentions in how I wanted to show up online. I shared it and invited others to do the same.

People started responding. Beautiful conversations resulted. New and deeper relationships grew. More people bought what I was selling because it was coming from the kind of authentic heart that people were longing for. My business grew and my social media reach grew, but more importantly my relationships grew.

How do you host yourself first? Here are a few tips:

1. **Do your personal work before you go online.** Start with whatever creative/spiritual practice sustains and enriches you – art, meditation, journaling, dance, walking, etc.
2. **Sit with your emotions before you broadcast them.** Are you angry, sad, disappointed, confused? Sit with them for a while, without judgement, and honour what is showing up. Ask yourself: “Is this is an emotion that is worth sharing (and perhaps asking for support for) or worth holding close to my heart?”
3. **Ask yourself each day how you can be of service to the world.** How can you serve the people in your social media stream – with uplifting posts, with humour, with invitations to justice and compassion, with offers to support them, with meaningful conversation, with reminders of how beautiful/kind/courageous/resilient they are?
4. **Remind yourself that each person in your social media stream (including yourself) wants to be loved.** When you think of it that way, then

the things they do that annoy you are softened somewhat because you recognize in them a quest for attention and love.

5. Choose your own mantra that you repeat to yourself before you post or respond to anything. It can simply be a question: “Is this authentic to who I am?” or “Is this serving the world in a positive way?” Or a statement “I choose beauty.” or “I am a messenger of light.”

6. Think of yourself as a facilitator or host when you appear on social media. If this were a party or retreat you were hosting, what kind of atmosphere would you like to create? How would you like to make people feel about themselves? What kind of conversations do you want to facilitate?

7. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to anyone else you’re hosting. If you were hosting a party and someone was feeling down and discouraged, you’d sit next to them and listen to them and offer encouragement. If they were celebrating something, you’d celebrate with them. Offer the same kind of compassion, encouragement, and friendship to yourself. When you do that to yourself first, you’ll feel much stronger and more able to withstand the highs and lows of social media engagement.

Your Challenge: Write your own social media manifesto. Start by journaling about all of the things that are important to you about how you want to engage online. Then write a list of your commitments. Share them or keep them to yourself – whatever feels right. If you want to, share them in the BYOR Facebook group.

Martie Barth: *I appreciate your share and your social media manifesto, Heather. It was exactly what I needed to start my day. I have been working for many years to access the authentic me, to leave the “masks” at the door and to share from my place of truth and joy – always a work in progress. It has been no different online. Although I am still quite new to this technology, I want to figure out how to create my own manifesto, i.e., writing on an appropriate background to make a “poster”, that I can pin to my inspirational Pinterest board as visiting it is one of my ways to begin my day on a positive note. Help please?*

Heather Plett: *There are a couple of ways to create your own manifesto:*

- If you have Microsoft Paint on your computer, you could type what you want onto a page, change the font style and colour the way you like it, and then save it as a jpeg*
- You could also create it in Microsoft Word, save it as a pdf file, and then go to a site that converts pdf to jpeg (pdf2jpg.net is an example, but I can't speak for their service as I don't use them).*
- If you have a Mac, create it in Pages, design it the way you want, and save it as a pdf. Then open the pdf in Preview and export it as a jpeg.*

Kirsten Foss: *I love the depth of this post. I had heard from one of my mentors that in order to sell well, you must always sell it to yourself first. But this particular conversation has triggered the thought that before I sell to myself first, I must serve to myself first. Wow. I will have to sit with this some more and let it really assimilate with how I show up. Powerful.*

Jane Manthorpe: *Host yourself... this is powerful. Before I learned how to connect with myself inside, to connect with my unique feminine essence, in other words, the real woman in me, I did not know my boundaries, values and personal desires. I did not know how to look after myself and nurture myself with love and respect, and therefore express the unique real me online and offline in the real world. Now I know how to*

connect inside to find “ME” and listen, I now host myself and have learnt to let go of all the things that do not serve me, both environmentally, in relationships and negative thoughts about myself.

Of course I have the bad days, but I know how to adjust. I have not yet set and engaged properly on social media for my business, but just joined Facebook, Google+, and other social media communities that help my business and me personally to grow and expand.

I love the list of Social Media Manifesto actions, and at present have shared my story and hopeful shared beauty in this world via my love of the natural way of living and living with nature and all her wonderful resources. I share information or comment when I think I have something useful to say or help. I am sure I will learn and grow to be better in my interaction as I interact on Social Media for my business

Crystal Pina: *I like this day’s task. I like really thinking about who is receiving your information and how they may perceive it before you post it. For me, I don’t have a social media manifesto but I do try to be conscious of what I post to whom. A while ago, like years ago when I first joined Facebook, I put all my friends in categories, with some people in more than one category. If I had a personal post I could just exclude business people from it. And if I had a business post I could exclude my friends and family from it. I did this because I didn’t want to bore people with stuff I don’t think they’d be interested in. I don’t exclude people from ALL posts. Sometimes I think a group would be interested in something I posted. Like if I am apple picking I will leave the images public. But if I am speaking about WordPress, then the post will be exclusive to my business peeps, etc. Every few months or so I go through my timeline to see how I may have been perceived. I’m usually happy with it - although no one likes political rants, lol. One thing I would like to post more of is helpful hints. I am always figuring out how to do things.*

Oh, wanted to add that I do way more commenting than I do posting.

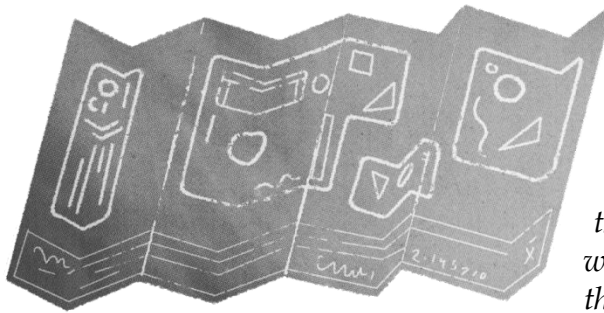
Create an Intentional Space

A conversation with Meg Worden

By Téa Silvestre Godfrey

There is no hospitality like understanding.

— Vanna Bonta, *Flight: A Quantum Fiction Novel*



Meg Worden has — at various times — been my health coach, my friend and confidant, my cheerleader, and my inspiration. You could say (and you'd be right) that she's pretty dang good at this whole relating-to-other-humans thing. Even online where it can be especially hard to create meaningful connections.

That's why I invited her to help with this project. Here's a bit of our conversation:

Téa: What is it that you would recommend that people do if they're trying to deepen and make more meaningful relationships?

Meg: I think about this all day long. How do you really teach people how to make deep connections and be able to get into, to be able to hold space for other people appropriately? How do I do it? Well, there's lots of practice involved. I work with personal stories, revealing information to hopefully give someone else permission to be able to feel like they can be vulnerable in return. Potentially, that vulnerable place for them can be mirrored.

So, I put a lot of intention into my content. When I write something, I really want it to do a couple of things. I really want it to make people realize that they're doing enough, and that they're already ok. That's really, really important to me. In the noise of the internet, I want to write something, if possible, that creates calm amidst that noise. That's not an easy thing to do because the very thing of writing something else -- another voice is more noise.

But a lot of intention to actually do that when I had my website designed. I gave my website designer, Illana Burke, a photograph of a room. I gave her interior design photographs. I said, "This is what I want it should feel like when you get to my website."

So, it's important to me, as much as possible to be able to have the people be able to exhale, have a little bit of peace and a little bit of solace and realize that everything is already ok. And I know that that's one of the most important things ever.

I still protect myself but I share enough personal fallibility and humor and teaching, to be able to accomplish that. But also I want people to feel like their own infallibility, as well as their own potential is being mirrored back by this space I create. And those are just two deep human needs. To be seen and heard and to be validated and witnessed as being ok already.

And so that's probably my biggest work and I think that is something that somebody could do today, is just to step back and consider what their intentions are when they put their work out into the world.

What do they really want? What's that room that they want their people to step into? Is it welcoming? Is it demanding? Is it, you know, what is it? And figure out what that intention looks like, what that space is that they're creating for people to step into. Are there leaks in the space, you know?

And do that work. Like using the building of a house, or a framework for a metaphor for that. You know, that's the way I think of it.

Are there any leaks here, where my people are gonna fall through? Or am I able to create a space that holds them and carries them all the way through the essay or the coaching call, or whatever it is that I'm working on.

And so, you know pragmatically, that could look like anyone selling anything for someone. That could look like writing that down. That could look like a Pinterest board full of spaces and places that feel comforting to me. Whatever that space looks like for somebody. A giant vision board or anything like that though, that would be a totally appropriate way to go about it.

Whatever someone's inclination for visualizing is, even if it's a single photograph. If you were having a friend over to your house, and you wanted them to feel comfortable, what would that look like? If you were to invite a client into your office, what would that look like? Those things are probably a little bit different, but when we're in the world asking people to come into our websites and come into our newsletters, and opt-in and potentially then develop closer relationships and give us their money for whatever, consider the space we have to give them.

What kind of a space are we creating for them? Everybody wants to be seen and heard and witnessed and welcomed, and everybody wants to be allowed to be human and be fallible. It's important to be able to create safe spaces for people.

Your challenge: Get clear and intentional on your virtual space and how you want your visitors to feel. Can you find an image to represent that space?

Melanie Kissell: *This graphic depicts the closest and best representation of the “intentional space” I want to create.*

Like many of you, I’m a natural-born nurturer. I care about what kind of day you’re having, what makes you tick, why you do what you do, the potholes of your life, what makes your heart smile, the missing links in the chain of your success, and most importantly, what I can do to make your life a better place.

I revel in the light bulb moments, the child-like joy, and the happy dance of serving others. There’s no better feeling or reward than when I can be instrumental in making just one positive change in someone’s life or business. I love to grant wishes.

Sandi Faviell Amorim: *My work is about creating inner space and when I picture it, it’s like a wide open view of the ocean and a great, expansive sky. Sometimes, it’s intense and daunting to face that space for the first time, but I’m right there with my people every step of the way. What’s sometimes difficult to get across is the freedom my clients feel when they access this inner space. Those are the moments I love more than anything else in my work. Like waves crashing on the shore, I am relentless in pursuit of freedom and space.*

Beth Campbell Duke: *LOVED today’s video - Meg hit a lot of my nails right on the head. I struggle with adding more to the online clutter when that’s a problem I’m trying to help people with... and it DOES all come down to helping people realize that they are OK, they have strengths and skills, and they’re on the right path. Like Meg (and probably a lot of us here), I’d like to create some breathing space for clients. (I work with students and recent grads in sorting out who they are and how they can make the most of school to find great work opportunities - and they are often stressed and freaking out.)*

It’s hard to create that space for people when you’re busy trying to sort out the noise of marketing advice for yourself. I’m so glad for this 30 day challenge.

Leverage Your Strengths

By Sally Anne Giedrys

Each relationship nurtures a strength or weakness within you.
-- Mike Murdock

Sometimes, the online world can seem like a crazy place.

Especially if you're trying to run a business.

The maze of so-called rules, formulas, and conflicting marketing must-dos can leave business owners and professionals overwhelmed. Disengaged. Ready to shut down the computer and step very far away.

Resonant connection is often missing outside the work realm, too.

We click and like and follow the crowd. Instead of being engaged with one another, we get sucked in and pass time.



The truth is, there is no blueprint for connecting with people — whether you're trying to market a business, market yourself, or enhance your personal relationships.

Let's turn down the volume, clear out the clutter — and simplify.

One of the best ways to build genuine relationships and engage people is to know your strengths. And use them.

Be who you are. And do what you are great at.

Online or off.

You are naturally good at and energized by certain activities and ways of being. These are your strengths, and yes, we've all got them.

If you're a little fuzzy on what they are, find out. Ask friends and colleagues. Notice how you feel when you're interacting with others or promoting your work. (You can even take a formal strengths assessment with a coach, if you like.)

Maybe you are energized by speaking or creating videos. (I'm not these days. I rarely even watch online videos.)

Maybe you've loved to write since you were in third grade. (I have. It's a strength of mine.)

Maybe meaningful one-on-one conversations are your thing. Or maybe you're the one everyone comes to for hard-hitting advice.

Perhaps you're a generous person who lives to give. Or have never met a rule you couldn't break. Or have a research brain and a hard drive full of information to prove it.

Whatever it is, pay attention. Make a list.

First: Stop doing what you're not energized by.

That thing that drives you crazy. Please. Stop. Right now. It's time to take a solid inventory of how you interact online, and stop doing anything that is draining you, making you nauseous or putting a knot in your belly.

There is always another way to get to your goal. In fact, there are plenty of ways. And every time you eliminate one that feels soul-sucking or just not-quite-right, you open up room for all of the ones that put a smile on your face.

Those are the activities that will get done regularly and without drama, anyway.

And — surprise! — those are the ones that resonate. The best way to feel authentic is to just *be* authentic.

Next: Start doing more of what energizes you. Much more.

Your Challenge: Go back to your strengths list. What do you love doing? How might you do more of that? Where can you build on what is working — and what works for you?

How might you use a strength that you have to grow in a new way that feels fun, exciting, and completely YOU?

That's it. You don't need to do it all. And you don't need to do anything that doesn't feel completely aligned with who you are.

Leverage your strengths and let go of the rest.

Sally Anne Giedrys: *For formal strengths assessment, I love working with both the Realise2 (<http://www.cappeu.com/realise2.aspx>) and the VIA (<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/>). Each one is a good jumping off point for developing strengths (and deciding what to do more of and what to let go of!).*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *As JoAnn pointed out in another thread, Sally Hogshead's Fascinate assessment has proven pretty spot on in terms of identifying your specific triggers -- the things that you're seen as doing well, that if you do more of, will serve to attract more of your right people to you. If anyone wants to take that assessment, you can access it here: <http://www.howtofascinate.com/YOU>*

Kim Doyal: *Focusing on my strengths has completely shifted things in my business (in a BIG way). I always felt like I had a clear idea as to who my audience was and what I wanted to do but I was fighting what was right in front of me because I didn't think I could do the things I loved doing with what I had created.*

I had taken a profile test earlier this year that told me I was a Star & Creator (of course the test goes a tad deeper), which makes complete sense and is alignment with who I've always been. Then I took another test by the same author and it was simply more validation.

I needed to STOP doing the things I didn't want to do (and weren't my strengths) and focus on what I loved. I made the decision to hire someone for that work and the opportunities have been showing up EVERY day. I also get giddy when I realize things are working better because I'm not the one slowing down the process because I feel like I "should" be doing things I don't want to do.

Best. Thing. Ever!

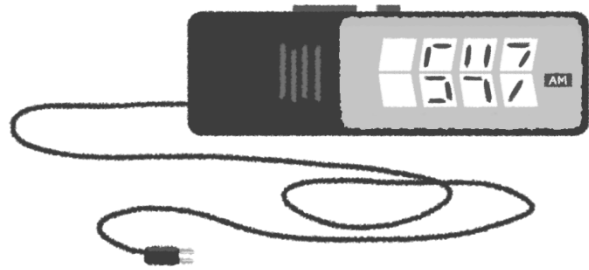
Wake Up to Who You Really Are

By Molly Gordon

*What a liberation to realize that the 'voice in my head' is not who I am.
Who am I then? The one who sees that.*

– Eckhart Tolle

*I want to talk to
you about
connection.*



You see, connection is not something we do. Especially online, we can become preoccupied with the mechanics of connection. And there's so much about internet marketing that we can be caught up in the techniques, the methodologies, the best practices, the flavor of the month strategy. And we forget that really and truly, it's all connected. We are all connected.

Connection isn't something to do. It's something to wake up to. It's about waking up to who you really are. Because here's the deal, when we start thinking about how to connect to someone, when we get caught up in the methodologies, the strategies, we start thinking about ourselves. We start protecting our identities, thinking about our self-image, our self-esteem. The ego comes into play and we lose touch with our authentic selves. The

people that we just are. And when that happens, our feeling of connection to others naturally goes away.

So, what I'd like you to do is recognize and reflect on the fact that the only thing that keeps us ever from connecting with each other is our thinking in the moment. Our thoughts of separateness. The only things in the way of connecting authentically are self-protective thoughts about protecting an identity, an image, a status. And while we can't get away from those, the ego is always in play. It's just part of being inhuman. [laughs] Inhuman. It's just part of being human.

The ego is always in play and we can't get away from having those thoughts of separateness, those thoughts of identity and self-protectedness. But we always have the choice to not buy in. We can let the thoughts run along. I like to think about it as sending the ego and its concerns out to play. It can run along. The thinking can happen, but I don't need to invest in it and neither do you. And as soon as you recognize that, as soon as you recognize that just because you are having thoughts of separateness, thoughts about your image, or value or how you're coming across. Soon as you recognize it's just thinking, you'll feel a little freedom from that.

So, just for today, I'd like you to play with the realization that really you already are connected. You're already part of the great fabric of life. And ask yourself, what one small thing would you like to do? How would you like to reach out? If you weren't worried about your image, if you weren't preoccupied with success or failure, what one small thing would you like to do? Then do it. Keep it simple. Keep it real. And have a good time.

If you get stumped, think about one of the things, and I bet there are a lot of them, that you've considered doing, but haven't yet put into effect. Choose one of those, and ask yourself what small step can you take now? To do that thing.

There's a paradox at the heart of connection online or off: the harder we try to connect, the less connected we can feel. That's because connection isn't something to do; it's something to wake up to. Connection exists in the very fabric of our being. In our humanness. The truth is we really are all

connected. There is no separation except in our thinking about how we are separate.

In the effort to connect, we can become distracted by thinking about ourselves. We can get preoccupied with making sure we come across a certain way. We worry that our ideas for connection might not work. We can be paralyzed by fear of failure, fear of success, or both. That fear creates the very gap we want to close.

But when we remember our common humanity, connection takes care of itself.

You may be thinking that this is all very nice and spiritual, but how the heck does it help grow your business? What does it mean when it comes to blooming online relationships? It means that the only thing keeping you from authentic, rich connection is your thinking in the moment.

The truth is, our egos are always in play. There's no getting away from thoughts about how we look or what people think of us. But we always have a choice about how much to invest in those thoughts. We have the option of recognizing the ego's preoccupations and choosing to set them aside. We can see through the veil of our thoughts of separation. (I often think of this as sending the ego and its concerns out to play while I get on with things.)

When you set aside your personal thinking without judgment or argument, your innate wisdom will kick in, guiding you to reach out to others without calculation or reservation. You'll be free to act on the inspiration of the moment. To take risks. To play. Even to love.

Your Challenge: wake up to the way in which you are already connected to those you want to reach. Ask yourself: "What small thing would I love to do if I weren't concerned with how it might be received?" Then do that. Keep it simple. Keep it real. And have fun.

Pauline Esson: *Thanks Molly for your video today. It got me thinking and then got me emailing Bart Houlahan of B Corp to ask if he has any plans to come to the UK because we need him.*

And if he hasn't currently got plans, would he be willing to consider some! If I hadn't been listening to your encouraging words I never would have been so bold as to do that, thinking myself not enough in a variety of ways. So...Molly encouragement working wonders here...ego out playing didn't even notice I'd done it

Sharon Hurley Hall: *I've been thinking about Molly Gordon's tip. It reminded me of A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle where he talks a lot about setting aside ego. While I couldn't think of any one new thing I wanted to do today, I'll keep mulling it over. But I particularly loved this: "When you set aside your personal thinking without judgment or argument, your innate wisdom will kick in". As I've progressed in Reiki and in life, I've learned to listen to -- and trust -- my guidance, which is why that resonated with me.*

Molly Gordon: *Thank you, Sharon. And I think the piece about "without judgment or argument" is key. I know for myself that I have often judged or argued with my ego, which is a losing game. I like to think of watching it with a certain benevolent detachment, like one might watch a pesky puppy. I can let it play its games while moving on in another direction.*

Get People to Hate You First

by Nick Armstrong

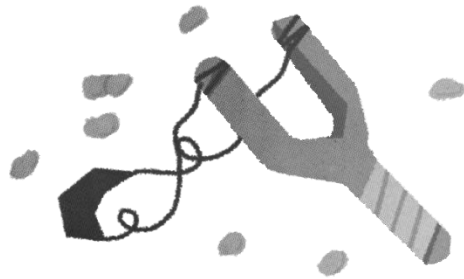
We don't always agree. We have some damn good fights in fact. But we always come away from them with a little more understanding and appreciation of each other.

— Captain Sisko, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

Always burn your bridges behind you. You never know who might be trying to follow.

— Enabrin Tain, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

My secret to creating closer, more meaningful relationships: Get people to hate you.



To be clear: I'm not talking about providing piss-poor service or screwing people out of their money. I'm talking about standing for something so big that some people are bound to say, "Hellz no" when it comes to working with you.

Let's not wax philosophical about referrals, building a list, or trying to prove your business worth through likes, followers, or some other silly social metric. The whole premise of telling you how to get a referral is so... cliché. I mean, people are already out there telling you how to be a good

person. I'd rather not do that. Anything practical enough to be useful would also be so generic that you'd be drowning in nonsense ("be generous" and "go the extra mile" anyone?)

Instead, let's focus on the premise that people (who are also like you) will tend to do certain things certain ways. Mostly, because you and they believe certain things are true about the world. Would you say that's accurate, if somewhat vague?

How does it feel when you encounter your polar opposite in terms of beliefs?

Someone who holds a worldview totally incompatible with your own? Are you energized? Ready to battle? Dismissive?

Cool. That's awesome. What it means is that your convictions are both polarizing and powerful, with a lot of energy invested in maintaining them.

I've got a story that I think illustrates this concept nicely:

Rewind three weeks. There I was, sitting around a conference table with so-called social media experts. The client — a reluctant convert and self-proclaimed social media recluse — told us: "I don't get social media. It seems like it's really diluted the field of customers and it takes so much time, why would I ever want to do that?"

His question wasn't really a question — and it's a common refrain I've heard from older business owners and also young technophobes.

Here's what he was saying: People like me have a Facebook page to keep up with our kids and grandkids. For everything else, we go to networking events or call or meet face to face after someone connects with us.

In short, there was ABSOLUTELY NOTHING any of us could have said to convince him that spending time on social media would benefit him.

"Have you tried blogging? You know, a blog (blah blah blah)" said Expert #1. Swing and a miss.

“The more often you post on Facebook, the more likely it is you’ll be top of mind when they need your services. Everybody’s on Facebook,” said Expert #2. Nope.

“Look, I get it. I just... it all seems like a waste of time. I like YouTube,” he tossed in casually. What he meant was that he liked wasting time with silly viral videos.

“You could advertise on YouTube...” Expert #3 struck out.

About that time, I’d been rolling my eyes so hard they damn near popped out of my head. Asking a question I’m sure Téa would have been proud of, I chimed in: “What’s the story that you’re trying to tell? I mean, you’ve got your product listed in the phone book because you ‘have to.’ You’ve got a website because you ‘have to.’ You’ve got a professional association profile because you ‘have to.’ Why did you do all of that?”

He didn’t get what I was asking. “Look, you’ve put a lot of time into doing what you’re ‘supposed’ to do. So, why are you considering doing Facebook or Twitter or whatever else because you’re ‘supposed to’? And why are you doing the stuff you’re doing now? Aren’t you just wasting time complaining about the latest thing that wastes your time? And aren’t you doing stuff that makes you look, feel, and seem just like everybody else? Aren’t you, just by participating the way you are, diluting your own client base?”

I pushed on, “What if, instead, every once in a while you would remind people of what you do for a living by sharing something relevant to your job that isn’t a sales pitch? The rest of the time, you could be working on telling the community’s story instead, because that’s what they want to hear.”

We wrapped up the discussion. His decision? The social media hermit is still a hermit. Old habits die hard and convictions take a lot of energy to build and maintain. He’s convinced that social media is a waste of time. And he definitely wasn’t a good fit for any of us.

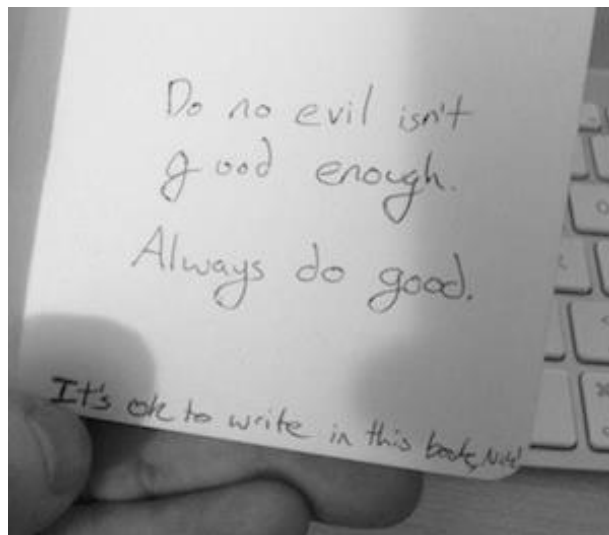
But let's say this guy walks into the Chamber of Commerce instead of a Social Media Experts group. Say the CEO offers him weekly networking meetings, face-to-face coffee exchanges with hot leads, lead and list exchanges, and a nifty phone referral service, too.

"Wow," he's gonna think, "these people really get me," right before he signs up for a lifetime membership.

If you want people to become your customers, you need to elicit a strong reaction from them first. If somebody hates you, it stands to reason that somebody else probably loves you. It's not so much the hate but the silence that should worry you.

If identity and convictions are one part of the love/hate equation, the other part is principle. Principle, distinct from convictions (which are also boundaries), is the story you tell about why those boundaries exist.

Four years ago, when I started my business, I had a really simple premise: "Do No Evil Isn't Good Enough. Always Do Good." Here it is, in my first moleskin:



My guiding principle. One of 'em, anyway. And it's been painful as hell on occasion.

So why do I say, if you want good relationships, to get people to hate you? Because I don't know of a better way to make people adore you than to stand for something through your principles.

About two and a half years ago, I was sitting in a conference room with some of my closest peers. I was debating changing the name of my business from WTF Marketing because I'd just lost my two biggest clients, been rejected from speaking at a conference I was absolutely perfect for, and my attempts at snagging new clients were met by derision: "That's your business name? What does it stand for? Ew, I can't do business with you, devil worshipper."

I'd called the meeting just after one of the biggest restaurants in Fort Collins got all the way through my sales process to my contract. All we had to do was sign, they were ready to go – and that's when the owner asked what my business name stood for. I told them. They opted to go with a different company because they didn't like what WTF meant.

Think about that for a minute – they weren't just objecting to WTF Marketing as a name. They were objecting to what they thought I stood for.

For the record, it took them another 2.5 years to settle on a new company, which I think speaks to the quality of our proposal and how much a pain in the ass this client would have been.

Anyway, back then I felt like I couldn't pick up a client to save my life. I felt like my friends weren't referring me even while I was doing some of my best work – things like CareerCamp and PodCamp and Ignite Fort Collins.

It was a dark time.

"How about Fugitive Marketing?" I asked my peers. "I like the sound of it. It matches my rebel-chic outcast kind of feel."

"But you're not an outcast," said one of my friends. "You're warm and fluffy like a giant teddy bear. A teddy bear that knows how to present stuff to people in a way that makes them want to buy."

The problem was: I knew what WTF meant. But I didn't know what WTF Marketing stood for. And that's why it was so damn easy for me to be ignored and slighted. That's why it was so damn easy for the big restaurant owner to make a snap judgment of my business name. Their snap judgment: that I only cared about shock value and didn't take my job seriously.

WTF Marketing needed a set of guiding principles and fast. But it wasn't going to get them, not at that moment. I was confused, defensive, hurt, and going broke. Worse: nobody knew what the hell it was I did — or why. They didn't know where my heart was.

I mean, I was doing website design. I was doing social media management. I was doing marketing strategy. I was organizing unconferences. I was doing Gen-Y consulting. I was writing about how Gen-Y could get jobs without hating on Baby Boomers. I had my hands in all sorts of pies. I was everywhere. But nobody – not even me – could tell you what I did, or more importantly, why I did what I did.

No wonder it was so hard to build up solid business relationships. How do you refer someone to a handyman who is also a clown, gardener, artist, and writer? How many of those passions can someone possibly sustain?

Long story short, what eventually came from this and the space between: a set of guiding principles that went beyond 'do no evil.'

The piece I was missing: WTF Marketing stands for unabashed honesty, even when it offends. That's why it's called WTF Marketing. You want to pay money to a 'yes man'? Fine. That's not what you get with me.

What does that unabashed honesty translate into? Instant trust.

When I make a recommendation, a suggestion, attend an event, give you my attention? That's big. I don't put my name on just anything. I don't engage in revisionist history. I own my mistakes and make them public when there's a lesson.

99% of my business is driven by word-of-mouth recommendations. People trust me enough to refer me to someone, and if I like what they do, we form a relationship. Easily 3/4ths of my first clients still work with me in some capacity 5 years later.

Business owners talk a lot about avoiding negative press. The opposite of love isn't hate. It's apathy. Nobody talks about things they're apathetic about. You want to grow your business? Stand for something that makes the wrong kinds of people hate you, so that the right kinds of people love you. Anything in-between is apathy. (For more on this topic: see "Related Reading #2")

If it isn't clear by now: apathy is fatal to forming meaningful relationships. Even more so for business relationships. Doesn't matter if they love you or hate you — just don't let 'em be neutral!

Your Challenge: Get a 3×5 card and complete these three statements:

People that are like my customers believe
this _____

People who aren't my customers believe
this _____

To get more in-line with my customers' beliefs,
I should _____

Relentlessly pursue #3, acknowledge you don't want 'just any old customer', and commit to loving the things you listed under #1 and possibly taking an active stand against the items in #2.

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Here's my index card: People that are like my customers believe good writing takes time and is worth paying a premium for. People who aren't my customers believe anyone can write and the cheaper the deal the better. To get more in-line with my customers' beliefs, I should highlight the value I offer in terms of experience and skill (and price my writing services to suit).*

Nick Armstrong: *Thanks Sharon - that first bit is a good value: "good writing is worth paying a premium for". You've defined boundaries for your work - it doesn't happen overnight and it doesn't happen cheap.*

Leslie Nipps: *I want to thank Nick Armstrong for his post today. It was pretty much exactly what I needed. Not with my biz, so much, but with my life. I've just found out someone pretty important in my network is engaging in serious misconduct, and I've been thinking a lot about what I should and shouldn't do in response. Re-thinking my values, and asking who is in line with them, and creating community with them, really, really helps. I don't want to expend a lot of effort judging people with different values, but I am putting my stake in the ground about what I care about in way others are going to notice, and not always like. Okay. Thank you.*

Gloria Miele: *Positive thinking, who relish in complaints and negativity, who believe you have to tackle the problems to get anywhere. To connect more I need to worry less about winning over the pessimist - they're not coming!! - and focus my efforts on connecting with the folks who want to learn more about their strengths and the strengths of their team. This was fun, especially since I'm often the "voice of unpopular opinion" in some of the organizations I belong to.*

Caroline van Kimmenade: *People that are like my customers believe that sensitivity is a valuable asset and quality, even if they may be confused or overwhelmed by it. They believe it's worth investing in honing that quality & learning how to work with it effectively.*

People who aren't my customers believe that their sensitivity justifies depression, apathy and not getting ahead in the world in one way or another. ("Because the rest of the world isn't sensitive enough"). They are unwilling to look at which aspects of sensitivity are "natural HSP wiring" and which parts of it are simply learned behaviors that can be changed.

To get more in-line with my customers' beliefs, I should be stating this directly, rather than implying it indirectly through what I write and share.

Pfew 3-minute insight there! Thanks Nick Armstrong! (and a bit of a scary one!)

Crys Williams: *This is nifty...I was, like, "No, I don't feel strongly about anything enough to push back" and then was, like, "Well, except for..."*

1. People that are like my readers, clients, and comrades believe in the power of words, or even a single word, to change anything and everything: Make peace, raise hell, change minds, reboot a life, soothe the soul, spread ideas. They value clarity over quantity and pay for power not by the page.

2. People that aren't my people think writing is simply another kind of data entry...you type word after word and any ol' word will do. They think fast equals good and faster equals better. They trust in spellcheck. They think a word has to be in the dictionary to be a "real" word.

2b. People on the edge believe in the word but don't believe they can't write. They believe they have nothing to say that's worth listening to. They read my writing and are discouraged about their own.

3. To get more in line with my customers' beliefs I need to serve as a fine example...get my website/blog content, social media profiles, and product/service descriptions to express what's really going on here. And I need to write a lot more and offer encouragement.

--- I feel recharged! Thanks Nick

Be an Authentic Goofball

by Pace Smith

*Professionalism's your doom.
It's better to be someone whom
Can be fun and silly.
Goof is the chili
That helps your relationships bloom.*



*I started off with a limerick
because that is one of the ways
in which I love to be an
authentic goofball.*

Limericks are goofy, and they're usually dirty. Mine aren't always dirty. But it's authentic because I love writing them. If I was just like, you know, what's really hot online today is limericks. Which this is not true! But if it were, and I was just trying to hop on the bandwagon, that wouldn't really be authentic. And even if I could do it, I wouldn't really be creating the connection with people and I would probably burn out from doing something that I wasn't really into.

Professionalism's your doom.

You do want your customers' trust. But you don't want to be so concerned

about maintaining a “professional image” that you hide your entire personality. People are sick of dealing with faceless corporations; don’t become faceless yourself.

And when I say, *professionalism’s your doom*, I don’t mean that you don’t want people to trust in you. Cause of course you do! But what I’m talking about is the type of professionalism that’s dry and boring. Like, I’m just gonna do my job and I’m going to present a professional image and not really let people know any part of what makes me quirky or unique or goofy.

So, professionalism is a way in which you can really do it wrong. You can totally have both.

You can be professional and have people trust you, and still be an authentic goofball.

Doing it wrong

If you’re a chiropractor, you don’t want to tell the story of this one time when you pushed too hard and broke a patient’s bone — no matter how hilarious it is. That’s the kind of goofy story that will destroy trust. You might could tell that over tequila shots at the Chiropractors’ Bar, but not to a client.

That’s the kind of story that’s going to make the person on that table not want to be on that table anymore. That’s the kind of thing that would totally undermine trust in you and your business instead of building it.

Doing it right – authenticity

Being an authentic goofball means that you’re not being goofy just because it’s trendy, or because some crazy woman named Pace told you to. It means that you’re being yourself, and sharing true, silly things that you’re into.

Authenticity creates connection. When you're being yourself, you give your customers permission to be themselves too – and that's something that a faceless corporation can never do.

But most authentically goofy things you can do have absolutely nothing to do with your business, or uh, they're just kind of randomish things about yourself. And when you do it right, telling true authentic stories about yourself or just being authentically goofy creates connection and that can really bloom and deepen the online relationships that you have.

If you tell a little goofy thing about yourself, then that can encourage people to open up and share more of themselves. And that connection is the advantage we have as small business owners over all those faceless corporations.

And without being an authentic person, you can't really take advantage of that. And I think that being an authentic goofball is the best way to take advantage of that. Being a goofball makes you memorable because a lot of people aren't willing to put themselves out there and just kind of be silly or they don't want to because they have this whole professional image thing. But it's also just fun, and fun makes people happy, and if people associate you with being happy, then there's no way that can be bad for your business.

Doing it right – goofball

Being a goofball means doing things that are weird or off-the-wall. I opened this article with a limerick because it's authentic and goofy. It's goofy because limericks are funny and you don't see them often in business. It's authentic because I love writing limericks – I'm not just doing it for a cheap party trick.

So, as an example, and because it's fun, back in the 80s, I loved this song called *Ponderous* by 2nu. I recorded it on the radio and listened to it over

and over again until I learned the chorus. And it goes a little something like this:

Oom poppa chuckamaga nauva sing gow

Ging koppawallawally double ching pow

Heavy coppalua cumma ginasing pea

Oom mama chuckamana one is now three

And that has nothing to do with anything, but hey it's fun.

Being a goofball is memorable. No matter how good my advice is, chances are you'll remember me as "the limerick chick" or "the one who sang 'Ponderous' on the audio version of this article."

Being memorable is good for your business because if your clients don't remember you, they won't buy from you.

And lastly, fun makes people happy! If you share something fun and your audience enjoys it, they'll remember that happy feeling and they'll associate it with you. And that can't possibly be a bad thing.

Your Challenge: Get out there and share ONE thing with your audience that's authentic and goofy!

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Virginia Small: *I like to illustrate common phrases and turn them into puns. For instance: I drew a group of slugs having a party. They were dancing and playing music. Someone asked me what it was. I told them it was a slug fest. Get it? Slug fest? Another illustration is of a group of*

crows enjoying Happy Hour. I told someone it was a crow bar. I have a few more on the drawing board. While I'm working on them I invite you to join me in a cup of tea.

Anna Holden: *The goofball thing wasn't working for me yesterday, as I've been going through more heavy stuff lately. One thing I work on is being authentic and vulnerable with my online space to give people permission to also be authentic and vulnerable. This was the type of post I created yesterday - I shared a bit of my process of surrendering to something, then asked how others surrender and what they do to comfort themselves. I got an amazing response in the form of comments -- more than I've probably ever gotten. People really seem attracted to these types of posts from me, which is awesome because it seems to create a feedback loop of permission to just BE instead of ACT out a persona we believe is more appropriate.*

Carrie Pinsky: *Well, I am known for being a bit goofy. And, while it is part of my charm...I think it has also hindered me at times from being taken seriously. So, I think what resonates with me the most is to do "goofy" right and make sure that I am not using it as an excuse to be too self-using humor to put others at ease with me. I need to be mindful that my humor is not over-used to protect others or to keep me from blooming in a really authentic way. Lots to ponder here.*

Pace Smith: *"What if I'm not goofy?" "What if I'm serious by nature?"*

Both Zoe Cannon and Tammy Vitale have started good conversations about this, and I wanted to share my own thoughts and experiences.

The reason I use the words "goofball" and "goofy" isn't because being silly is better than being serious. It's because being yourself is better than wearing a mask. And wearing a clown mask is just as masked as wearing a professional mask.

To me, the heart of being an authentic goofball is the authenticity, and the goofiness is just a shame-free permission slip to show a side of yourself that you don't usually show. Forced goofiness isn't authentic - doing it on demand is against that point of what I'm hoping to share.

Personally, my danger is to put on an "I'm awesome" mask and hide behind it. (I'm an Enneagram 3 if that means anything to you.) Being authentically goofy for me is about being vulnerable. It's about showing the side of myself that's silly and unpolished. Being an authentic goofball reminds me to take off the "I'm awesome" mask and connect with people in a way that's REAL and also FUN.

For me, goofy is a fun way to be authentic and vulnerable. But there's this pesky thing called the usual error - assuming that what's true for me is also true for other people. I made the usual error in my "Be an authentic goofball" challenge.

So if "goofy" doesn't feel authentic to you, what else could you do to be vulnerable? How could you express a side of yourself that's true, a little bit tender, and that you don't usually express?

Tori Deaux: *Hi. I'm an artist, blogger, web-wrangler, and professional goofball. On a scale of 1 to Goofball, I rank somewhere to the north-west of tangerine. Even so, I worry about getting it right, and what everyone will think, and how they will respond. My goofball challenge to myself for today? Start sharing the small stuff.*

Stuff like how yesterday I went to the pet store for aquarium water conditioner. I just HAD to check the sale rack, and as a result came home with a (broken) model of the Brooklyn Bridge that's larger than any of my aquarium tanks, and three squeaky dog toys -- one bungee caterpillar for the dog, two mini dinosaurs for me.

Find Your Point of Distinction

By Kaya Singer

You never lose by loving. You always lose by holding back.
-- Barbara de Angelis

*I know you want to bloom your
relationships online and stand
out and be noticed!*

It can be a little frustrating to feel like you just blend in with everyone else and are not seen!

My challenge to you is to let your hair down, dig into your deepest, darkest places, and find that wild side of yourself.

Maybe it's the part of you that you don't show because you think it wouldn't be professional to expose that part of yourself.

At one time about 50 years ago this was true! Everything has changed now. This is the era of relationships and interaction online.

It could be the one thing you have been hiding is the one hot thing that will attract people to you in droves!



This also has to be about YOU, not about your business name. People want real people, not a relationship with your company.

Example; on Facebook when I do these kinds of posts on my profile page (not your biz page) I will get 70 or 80 likes and comments!

Experiment and see what happens. Here is my one challenge for you today!

Whatever you do -- Get known for something distinctive.

How many of you think of pink Cadillacs when you think of Mary Kay?

Some people think she was a little bit crazy, but she built an empire!

For me it's my silver hair and the cronish, elder wisdom that goes with it!

Your Challenge: For you it's_____.
How are you going to fill in the blank?

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Lois J. de Vries: *Hmmm. I have to say I'm confused. I can think of a number of things that make me distinctive, which I see is what others here are posting, but they are not "wild and crazy." Kaya Singer, can you clarify, or give more examples of what you mean?*

Kaya Singer: *Great question! I would love for you to share what those things are that make you distinctive. To me "wild and crazy" can refer to hidden parts of yourself that are unknown to most people but such a deep reflection of who you are.*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Kaya: What we feel would be “wild and crazy” to others? Like people expect me to be X, and if I showed them Y, they’d think I was crazy?*

Kaya Singer: *Or in my case- they might think I was “unprofessional.” But in fact -- my clients want someone who is authentic and real and they love that part of me that I was hiding!*

JudyAnn Lorenz: *This is one part from the blog post I have ‘cooking’. “Let ‘wild’ be that part not yet spoiled by confining expectations. I perceive the encouragement to show the ‘wild’ side as a directive to set my spirit free and send my abilities out there into the world...drop the tentative and watch closely for fairies. “*

Kaya Singer: *For those of you who are stuck. Here is a clue. There could be something about you that has nothing to do with your business but it is so so much about who you are. Example. I am a potter. It is a hobby, now but a huge part of me. In fact, it attracts people to me and I use clay metaphors in my blog posts and stories all the time. I post photos of my clay work and I get 60 or 70 comments and likes. I make the posts connect to my biz message somehow.*

Sandy McDonald: *I believe it’s the little things we do consistently (the sum of the parts) that work to create distinction. Although some folks are so busy doing stuff, they become scattered and no clear picture forms of them or what they do.*

It’s taken four years to reframe why I do what I do for whom, and that is yet to be launched (this week maybe!). So I’ve been a bit scattered and that hasn’t made for distinction.

None the less, there are core elements of you -- the person that remains, no matter what you do in business.

A wonderful photographer friend who took some professional pics of me recently said it was my smile and hands she wanted to capture because they communicated empathy. That is a distinction I’m happy to imbue in all that I do.

Know Your Relating Style

By Tami Smith

It's a wild thing, that people have the ability to help each other by just relating to one another.

-- Natasha Lyonne

Do You Have a Relating Style?

What does it mean to be fully yourself and show up authentically?

Participating in this 30-Day Bloom Your Online Relationships Challenge is perfect because it has created this intense focus in awareness. In working with the daily challenges I notice where I hold back, what feels comfortable, and what stretches my comfort zone.

Just be yourself.



Seems like great advice. Seems simple. But is it?

What's the big deal? How hard can it be to just show up as myself and build relationships?

When I first started out in my online business I didn't think about how I was going to build relationships. I just figured it would naturally and organically happen.

I'm creative & visionary

My thinking style is primarily that of a synthesis and idealist which means I ask a lot of "what if" questions, look at situations holistically, and have more abstract ways of using language. That translates to getting caught in theory and coming across vague and boring if I'm not consciously bringing in practical and personal stories.

My relating style is more extroverted, which in my experience, means relating is easier in the offline world. When I meet people in person I can read body language and intuitively know how to connect. Learning to use these strengths online took a higher degree of self-awareness.

As I became more aware of the way I'm innately wired to think and relate, I started using my strengths specifically and intentionally in the way I designed my business. It has been so liberating to learn to appreciate who I am at this innate strengths level. It goes a long way in melting judgment and discouragement. Letting go of thoughts that I should be different, or should be more like other people (especially those who are good at building big tribes), creates a deeper appreciation of the relationships I have and seems to draw the right people.

"It takes courage...to endure the sharp pains of self-discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives."

~ Marianne Williamson

The point is, we all have strengths and challenges largely due to our natural way of relating to the world and each other. The first step in deepening online relationships, is becoming aware of natural tendencies in the way we relate.

Here's a tool to help you determine your primary relating style.

In the chart below you'll find the four types of relating styles (or patterns of behavior) that describe the way we are most likely to express ourselves in our relationships. This chart is awesome because it matches Myers-Briggs with Social Styles.¹

ISFJ INTP ISFP INFP (Relater / Amiable) Value: Forging Connections	ESFJ ENTP ESFP ENFP (Socializer / Expressive) Value: Inspiration & Ideas
ISTJ INTJ ISTP INFJ (Thinker / Analytical) Value: Stay Consistent	ESTJ ENTJ ESTP ENFJ (Director / Driver) Value: Taking Action / Take Charge

If you don't know your Myers-Briggs type, here is a brief description of characteristics associated with each Social Style.

¹ <http://www.careerplanner.com/mb2/styles.cfm>

Relater: Kind, thoughtful, peaceful and connected. You are often complimented on being a great listener and you enjoy feeling-level conversations. You tend to be “behind the scenes” at work and the supporter in family relationships. Under stress you shut down and look/seem hurt to others. Naturally empathetic, receptive, and other-oriented you feel at best when helping others develop skills and strengths. More adept in horizontal or lateral thinking, you consider all sides of a situation to take into consideration how others may feel.

Balance is important and you don’t want to make decisions without time to process. You may find social media more enjoyable when you are working collaboratively and can share successes, lessons, and experiences as part of a collective experience. You might want to lead discussions with, “It seems to me...” or “ Don’t you think?” You are not comfortable with conflict or putting anyone in a potentially uncomfortable situation. You probably prefer written interviews vs live (on-air).

Socializer: Lively, talkative, persuasive and out-going you want to make tasks as enjoyable as possible. You have the ability to develop rapport quickly which makes people feel at ease. You tend to be upbeat, looking at the bright side trendsetter. You see possibility where others see obstacles. You are imaginative, creative, and speculative (ask “what if” or “why not”). In other words, you shake things up by introducing new ideas, disrupting the status quo, and challenging the powers that be.

Let’s just say, you aren’t known for your moderation. When you take on a project you go all out. You love inspiring others and building up their confidence. You might want to use social media to help people brainstorm, consider new perspectives, and find silver-linings. You are quick on your feet and will enjoy interviews, lively debates, or panel discussions.

Thinker: You need to know the best route to take, the most efficient way to results, and the optimal use of time. You are more prone to convergent thinking, narrowing in on options rather than exploring new possibilities. You know the “devil is in the details” or better put, “love is in the details.” You thrive in well-defined objectives and an orderly environments where you can work with purpose and poise. Open loops, multiple projects, and too many responsibilities or commitments means major stress.

Sometimes your high expectations get the better of you and you find yourself disappointed in others or feeling isolated in your circumstances. You might want to use social media as a way to build trust through sharing your processes and reasoning, your mission and purpose. You can bring objectivity, concreteness, and direction to discussions but try to focus on shared values and interests, not positions or right and wrong sides of the issue.

Director: You are out-front leading the way and raising the bar on everything you do. You make decisions based on instinct and you trust yourself, or you are learning to trust yourself, as the authority in your life. You value results, self-leadership, power, and prestige. Overly sentimental and abstract conversation is tolerated but rarely appreciated.

It can drive you a little crazy to have to make small talk, share in aimless discussions, and water-down your opinion. At the heart of the matter you care about doing the right thing. Take advantage of your natural ability to do the right thing by resolving conflicts and bridging gaps. You can use social media to share your work in a way that makes a tangible direct difference.

Well-known brand examples of relating styles

Nordstrom: With an unwavering commitment to customer service we see both the Relater and the Thinker showing up in their relating style. Never questioning or making a return into conflict, and taking great care in the detail of customer experience, this brand is known as a trusted provider of

the very best quality. Maybe we could say their relating style is one of “devoted care and trusted fashion resource”.

Apple: Although known for setting trends, challenging status quo, and thinking out-side-the-box, Apple’s retail stores are creating a collaborative environment between customers and staff. The way this brand is relating is through a combination of Socializer and Director. We could say their relating style is the “cool (and fun) trend setting leader.”

Starbucks: “Our mission: to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.” It is easy to see the Relater in the way Starbucks forges connections. Do you also see the way they establish trust through consistency and process without losing the emphasis on creating an enjoyable place to hang out? There’s a subtle undertone of Socializer with emphasis on variety, fun, Wi-Fi, music, and changing the way people approach coffee. This combination of Relater and Socializer could be described as “thoughtful experience maker.”

Fergie (lead singer of the Black Eyed Peas): In an interview with Cigar and Spirits, she was asked, “What drives you as an individual?” She said, “I’m naturally ambitious. I’m also a dreamer.” Her relating style is a combination of primarily Director with Socializer. In addition to her music success she has taken on multiple business ventures and is part owner of the Miami Dolphins. Let’s say her relating style is “bar-raising challenger.”

L’Oréal: “L’Oréal has set itself the mission of offering all women and men worldwide the best of cosmetics innovation in terms of quality, efficacy and safety.” There’s a strong scientific and methodical approach to everything that is communicated through this brand. Being created by a researcher, it is no surprise innovation and knowledge is a driving force. We see Thinker as the primary relating style with a strong dose of Director. The relating style could be called “expert & responsible innovator.”

A Relating Style is how you connect and communicate in your most natural innate way.

Your Challenge: See if you can recognize your primary social style from the four types above. You will be more of a combination of two.

Create a name for your relating style. For example: Advocate and Encouraging Friend, Idea Inspiring Innovator, Detailed and Thoughtful Teacher. You get the idea. Just be your authentic self here. For extra credit see if you can spot the style of your peers.

We all have preferred relationship styles

Insight in relating styles helps us to notice and appreciate differences. When we recognize and appreciate our differences we see there is nothing to fix and relationships start to blossom beautifully.

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.

-- Carl R. Rogers

By letting others know who you are and what is important to you, you open the door to richer relationships. Knowing your relating style can help you relax and be more you. You might want to notice when you are NOT acting in any relating style at all, or a mix of them, because this is about being human. You are wonderfully complex, uniquely designed, and beyond the description of a type or style.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Gloria Miele: *I'm a big fan of the MBTI and use it in my practice. I am always ENF and flip between J and P, but am really more J more of the time. I'm definitely an expressive socializer, which is one of the reasons I love social media. Even if I'm completely alone, I can be with people,*

interacting and “taking the stage.” My primary passion is training, which really draws on that personality style and my strengths of communication and woo (not woo hoo, but “winning others over.”). Love how the pieces of the puzzle fit together and increase understanding and the ability to create a rich, cohesive brand.

Blaze Lazarony: *Here’s my share for how I relate: As a Business Strategist, with 20 years of mentoring and leading people in Fortune 500 companies and managing big money, I’m being so bold to embrace the analytical/thinker in me that I translate into working with entrepreneurs today as both a consultant and coach. (I refer to it as Co-sulting, it’s a blend.)*

I’m also an Intuitive, so everything I do has a current of spiritual woo--single woo, not Woo Woo, that’s too out there for me personally. (However many of my friends are totally woo woo.)

Yes I’m serious, and I also have a very wacky and silly sense of humor. I own this!

And I’m a super connector too, I love connecting cool people to other awesome people...who do you need to know that I can connect you to?

Melanie Kissell: *No doubt about it, I’m a combo “Relater/Socializer.” So I’m going to name my relating style “Energizing Connector.”*

Hands down, bar none, the most joyous [blooming] experience for me is when I can connect others. I’m tickled pink to introduce people I meet online to one another. I can quickly and easily recognize their commonalities and relating styles and my heart smiles knowing they’ll click. Oooh! Goosebumps!

Build Your Know-Like-Trust Factor

By Rachna Jain

It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives. It's what we do consistently.

— Anthony Robbins

I've written this post to give you some easy and useful tips to build your know-like-trust factor online.

So the biggest predictor of your success in business is, truly, your relationships. Though it can sometimes feel simpler to build relationships in real life compared to online. The Internet can feel vast and mysterious, and sometimes not all that friendly or welcoming.



Yet, one of the things I've observed and researched over the past 16 years (since I first began working online in 1998), is that building relationships online – especially now in social media -- is very much the same as building them in real life.

Let me explain what I mean:

I'm a psychologist by training, and one of my areas of clinical specialization is in couple's therapy- how we make and maintain meaningful intimate relationships. In the vast majority of cases, healthy relationships are based on good communication, mutual respect, and shared activities or interests.

It seems easy to think about this in real life- you can meet for coffee, spend time together, and engage in conversations that last longer than a 140 character tweet.

Yet, if we take the framework of off-line relationship building -- the idea of communication, mutual respect, and shared experience- we can place this framework directly online and see how we can build our online relationships the exact same way.

Even though the Internet is vast and filled with billions of people, we, essentially, seek to build our online relationships one at a time, just like in real life.

If you look in your social media stream, right now, you probably have at least a couple people you want to know better. You might like their updates -- the way they share ideas, or their humor, or their honesty, or all of these and more. So how would you go through the process of building a deeper online relationship with them?

Well, you could start by reaching out to them more often. "Like" their updates more consistently. Take time to leave a thoughtful comment. Show up more in their lives (and news feeds), so that you begin that first step of making connection.

Usually, this is enough to activate reciprocity, where they will start liking and commenting on your updates as well. Over time, you might move to trading some messages back and forth, and then, eventually, if circumstances permit, and you both would like to, you might end up meeting in real life, too.

In fact, I make it a point, whenever I'm traveling to a new city, to try and meet at least one person in real life who I previously only knew online. I keep these meetings light and casual -- like a coffee date -- and use these to learn more about this person and grow our connection even more.

In this way, social media becomes a bridge for us to connect in real life.

Does it always go really well? Well, so far, it's been pretty good. I've come to think that if you're honest and authentic in social media, you pretty much have a sense of each other before you even meet in real life.

And then, once you do meet in real life, you have something to talk about, because you've had some conversations online first.

So, basically, I'm all for this idea that we make connections online and we move them into real life if/as we like.

Even if you never go the extra step to meet all your online friends in person, you can still build relationships with them, especially ones which build your community and your online visibility.

One way to do this is to become likeable and familiar. You can do this by sharing relevant and useful content, being authentic, and being consistent. The goal is to be visible enough, long enough, and consistently enough so that people recognize you and pay attention to you.

Once you have their attention, you want to nurture and grow it over time.

There is more to this process, but I hope this post gives you a good starting place.

Your Challenge: Decide on a process for nurturing your existing relationships. Then take action today.

Building strong relationships is one of the best ways to build a stronger and more profitable business.

Melanie Kissell: *The way I see it, Rachna, people are people.. online or off. And chances are great the fibers of our being won't change, whether we're blooming relationships in the real world or on the wacky world-wide web.*

Everyone appreciates a little human kindness, a thoughtful gesture, a note of praise, a spot on your radar, a lending ear, good manners and netiquette, constructive criticism, honest and open communication, common courtesies...all the finer things in life.

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Rachna's tip made me think about the people I'm already connected with. Over the years, we've moved from commenting on each other's blogs to participating in the same groups to promoting each other's ventures and sharing small details of our personal lives. While no-one's coming to mind immediately for new connections, I think this dovetails nicely with the previous tip (well, the previous tip I posted on; not sure what day it was) about getting to know subscribers. In the course of getting more personal with them, I could start to build those relationships there.*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Finding new people to learn more about...hmm. It's hard to find the lesser known folks via Facebook since FB likes to organize your friends by how often you interact. So everyone at the top of the list are people we already know pretty well. You've got to scroll-scroll-scroll to get down to the bottom and then figure out whether or not those folks are even still using their accounts. I decided to take a slightly different tack...opened up my Mailchimp account to see who opened/clicked on my latest email. From there, I found a couple of people who -- GASP -- have opened 100% of my emails since they subscribed. These are people I'd never interacted with before at all, but I could find their Twitter accounts and follow them. I also sent them each a short thank you email. Gifts! A free copy of my book + a Starbucks card. Mhuah! I love this challenge.*

Gloria Miele: *Love the idea of looking at your email list. Will do the same. I've also gotten a lot out of building relationships on LinkedIn, where people are usually so impersonal. I always send a personalized note after someone connects with me and have developed some interesting relationships there too.*

Gina Musa: *I've just done a similar thing with my Mailchimp list but it was an idea triggered by an earlier tip. I've also got a couple of 100%-ers that I've never had contact with so I was thinking of e-mailing them to say thanks and to send them a gift.*

Show Up Consistently

by Susan Giurleo

To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved.

— George MacDonald

As a psychologist, I can tell you that building a relationship requires trust.

And the only way we can build trust is by showing up when we say we will on a consistent basis.

Why is consistency so important?

Think of an infant who relies on her mother for sustenance, warmth, and nurturing.

What happens to that baby if the mother doesn't consistently feed her? What happens if no one picks her up and snuggles throughout the day? We learn from our first days of life to trust people who are consistent. And that core psychological trait carries through our entire lives.

What does this have to do with building a community?

Everything.



You are building a relationship and people have to learn to trust you.

The best way to build trust is to show up when you say you will, over and over again.

This doesn't mean you need to post or email daily, or even weekly.

What it does mean is that if you promise a monthly newsletter, you send a monthly newsletter.

Or if you promise engagement on a Facebook page, you engage regularly on that page.

You don't have to have spectacular insights or spend all your waking hours catering to your community.

What matters is that you keep promises and show up regularly.

If your connection with your community is sporadic, you can get things on a more consistent track starting right now.

Here's how:

Commit to showing up consistently. Set your intentions so you can achieve the goal.

Decide on the frequency with which you want to show up. For some folks that's daily, for others it's weekly. I do suggest it never be less than monthly.

Determine how and where you want to show up to your community. Is it Facebook, email, Instagram? No need to spread yourself too thin. Pick one place that feels good to you.

Set a schedule for showing up and write it down in your planner/calendar system. Saying you'll send a weekly newsletter doesn't mean you will actually send it. If you carve out time to thoughtfully connect with your community on a consistent basis good things will happen.

Blooming a community takes thought, time, and caring. Build a community of folks you want to serve and being with them on a consistent basis will feel less like "work" and more like building fulfilling relationships.

Best wishes on growing your special community!

Your Challenge: Decide on a schedule for all your online activity and put it on your calendar.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *For the last 10 years I have had a blog post and matching email newsletter go out every Monday morning and I have experienced the benefits of becoming a regular part of my followers' lives.*

I do also want to add that one time I accidentally scheduled it for the wrong day and felt like I had let my followers down. Other than a few emails checking in on me, nothing happened. The world did not end. Life went on. I am not a perfectionist and yet realized I was holding very tightly onto the idea of serving my followers. Since then I have found the balance of having an intention for consistency and going with the flow of being a human being.

Mo Davies: *One of the problems I have with consistency is dealing with fibromyalgia. It means I live from each day to each day, never quite knowing what's going to happen. I have moved from frustration at being laid low at times to going with the flow more easily. And while I have to*

dig deeper into this course now it's cooled down (oh, joy) one of the practicalities I decided to face up to is the fact that, being in North Cyprus where mail goes via Turkey, all my art orders need to be placed with websites operating in Europe or the US. So I've actually decided to focus on posting my digital art on these websites and then publicizing their availability. The course has helped me narrow down my choices, given my geographical location, and also stop flailing around wondering in which direction to head.

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Consistency is something I've struggled with. I go through consistent periods, where I show up regularly on whatever network or forum I'm on and participate, but often I move on to trying something new. Of course, in the few groups where I DO stick around, I have great relationships, so there's definitely a lesson there, thanks, Susan. Key takeaway for me: stop spreading myself thin so I can focus (easier said than done)*

Sandy McDonald: *Oh consistency! Such a sore point, especially when I preach it to my clients.*

What a valuable thing to be made to think about Susan. I started out so well and have become increasingly poor. It troubles me. But I ended up with too many fingers in too many pies. So it is time now to bite the bullet and rationalise where I direct the energy so that I CAN be consistent.

Sometimes you just have to let things go to do the right thing by others. Thanks for the reminder.

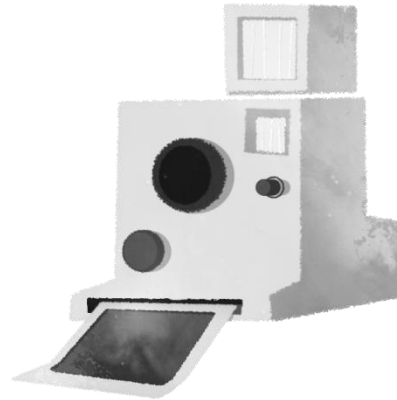
Share the Real You – in Pictures

by Téa Silvestre Godfrey

“You are imperfect, permanently and inevitably flawed. And you are beautiful.”

— Amy Bloom

One of the things the experts tell us to do is get professional photos taken for marketing purposes.



And yes, I agree you need those. (I’m one of those people who’ll tell you to get them.)

But that doesn’t mean you should only show the world the perfect version of you. Or that you should avoid using pictures of yourself altogether (How many people do you know who use something other than their actual photo?).

When we’re connecting with people in person, they get to see us in all our real-life glory.

What you may not realize is that you're absolutely gorgeous in your imperfection.

Some folks don't shy away from using real-life pictures — even if they're not perfect — but if you're one of those who uses a cute kitten as your avatar (or even the glamour photo you took 10 years ago), it's time to practice sharing just a teensy bit more of YOU. It's time for you to switch things up and show us what you look like today.

It might seem strange, but when we're trying to build our know, like, trust factor online, it's important to let people see what you really look like. Even if it's just once in a great while.

That means being brave enough to snap a selfie (or have someone take your picture) without fixing your hair or face first. Without worrying about your double chin, or that blemish on your forehead.

When you share real-life photos, you're also telling a story.

It might be something funny that happened to you. Or maybe something that gives us a glimpse of your non-professional life.

It could even be something most people don't know about you yet (like your karaoke habit or your strange collection of nesting dolls).

Whatever it is, you get major bonus points if you're making eye contact with the camera — as that translates to you making eye contact with those who see your photo.

Remember: Eye contact (at least in the Western world) is crucial to how we feel about people. If you want to grow your know-like-trust factor with people, you need to look them in the eye more often.

Here's one I recently snapped (and shared) as part of a series I'm calling "emoti-selfies":



As you can see, this is definitely not my most flattering view. (Much MUCH different from the polished and professional version you see on my About Page.)

It tells a story in that it conveys a clear sense of worry, or "oh crap."

I've been using my emoti-selfies in places where I'd normally use an emoticon. You know, instead of :0, I'll use this photo.

If you normally find yourself throwing out or deleting photos of yourself that are less than perfect, this is going to feel kinda hard.

I get that. It was hard for me at first, too.

And I'm not nearly as shy as a lot of people I know.

But You? You can totally do this.

Your challenge: Share a REAL-Life picture of yourself with your audience today. Just take a picture wherever you are. Even if you're at your desk. Let us get a glimpse of the real you.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Margie Goodchild: *This is me this afternoon.*

When I started online, I wouldn't have dreamed of putting up self-portraits, by professionals or otherwise. After some years of noting my own reactions to sites/profiles when people do and don't post a pic, I now think it's an important part of the connection parcel.

If anyone wants some encouragement, Vivienne McMaster is a gentle and inspiring teacher of how to take a pic of yourself you can look at or even love.

Mo Davies: *Because I got dead cranky when I was stuffing around with some friends on my Timeline about being badass and kickass as I get older (I'm 67 tomorrow!) when someone said that they weren't into aggression of any kind which got up my nose. Because being Badass and Kickass isn't about aggro, it's about being yourself, standing up for yourself and your values, being gutsy. And I think posting selfies on-line in this group is badass/kickass - overcoming fears and so on. Thank you for the space not only to rant but also to admire all the beautiful faces that have been posted so far. And I mean "beautiful". Love, kindness and goodness shine out of the faces on this group. xxxx*

Create an Open Inner Circle

By Nicole Fende

What we really long for, as human beings, is to be visible to each other.

-- Jacqueline Novogratz

Fun green boa?

Check.

David Lee Roth sparkly top hat? Check.

Blooming relationship? Check.



Is this a finance blog or a crazy take on fashion week?

This is a blog about small biz profit that has fun with outfits, mascots, villains, and one very contagious laugh.

Still reading? Then welcome to my inner circle, where the right brained, purpose driven, sometimes geeky, always entertaining, cool kids hang out. I'll help you grow your bottom line, and have fun doing it.

Profit Tip 1: The Power of an Inner Circle

People like to feel in the know. They like to be part of a group. A sense of belonging is incredibly strong, and though it pains me to say it, transcends numbers.

The staying power of Star Trek is a great example (of course when isn't Star Trek a great example?). Despite the fact it only ran for three seasons on TV in the 60's, with limited commercial success, it has become a part of the American psyche. Not to mention spawning 4 additional TV shows and 12 major motion pictures.

How did this happen? In a word, Trekkies.

With his original show and premise, Gene Roddenberry created a world that had found peace, a world where African Americans, Russians, Asians, women, and even aliens worked together, equally, on the same ship. This vision, which fed ideas those in-the-know liked to quote (the Prime Directive, red shirts, and anything Vulcan), created a powerful community.

The cult following, coupled with the popularity of reruns during the 70's, eventually resuscitated the show and brought about the first Star Trek movie. This example is particularly apt given the time frame. The TV show originally ran from 1966 to 1969. The first Star Trek movie was released in 1979.

As Téa Silvestre Godfrey of Story Bistro is fond of saying, this is slow cooking. The power of an inner circle is profound. Just remember it can never be microwaved.

Profit Tip 2: Make it Open, Memorable, and Natural

How can you do this as a business? Entertainment is supposed to be memorable! Entertainment by its very nature is open to everyone who is interested.

The answer is as simple and difficult as being you.

Online many people throw around the word *authentic*, to the point where in my mind it's lost its power. We're going to use natural instead. When you are just hanging out with friends and family, what comes naturally to you? What topics do you like to discuss? Shows you watch, books you read, issues you care about, things that make you laugh, pets, kids, interests....

Everyone has them. What are your most memorable ones?

I have eight light sabers in my office. It's safe to say I love sci-fi. People often comment on my laugh. I love laughing, so why not capitalize on my unique sound?

Let's return to that picture at the top of the blog for a minute. It's from a recent conference I exhibited at. My display was Maxine the Math Mutt (one of my mascots) in a boa proclaiming herself as a #ProfitDiva. The draw to my booth was taking a selfie with Maxine and celebrating your #ProfitDiva. I offered a variety of props, such as boas, a pink cowboy hat, a faux fur coat and my rock star leather jacket.

My booth was a huge hit! Why? Because I was having so much fun with it people wanted to come over and join in. They wanted to belong to my group. I greeted and welcomed everyone. It was an open inner circle.

Profit Tip 3: Focus and Relevance

You're ready to create an open, memorable, and natural open inner circle. Now what?

Pick something and focus on it. If you're like me, you could spend all day sharing different interests. Bouncing all over won't attract people, it will confuse them. In Star Trek there is only the Prime Directive – not the Top 20 Directives.

My focus? Making finance fun and relatable through my own quirks and my quirky characters. When I showed up to give a presentation yesterday to a group of business women, I had brought a feather boa with me. Those in the audience who already knew me immediately clicked and started telling others about being a #ProfitDiva.

Which leads to relevance. I'm not just saying Diva, or Rock Star (my first book is titled How to be a Finance Rock Star). I'm saying and showing how it directly relates to growing your bottom line. Profit Diva. Finance Rock Star.

What's Your Inner Circle?

How can people quickly identify that they are in your inner circle?

Your Challenge: What term, idea, saying, or image captures your business and makes it relatable? Maybe you like to wear fun socks. Maybe you're all foodies. Maybe you call yourself by a fun name *cough* Trekkies.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Sharon Hurley Hall: *When I first read Nicole's post, I thought: "I have an inner circle". Then I got to the open part. The thing that stands out for me is general word nerdery, which is easy to link to my business, but I'm not sure my clients would relate to it. I guess it would be up to me to tie them together. Maybe I could include a word of the day in my client emails or something.*

Beth Campbell Duke: *Love the Trek analogy/example. It's been quite helpful - but I'm still stumped as to what the Inner Circle will call themselves (and I've even asked them).*

Here's what I have so far: Much like the Star Trek future, the future that the Personal Brand Academy insiders see is one where we all know our strengths and values and know that we have the right, responsibility and the power to find or create work we love.

Our Prime Directive/Job One is to #BuildOnStrength. We also know our #SuperPower and who is in our #CareerPosse. Maybe we're the Personal Brand Posse....

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Beth, as you know, branding and naming things kinda go hand in hand. The names we give things are short hand ways to convey meaning and purpose. I'm not familiar with your brand, but I'd ask you to think about the metaphors and themes you use often in your own storytelling (via blogging and speaking). What do YOU love to lean on in terms of real life or fictionalized examples of what you teach?*

Beth Campbell Duke: *Thanks Téa - that's a good question as there's currently a difference between my blogging stories and how I speak with people. I think I'm getting more confidence to be more of myself in blogging.*

Tammy Vitale: *This feels really important and at the same time really hard. Well, it's hard because I'm in the middle of deciding if I want to do an on-line business again and what form it will take. And wrapping art and coaching women and Wylde Women all together. I think this is very much "slow cooking" and I hope it gets done in time to taste before I go on to the great energy in the sky! Téa Silvestre Godfrey can you talk a little more about what you mean when you say "love to *lean on* in terms of real life or etc.? I'm not really clear what "lean on" means here. Thanks! And my blogging seems to be about art and Wylde Women in its own way...not so much coaching. Hmmm. Coaching I don't want on-line anyways. I like face to face. Hmmm. I think I need to go journal about this instead of thinking out loud.*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Writing is a fabulous way to get clear about what you need to do! An example of metaphors I lean on: cooking, eating, food in general. Those have been my go-to themes for explaining the processes of marketing/branding.*

Tammy Vitale: *Ok. I think mine is story and how we create our lives by the stories we tell ourselves. That shows up in my art when it uses (in clay or writing or otherwise) words of power, and in my jewelry in that it isn't for everyone -- it is definitely statement jewelry (I like to think of it as "I AM" jewelry). That's a start! Thanks, Téa!*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Sometimes Tammy, it goes more sideways than that. Consider your topic: creativity/art/story. There are LOTS of other people talking along those very same lines. What will make you different is an unexpected addition to those things. Most people don't expect marketing consultants/coaches to use food as their point of view. That's where we're going with this. For Nicole, most people don't expect numbers people to be fun and joyful (or to have a personality at all). What OTHER part of you and your life could you bring in to your conversations?*

Nicole Fende: *Hi Beth Campbell Duke - always happy to meet another Trekkie! I love that you've got your own Prime Directive and Mission. To build on what Téa said, and to keep with the Trek theme, what is your equivalent of Starfleet? Characters say they're with / in Starfleet. The captains are commanding a Federation Starship...and having a consistent language is really important. It took me quite a while to create mine. Now people who know me can quote my common sayings.*

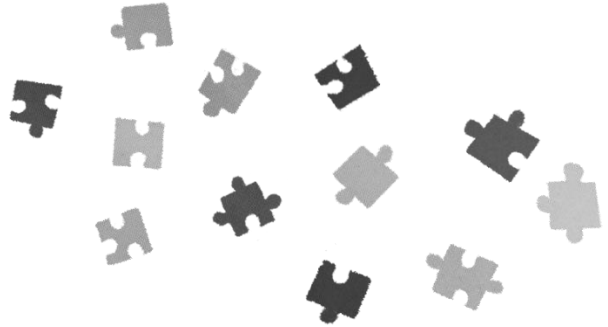
Bonita Richter: *Téa, I like your comment about metaphors. You've helped me get clear on something. For two years I've been thinking about my services as a collection of gourmet chocolate treats. Yet, I never knew what to do with that idea. I also created a 52-card deck of cards that have pictures of vintage French bon bons. They are beautiful. I didn't know how to link this wonderful product to everything else in my business/brand. It was always there...just disconnected.*

Be Incomplete

by Mark Silver

Don't smother each other. No one can grow in the shade.
-- Leo Buscaglia

Mark Silver is a designated Master Teacher in his Shadhiliyya Sufi lineage, and is currently studying for his Masters of Divinity with a specialty in Ministry and Sufi Studies. As a coach, consultant, mentor and spiritual healer, he's facilitated more than 2000 individual sessions with entrepreneurs and has led hundreds of classes, seminars, groups and retreats. His weekly writings and teachings are followed by thousands of people around the globe. He does a wonderful job of creating meaningful relationships – even online.



That's why I invited him to share a blooming tip with you. Here's something you may not have thought of before:

One of the more surprising things I've found as a way to have a more engaged relationship with our audience and to have them more engaged with us, is to simply be incomplete. And this is really a hard thing to do. What I mean by this is to leave stuff out. The reason why it's so hard is because when you have a caring heart, when you really want to help

people, you want to give them everything you've got and pour it out and give it to them.

So you write a blog post or a social media update that is fairly complete. But what I've found is that if I'm fairly clear that I have five or six points to make about, I don't know, some topic, then I can post two or three of them and ask, *Anybody got anything else?* And people are so happy to be able to add their own opinions, their own experiences, their own stories. *Hey, you missed this one.* It just creates such a great conversation.

So, yes. Be incomplete. Hold yourself back. Let other people fill it in. It's ok and it actually ends up being a really beautiful conversational start.

Your challenge: Today, leave something out and let others fill in the gaps.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Gloria Miele: *I was inspired to post a fill in the blank on this day of being "incomplete."*

Fill in the blank: "One of my top strengths that helps me be a better leader is _____."

Mark Silver: *Here's a question- what are all the ways to be incomplete? I see Gloria, Beth and Caroline did a fill-in-the-blank. That can be one way.*

Another way I mentioned in my video was to only make 2 points, even if you've got 5 (or 10) points you could make on a topic.

What other ways can you think of being incomplete?

Leslie Nipps: *Asking real questions seems like the best, time-tested way to do that productively. The key is “real” questions (not questions that it’s pretty clear you already have a stand on, etc.). Another way is putting out an article, image, or video, and asking for their authentic response to it.*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Somewhere here today I shared a link to Pace Smith’s podcast. One of the points they talked about was how to end a conversation naturally. Especially online. (There are some folks who always have to have the last word/make the last comment.) So, paying attention to our need to comment on EVERYTHING might be a good place to start.*

Mark Silver: *As you can see, I fight the “incomplete” thing- look how I worded my post. “What are ALL the ways to be incomplete?” Ha ha! Jokes on me. Ahem... “How many different ways can you think of to be incomplete?”*

Karen DeBolt: *I have a really hard time with this, too. Maybe it’s a Virgo thing to have everything tied up*

Maggie Dennison: *Stop to take a conscious breath...it’ll slow you down maybe long enough to allow the other person some space.*

Melanie Kissell: *This might be a little wacky or weirdo, Mark, but it could be fun. I like to write poetry and musical lyrics (I believe I have a couple of kindred spirits in #BYOR30). So ... similar to “filling in the blank”, start a poem and let your audience finish it.*

Lisa Braithwaite: *One thing I try to do in my group programs is NOT to jump in first and answer every question or make the first comment on everyone’s post. It can be really hard, because I don’t always have the most interactive participants, and I don’t want to leave their unanswered question sitting there for days. But if I’m the first to jump in on everything, then no one else will feel a need to contribute. Believe me, this is hard for the hereditary know-it-all that I am.*

Tara Leaver: *Lisa I do exactly the same. It's a fine line to gauge between keeping the flow of conversation {and risking others not responding if I do first} and letting things dry up {while trying to allow space for others to comment}!*

Leslie Nipps: *I just had a thought I think might be important: allowing incompleteness isn't the same as not responding. We all need response. How do we respond reliably without it needing to be an "answer"?*

Lisa Braithwaite: *I also find that it's different in writing versus speaking. With my live audiences, I'm very happy to leave lots of open space and incompleteness in order for them to participate and share their experiences. It's really important to engage with a live audience that way. But it's definitely harder in writing. I'm going to practice writing fewer "tips" in my next blog post.*

Tara Leaver: *I usually ask readers at the end of my blog posts what they would add, or if I've missed anything in a list style post for example. What about asking something like 'how would {or do} YOU approach this?'. I want to encourage different approaches as my way is obviously not the only way, and it gives other readers a) permission to find their own ways, and b) proof that there aren't any real 'rules.'*

Lisa Braithwaite: *Tara, I do that, too, but I think I'm still giving too much information up front.*

Tammy Vitale: *When I started blogging, I liked the whole thought to be neatly tied up by the end. But there are some subjects -- the real, deep down, dark, hard ones -- that can't be tied up at all, never mind neatly I do those a lot since I've restarted (just in the past month) posting again and the interesting thing is that I get a lot of private messages about how much the post meant. These aren't earth shattering, and I certainly don't come up with anything new and inventive, but they are my best posts, even when I leave them not sure exactly what I've said. I've been calling it "imperfection" and I guess that's different than incomplete, but they are kissing cousins. I like the incomplete concept a lot!*

Caroline van Kimmenade: *I'm thinking more and more that with the big topics we can be both complete and incomplete, by honing in on one small part of the journey. Like, how to get from D to E. That still leaves all the other connecting points incomplete. Another way would be to approach a topic from a particular angle or question. I find this helpful in answering questions people send me in a blogpost sometimes. There's a clear "need" and this helps leave many aspects of the whole issue incomplete, and so it usually brings up questions for people like: Yes, but what about in THIS situation, or what about if THAT is different.*

Molly Gordon: *These days I often find myself sharing insights that are ineffable. They can be summed up in just a few words, for example, "We live in the feeling of our thinking" or "We have infinite access to Divine Mind," but *explaining* them is anything but easy. In some ways, the more I say, the less true the words are. So I settle for being incomplete.*

Clara Soister: *Not finishing projects By nature I'm great at ideas -- follow through is another story! Okay -- adding on here -- realize the real point of the exercise is a way of being incomplete that is a good thing... Recently I have learned that it's best to leave my clients pondering/questioning at the end of a session and not insist on an Outcome. I have learned it's far more useful and effective in my therapy work, and by far one of the hardest things to do!*

Caroline van Kimmenade: *The idea of how incompleteness fuels engagement (people fill in the blanks with their own details) is really interesting. And tying that to the idea of "spaces" - the question for me becomes, how can incompleteness create a welcoming space for others to step into?*

Kamala Murphey: *Oh, Clara, I'm with you...ideas runneth over, but my follow-through, frankly, sucks!*

Adel Brown: *I am considering these questions about incompleteness ... How many details can I exclude and still have a whole? Are there steps I can combine? Will investing more time, attention and energy offer a return of equal "worth"? Are there questions I can ask instead of answers I can offer? Ask "What do you need?" Ask "Is this enough" partway*

through. And repeat “What else do you need?” Ask myself, “Can I can do less without being less?”

Carrie Pinsky: *As a career counselor there is a temptation to give people all kinds of support, tools, and ideas ALL at once. I used to do this in an effort to show my value and to be helpful. It is like stuffing bite after bite of cereal into a baby’s mouth even though the baby is not swallowing. The clients need little teeny bites of information offered up in tiny doses. So, in my world being incomplete is about allowing the client to take the lead and only offer up what they are asking for WHEN they ask for it. The other thing I am working on is asking very small questions without any back story. Just small prompts are all that is needed. Less is more. The client can fill in the blanks and think, work, and talk MORE than me.*

Jolina Karen: *Really enjoying this conversation. Love the idea of asking more questions rather than telling. Feel a little challenged when I consider that so many Huff Post articles are how to’s. Certainly for engagement it makes more sense to me to be posing questions, not always answering them.*

Linda Resca: *Working as a caregiver is like floating down a river. You see something lovely and interesting and think “Oh, let’s go there” and while you’re heading that way, everything changes and you’re going in a different direction. You have ideas about what to say and do w/your client and really, it’s best to be still and quiet until it becomes clear what your client needs/wants. Sometimes, words are needed for this clarity and sometimes, doing/saying less is best. If you know how to watch and listen, your client will fill in the blanks.*

Sandy McDonald: *Your concept Mark of being incomplete has reminded me of Brene Brown’s book, The Gifts of Imperfection. When we must cross every ‘T’ and dot every ‘i’ to leave no point unturned to strive for perfection, we’re aiming to be complete. But in doing, perhaps we’re shutting others out of our world, rather than inviting them in. Thank you for letting me look at this another way.*

Erin Obrien: *Reflecting on my biggest *enemies* for NOT leaving things incomplete (aka why I feel compelled to speak unnecessarily), I created this list. I see lots of themes in the posts above. I'm curious, can you add more? (1) wanting to witness others and not leave people hanging, feeling unheard or unseen; (2) wanting closure and clean endings so I can move onto other stuff; (3) feeling vulnerable, exposed, uncomfortable with the silence, (especially online when you can't see people's body language, or when there's time delays "What are people thinking? Are they ignoring me on purpose? Have they read it yet?"). (4) wanting to get on a brainstorming super highway, and think deeply and widely and thoroughly, leaving no stone unturned [hm, I'm heading in this direction with this list ... ironic huh?].*

Lee Drozak: *This is a great conversation and like Lisa and a few others I am practicing not answering every question of commenting on every item. It's an exercise in restraint for sure.*

Jeda Lewis: *Hey Caroline van Kimmenade -- love your thought: How can incompleteness create a welcoming space for others to step into? As some have mentioned, I too can struggle to hold back when writing posts / responding in comments, but I pride myself on being a thoughtful listener in-person, so this is a nice reminder to channel that listening & questioning side of me when responding in writing. I love how this wee collective is opening up & inspiring through small, but mighty thoughts.*

Oh, just had a thought -- like Sandy McDonald was linking it to perfectionism, for those of us who spend far too long ruminating over what they've written before posting, maybe hitting send or publish earlier, before it feels complete will not only save time, but allow us to be more vulnerable, more real...?

Caroline van Kimmenade: *That's a great point Jeda Lewis! and (to your second comment) I think being incomplete is definitely an aspect of much needed "imperfection". I have noticed that my goals for "responding" have shifted over time. There was a time when I felt compelled to e.g. answer every question I got through my website. Now, I can feel complete when I've decided to not respond to something at all, or respond with a question, or respond with an invitation to someone to book time with me (in response to Erin's comment, I recognize that need for closure a lot, and yet had to develop new ways to create the same feeling I'd get in the past from a satisfyingly completed conversation. Closure can also be adding an idea to your idea pool, and letting it sit there for now). Conversations have so many angles and layers to them, there's no real way to "complete" them anyway. I struggle with that in other ways now - like what I can "do" or answer in a particular timeframe for the kinds of questions that I do want to address.*

Jane Manthorpe: *Being a perfectionist. That is me. I just need to make it perfect "in my own eyes." But what I think is perfect isn't always what others think is perfect or is in fact, too much information. And that's another thing giving too much information and fearing of leaving out things because, as I coach, they might not get what I am telling them. I experience discomfort when a client is silent after what I teach them... have they got it? Do they understand? Are they bored or disinterested?.. All these questions go through my mind, rather than accepting a silence as them processing the information I give them, and waiting patiently with a smile. I am sure they will come back with a question if they do not understand or want clarification. It's a journey of stopping, listening and getting clarification if more information is needed at this present moment in time or just leave as, may be incomplete but still valuable.*

Add Heart to Your Email Newsletter

by Crys Williams

Give me your heart, make it real or else forget about it.

-- Rob Thomas & Itaal Shur

The sign-up strategy for my Pinch email newsletter did not go according to plan. And it was wonderful.

My Great Mistake

I made a well-thought-out, much-considered, totally justified, and reasonable mistake: I asked for only an email address.

Experts say we'll get way more subscribers if our email opt-in form has: 1) as few fields as possible and 2) doesn't ask for anything personal or identifying. Brevity and privacy encourages signups, so They say.

That sounds sensible and fair, yeh? Give website visitors the simplicity and anonymity they want and we'll gather as many subscribers as we can. Everybody wins. And if that means the emails we send them are impersonal? Then, well...at least we have a big list.



The First Try

So the first Pinch sign-up form asked for the absolute minimum: an email address. And the list grew faster than any list I'd ever had! It wasn't a huge list, but it was big enough that I felt I'd done the right thing. Soooo exciting to watch the subscriber number climb! But then I wondered...

Do I even know 252 people? These can't all be friends. Who the heck are these folks?

So I logged into MailChimp, looked at the list, and found hundreds of email addresses, a handful of smiling photos, and...nary a name. Alllllll those email addresses yet so few actual people. And it sucked.

People have email addresses, but email addresses are NOT people.

Getting Real

I cringed at the thought of sending my weekly chunk o' love to hundreds of strangers. That's not what I wanted or intended and it's totally not my style. So I went on a quest for real names.

Often a subscriber's first name was in their email address and some subscribers I recognized by their photo. But equally often I needed to check Facebook or venture to a website to fetch a name from a byline or About page. Some names escaped me. Cryptics such as sexybunny1264@yahoo.com don't offer much of a trail to follow :-)

It took hours to update all the profiles and it was worth every minute. Not every subscriber was a friend but now everyone was familiar.

Soon after, the weekly issues of Pinch began with Hey <Your First Name > ! and that was great enough for a while. But not for long. Because one day I realized there's what your Momma & Daddy named you and then there's what you like to be called.

Real Real Names

On a whim, and on Facebook, I asked subscribers for their favorite nickname so their Pinch profile could be updated with their real *real* name. Based on a whole heap of happy comments —

The next Pinch included an Update Your Profile link so readers could change their name themselves, encouraging them to make it any name they wanted, even a name they've never been called but would like to be, and a name field was added to the sign-up form on my website, but instead of the default "First Name" it says "Your favorite nickname."

Most folks kept their given name...but the folks who didn't? Holy wow.

Getting Really Real

On Facebook I met people who never had a nickname but didn't want to invent their own, so I had the unexpected pleasure of reading through their Facebook feeds and websites and gifting nicknames based on what I found there: Kitty. Share Bear. Bell.

I was asked (in private) to add names reserved for family and names people hadn't been called since their parents died.

There are a bushel of darling names:

Sexy. Precious. Pookie (and Pooky). Snookems. Sweet Girl. Honeybunny. Morning Glory. Sunshine.

And literal pet names:

Songbird. Kitty. Monkey. Bunny.

There are names from the produce aisle:

Pumpkin. Pickles.

...and the bakery:

BonBon. Cupcake. Chocolate e'claire.

I met the Awesome Family:

Awesomepants, Nurse Awesome, and Your Radical Awesomeness.

...and a couple of deities:

the Goddess of Fabulousness and a Goddess Formerly Known as — —

There are loving digs like Menace and Little Rascal, plus one name even Google can't identify: Banachinesi.

And of course there are classics like SuzieQ, Kdizzle, and Friend.

Wow. :-)

So.

I don't watch my subscriber numbers anymore but I sure do keep an eye out for new nicknames.

It's important to me, and apparently to them, to know what folks prefer to be called, what their friends and family call them. It's enriching to see how they see themselves, whether they use the name their parents gave them, one they picked up along the way, or something they invented in the moment they signed up.

To know the name that connects them to others or sets them apart is a secret treasure.

It Begins As It Ends

The Pinch newsletter has always ended on what I'm leaving the week with and what I left behind. A tiny intimacy. A private truth. And now it begins the same way.

Can you imagine how good it feels to receive email addressed to you...the real you?

Hey Monkey!

Hey Cupcake!

Hey Your Radical Awesomeness!

Can you imagine how good it feels to send it? :-)

Your Challenge: Ponder the question of personalization for your email list. Will you use merge fields? And if so, how?

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Crystal Pina: *Great post Crys. I love email tips. I immediately changed my opt in form. It now says, "What do you want me to call you when I send you awesome stuff?" and "What email address do you want them sent to?" for the email spot. Combine that with the tip to send a personal message as soon as they sign up.*

Dina Eisenberg: *Crys, I'm percolating on your deep questions about my subscriber knowledge. I'll admit that my newsletter is not my most shining moment. There's a disconnect for me because I get so much mail that I hate to send it. Working on that and I'd love some ideas. So yes, I'm*

thinking about this hard. I once heard someone, perhaps Pat Flynn, say that he contacted every subscriber. My book list is small enough that I can do that. (Who knew a small list would be a blessing?) We'll see what happens when I get real and personal with folks. What an experiment.

Nicla Williams: *I was reflecting on what was said about becoming more ‘personal’ in my email communications and I’m not entirely convinced that my subscribers, all 16 of them!, would appreciate me addressing them with a nickname! I believe that first names work just fine and in my opinion the personal aspect can only come through doing ‘videos’ and 1 to 1 contact through Skype or group contact through teleseminars and webinars*

Follow Them First

by Téa Silvestre Godfrey

*It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front.
-- Nelson Mandela*

*One of the things
the experts tell us
to do when
someone new
subscribes to our
email list is ask
them to also follow
us on Twitter, like
us on Facebook, circle us on...well, you get the idea.*



I don't know about you, but when someone asks ME to do that, I'm like "What? It's not enough that I just gave you my email?"

So awhile back I decided to flip this around and instead ask people to share links to THEIR social profiles so I could follow THEM.

The idea here is to let people know two things:

1. You think of them as real human beings and would like to get to know them better.
2. You're interested in having actual, for real, two-way conversations with them.

To be clear, this is NOT an email where you ask them what their biggest problem is related to whatever-it-is-you-do-or-sell.

This is an invitation to your new subscriber to share a bit of who they are as human beings – online and off.

Not everyone will respond, but many will.

And if you take just a minute to read and respond, you'll be amazed at how connected you feel to that person.

Here's what mine looks like...(see next page)

Story Bistro

Hi there, *[FNAME]*!

Cool beans. You made it through all those hoops.

THANK YOU for honoring me with your presence here!

Before you head out to cook up something tasty, I'd love to know YOU a little bit better.

I mean, you know who I am. But that's just one-sided, right?

Please take a moment (if you have one) and hit reply to this little message.

Share a tidbit or two about where you live, what kind of business you have (or are thinking of building) and where you hang out on social media. Let me know what's on your mind.

When you do this, I promise you two things:

1. I'll follow/like/circle you where ever you point me to (it's a *great* way for me to get to know you better); and
2. You'll have my undivided attention and listening ear.

Yes, I respond personally to ALL my email (except SPAM) and YES, I always love to hear from you.

Here's to blooming our new relationship!

Cheers,



p.s. - If you enjoy getting REAL mail (you know, that analog kind), please be sure to share your

On average, I'd say about 20% of people actually reply to these. And yes — I follow through with a reply back within 24 hours, also following them on social media when they share their links.

NOTE: There are also folks who say you should always follow-back everyone who connects with you on social media. Twitter advocates, for example, have long had a reputation for urging folks to follow back everyone that follows them. My advice: don't do it. ONLY follow people on social media channels that you KNOW are quality connections. There are lots of people using this follow-back mentality to build up the number of people who follow them (e.g., it will look like they're more important than they are — vanity, pure and simple). Unless you have a plan for getting to know each and every person you follow, those connections will end up as meaningless, weak ties.

Your Challenge: Follow Your E-mail Subscribers. (You'll want to fix your standard "thank you" email to reflect your invitation to your new peeps.)

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *I often connect and follow my followers, but love Téa's example. There is something about sharing the intention that makes it even better.*

Sharon Hurley Hall: *I'm editing my thank you page and asking a question. Here's what I wrote:*

You're in!

Thanks so much for signing up to get my updates. I'm thrilled!

We don't know each other that well yet, but that's something I want to change. Hit reply to this email and send me your Twitter handle or Facebook page URL so I can follow you.

While you're emailing me, I'm curious. What's the main thing you're hoping to learn from these updates?

Hit reply and let me know - it will keep me on track to make sure I deliver what YOU want.

Look forward to getting to know you.

Sharon

Nurture Your Connections

by Cigdem Kobu

Gardeners are good at nurturing, and they have a great quality of patience, they're tender. They have to be persistent.
-- Ralph Fiennes

I'm a hard-core introvert.

The last time I took the Jung Typology Test, I turned out to be 99% introverted.

That means, like all other introverts, I need my quiet time, I carefully choose the people I connect with, I refrain from interacting with too many people in a short period of time, and I enjoy fewer but deeper friendships.



It's not that I don't like people or the human connection. I do. Very much.

But I need to safeguard my energy, which tends to decrease quickly in crowded or loud environments – whether online or offline. Otherwise, I won't be able to get anything done and will feel drained all the time.

On the other hand, I discovered a very practical method for building amazing relationships with many of my right people (many of whom later turn into raving fans, clients or members of my private community.)

Yes, in spite of my quiet and solitude-loving nature.

And that method is building connections slowly, with one person at a time. From the comfort of my inbox.

I discovered the power of focusing on fewer but deeper relationships. Getting to know people with one more email, one more question and answer, one more email chat.

I did it without leaving the comfort of my cozy, quiet world. And the main tool that helped me has been my Signature Freebie (which, in my case, is a 12-part mini email course sent to my new subscribers every other day.)

By the way, do you know the book *The Little Prince* by Saint-Exupéry? I love each and every story in it, but one chapter is my favorite: The Taming of the Fox.

In the chapter called “The Taming of the Fox,” the Fox and the Little Prince encounter each other for the first time. The Fox is afraid of the Little Prince who wants to befriend him. Timidly, he asks the Little Prince to “tame” him first.

Astounded, the Little Prince asks the Fox what “taming” means, and the Fox replies by saying that it is “establishing ties.” Then he adds that only after the process of “taming” they will come to mean something to each other and will need each other.

“Without ‘taming,’” the Fox says, “for me, you’ll be nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I will be to you nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But after you tame me, you and I will become unique for each other.”

What the Fox means in the context of the story is that it matters to make friends and to establish a deeper kind of relationship – slowly.

In the context of creating and offering a Signature Freebie, “taming” means showing your Perfect Person (your “Dearest”) without doubt that you are the one she’s been waiting for all this time so that her problem (as related to your line of work) is finally solved.

According to the Fox in the Little Prince, unless you take the time to build a genuine relationship with a person and get to really understand her, that person will remain indistinguishable for you from the hundreds of thousands of people in the world – and you, too, will not be “unique” or special to him or her.

The same is true for you and the people you want to connect with and the people you want to serve. You have to take the time to build a deeper kind of relationship, get to know each other and make friends first.

But how does the Little Prince tame the Fox?

On the first day, he sits down on the grass at a little distance from the Fox and says nothing. On the following days, the Little Prince comes to the designated spot always at the same time and sits himself down again. But each day, he sits just a little closer to the Fox, who keeps eyeing him out of the corner of his eye.

Eventually, by the time the Little Prince sits right next to the Fox, they already know each other well, and a warm, genuine friendship has formed. And that friendship is there to stay.

This sounds like a process that requires an enormous amount of patience and generosity – the same kind of patience and generosity you need when building a close relationship with your people.

And that's exactly where your Signature Freebie will help if you:

- Choose to make it a mini email course,
- Create it as a truly relevant solution for the major need or problem of your Perfect People,
- Make it as high-quality and valuable as a premium offering, and

- Drip it slowly through emails sent at intervals until all pieces of the process are delivered.

This will enable your Perfect People to get to know you slowly and at a deeper level as each piece of the process arrives in their inbox. They will get used to your voice, your stories, your style.

And they will appreciate the value you deliver in a free offering. This will lead them to want to know more about you. And they will also start asking small questions here and there and wonder how you'll respond (if you – hopefully – encourage them to spill their hearts and ask their burning questions.)

Building genuine relationships and deep connections with people is hard work. Even harder if you're introverted like me. But it all begins with the first "hello" – your free offer and your gift.

The other day, the fabulous Hiro Boga posted the following update on her Facebook wall. She said:

*"Love is not a strategy. It's a quality of soul, a gift of essence.
So are generosity, gratitude and appreciation.*

*When you harness these qualities to an agenda –
whether that's building your list, promoting your offers or
growing your networks – you disconnect from the
deep sources of support and nourishment.*

*The real danger isn't lack of authenticity –
it's the suffering caused by disconnection."*

If your Signature Freebie is something mediocre you just threw out there to bribe people, it won't work.

Similarly, if you cling to your agenda, harbor expectations or focus on results, it won't work. You won't build those connections.

It. Just. Won't. Work!

For your Signature Freebie to turn into an irresistible invitation for your Perfect People to connect with you, it has to prove to them that:

- You really wove a lot of love, care and usefulness into it because you really understand them,
- You gift it to them wholeheartedly and without any expectations,
- You know how to stay relevant and meet them where they are, and
- You can show them that you can help them in a style no one has done before.

So, today, I invite you to reflect on your Signature Freebie, which will allow you to connect with your Perfect People through the comfort of your inbox. Start with the following questions.

- What can you create as your Signature Freebie?
- What major problem of your Perfect People will it solve?
- What solution will it offer? Why is that solution unique?
- What hasn't been sufficiently/remarkably covered or addressed by other people in your industry before?
- What results can someone who takes your freebie and uses it expect?
- How can you infuse your point of difference into it?
- How do you want your people to feel after using your freebie?
- What kind of words would you want them to use for describing it to someone else?
- How can you make it incredibly useful and undoubtedly outstanding?
- How will you differentiate it from the freebies of others in the same industry (think content, structure, voice, design, functionality, format, delivery method, etc.)
- What is the best way to start working on creating your Signature Freebie?
- What do you need to get prepared and then to get it done?
- What will you do to ensure you're taking baby steps and preventing overwhelm?

Be generous, Give your all. And create your Signature Freebie from a place of kindness and care. Show your right people you really understand their needs and problems.

Create such a useful piece of work that your ideal people feel the desire and urge to hit “reply” and write to you.

Because that is what you exactly want: the organic opportunity to connect with your “Most Perfect People” in the quiet, cozy comfort of your inbox and build multiple profound layers of connection and conversation without having to go out into the loud and crowded world of online business and social media.

“It’s not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.”

~ Mother Teresa

Your Challenge: Decide...How will your Signature Freebie show your ideal target audience that you really get them? Is it valuable, unique, relevant, and perspective-shifting enough to make your Perfect People want to hit “reply,” write to you and start a peaceful conversation? How will you prove to your Perfect People through your Signature Freebie that you are unique for each other?

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Jackie Levin: *Loved the Little Prince analogy and the thoughtfulness of ideas for the free gift. Being new at the website business thingy, I’ve been feeling pressured (internally) to “just get something done.” What I’m taking away as I sit with your questions, is not how “big” it has to be. But to put my energy into how will this be in service to my peeps. As I*

work on this today, your questions will be sitting right by my side as I do.

Cigdem Kobu: *So glad, Jackie! True. It doesn't matter how big it is. What really matters is how relevant it is to the problem you set out to help your people solve and how uniquely powerful the solution you offer in your gift is. If it's useful, if it reflects your genuine voice, and if it really makes them experience some sort of an a-ha! moment, they will want to stay in touch. It also helps to drip it in portions so they get used to receiving something they like from you. Let us know here what you decide to create!*

(And... it doesn't have to be perfect. You can create it and then keep improving it as time goes by. I always start my projects with the minimum requirements in place and without looking for final perfection and then observe, improve and polish continuously. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to get anything out the door because of the perfection monster inside!)

Jackie Levin: *I know her (my inner perfectionist) very well and also my overzealous (AKA passionate, creative, good at starting things) part that keeps thinking of what to add before the first thing is done. So thank you for this bit. I'm a holistic nurse and my website (almost up--and by the way, loved how you spoke about your process) is how we health professionals take care of ourselves, while taking care of others using mind-body-spirit strategies. My idea for the gift is a brief guided meditation bringing the feeling spaciousness (because we all feel really busy) and then tips on how to bring this into their day, throughout the day. As I'm writing, I'm seeing what can accompany the audio/video is a PDF that gives a bit more info. I will now think of how I might make this into a something they can receive at least for a few days over a week, perhaps.*

Cigdem Kobu: *Jackie, you can create a 3-part mini course on meditation, spaciousness, the holistic approach to it, how-to begin so that it really becomes an everyday habit and a part of their lives, why it matters, tips to transform it from a "should" to a "source of joy" etc.*

And on the 5th day after they sign up you can add to the 3rd and last part a soothing guided meditation you record for them and offer as a downloadable audio they can always go back and listen to.

I'd also add two follow-up emails (one week and one month after you send the recording) to ask if they're using it, what has shifted, what gets in the way, if they have any questions you can help with etc.

You can automate this whole process so that whoever signs up goes through it automatically.

Immerse Them

By Michele Christensen

"Pull up a chair. Take a taste. Come join us. Life is so endlessly delicious."

— Ruth Reichl

Deeper relationships are exactly what I'm about, both personally and professionally.

I'm a relationship and intimacy expert. With everyone from my husband to clients, to my email 'love notes' subscribers, INTIMACY is one of the core values of my brand (along with depth, playfulness, and excellence).



So I'm thrilled to be part of the conversation about creating deeper online relationships.

The most effective thing I've done in the past year to deepen online relationships has been to create an immersive experience. I call it "OooCamp" – it rhymes with Boot Camp. It gives you an experience of what you're like when you're steeped in pleasure. Today, I want to share more with you about my experience with that, but let's do the super-quick

version first, so you can take two minutes, take one action, and get on with your day if you prefer.

The quick action:

To deepen your online relationships, think of the one insight or shift you would like to “be,” represent, and provide in your community. Mine? Daily, toe-curling pleasure and all its effects on a woman and her world.

The rest of the story....

Here’s how this project came about for me: I wanted to serve more people, more deeply. And I wanted to give my friends a chance to taste my – admittedly intimate – work, without hiring me. So I looked at the most powerful changes that happen for my clients through our work. One of the things that came up was that both single and partnered clients’ lives change when they recognize that pleasure is an essential nutrient for women. For everyone, actually, but women tend to get really depleted of pleasure and to forget how different they feel, think, and act when they’ve got enough of it.

But it’s very simple, really, to re-introduce it. So I created a 21-day ‘boot camp’ to help women bring pleasure back into their daily experience and to look back at the end and see how differently they feel about every facet of life.

Why creating a 21-day immersion worked well:

People want it. It’s like a product that’s worth paying for, but it’s free. It’s enticing to start now and know that 21 days from now, you’ll be in a different place. So it’s expanded my reach tremendously, doubling my list in the first two months I had it, and more since then, even though I haven’t promoted it deliberately since then.

It felt generous and expansive for me. I like doing things that make me feel creative and serviceful. This totally hit the spot.

It's given my friends a deeper experience of my genius than they get just from our conversations or from reading my weekly love notes or social media posts.

It gives my friends and colleagues something easy and fun to talk about that's free. Sharing my immersion experience is like telling people about your local ice cream store's free cone day coming up... It's fun and helpful and easy.

It's created more intimacy with other community-conveners. I have more to share with them, they get to know me, and it's resulted in unsolicited invitations to be a guest expert, a contributor, a speaker, and a coach.

It's created intimacy with my community. They hear my "voice" (my program is all written) every day for 21 days. I invite them to write back and they do. By the end, people feel they know me and I've given them something amazing: their pleasure. They tangibly feel my love for them. They trust me, they talk about me, and they buy things from me.

Another example

My friend Hannah Marcotti is doing a 40-day immersion right now called "A Woman's Thirst." Participating from the outside, as both a subscriber to her community and a "customer" of her paid programs, I love watching the immersive quality of this free offering. I can see how it both tickles long-time fans, gives her a chance (with guest prompts from friends and colleagues) to share others' voices, and gives newcomers to her community a sweet and substantive taste of what it's like to be in Hannah's world.

Your turn

Whether it's an every-day-for-7 or 10 or 21 or 30 days thing or a different sort of immersion, I encourage you to think about how you could immerse your newest community members (and your existing community too) into one of the most valuable aspects of your work. Naturally, there's far more value in actually working with you (or buying your products) than they'll get in this free experience, so you don't have to worry you're 'giving away the farm' just because your free immersion experience is wildly valuable. Don't forget the tremendous power of reciprocity. Whether consciously or subconsciously, we all LOOK for a way to 'pay back' someone who's been generous with us with no strings attached. Your right people want more from you and will run to pay for other offerings after enjoying your immersion.

How to create your own:

1. Look at the best things that happen for clients or customers through your business.
2. Ask "how could THIS be easy for me to provide for free to an unlimited number of people?"
3. Think of how long a program you'd need. How quickly could it be done? How elegantly?
4. Build your material into an auto responder email sequence and/or a series of web pages. You can include external links, audios, videos, .pdf worksheets or recipe cards or anything you want.
5. Find ways to get people to take action or do things differently. The deepening of the relationship comes when you make a difference for them, and that happens when they change their feelings or behavior.

What you might do differently:

I am not a shining example of “how it’s done.” I’m more like a shining example of “done is better than perfect.” You can always refine later. But if I were guiding you (and I am) I’d encourage you to add some of these refinements I didn’t make at first:

Create the whole thing up-front.

I wrote OooCamp as I went, the first 21 days. 21 days of must-write content? Perfect recipe for writer’s block, even if you’re starting with an outline. The deadline was oppressive. Do yourself a favor and get at least 5-10 days ahead, if you can’t pre-write/pre-film/pre-record the whole thing.

Integrate social media more

I’ve seen some great examples of people giving an “Instagram challenge” to others to post photos related to the challenger’s business... And obviously you can ask people to share with a hashtag or to tag you on Facebook as they post about different aspects of what they’re up to, related to your program. All very good ideas for helping your immersion experience grow. The best integrations are organic parts of the immersion versus separate “please share” asks.

Make your program shorter

I did 21 Days (though the latest science shows that a habit takes more like 40 to change your brain). I figured 10 days makes the difference, but I know how busy I am and how scattered my attention is, so I wanted people to be able to drift off, come back, and still get the benefit. Maybe a tight 7 day program is your style. Whatever it is, do it deliberately.

Offer a little upsell

I’m working this in right now, and it’s dead simple: We’re putting the whole program (mine includes a wealth of information about the female body and different types of pleasure) into an e-book you can read all at once

or refer back to. I'll sell that for \$17 or \$27 or something like that. You might sell a premium version of your program with more access to you, or the upsell might be to something else. I really was just wanting to deepen and widen my community versus driving sales directly, so if you are, too, don't focus too awful much on selling to your immersion participants in the immediate term. I've been richly rewarded with no direct offer.

Host the content as web pages versus just as email messages

It's probably more strategic, web-traffic wise, to put your content on web pages and have your emails be links back to that content, though that's not how I did it initially.

Your Challenge: Decide...What else will you do to make your community bloom and deepen intimacy, widen your circle of connections, and serve richly?

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Tara Leaver: *Absolutely love Michele's post today about creating an immersion experience; this is something that's been in the back of my mind for AGES, and it's so great to have some more concrete ideas about how to approach it. I think also it's taken me a while to really understand and get enough clarity and work with enough people to really get a feel for what's most needed and most valued by my students and clients.*

What I'd like to do is a series of short videos - a little like my thank you gift for signing up to my Artnotes, which is 3 drawing videos - with a specific focus in mind. A lot of my work is about freedom, and there's a permission element too, so I think it'll be with that in mind, although obviously I need to give this more thought and let it percolate a bit so it really blooms into a rich idea! I'm planning to run a drawing challenge in

October so that may give me more ideas or even be a way to create content and promote the immersion before I've completely created it. Thank you Michele, I'm newly excited about this little project!

Gloria Miele: *Lynda.com recently did a free, 30-day drawing challenge that I was really excited to find. An artist did a 1-2 minute video assigning the task, you completed it, then watched the follow up video of him doing the task. I did Day 1 and drew a cute cat I was really proud of. On Day 2, there were 3 images, each representing motion, and the task was way too difficult (here, kitty, kitty!!), beyond my capabilities and quite overwhelming. So I gave up. Was it my low frustration tolerance? My lack of drawing ability? Maybe. But I also think the lessons needed to be more do-able or at least flexible for different levels to keep involved, motivated and having fun. It will also depend on your target audience for this. Do you want to get non-drawers drawing or artists who want some additional structure? Something in between? I'd also be interested to see what you come up with. Good luck (and, yes, I am procrastinating like a boss writing this post instead of working on a project [yay, I used it in a sentence!].)!*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Yes! It's definitely a good idea to keep the assignments small and doable. When they're too big or too hard, people get discouraged and leave. And often, what we think of as "too easy" is just right.*

Have a Real Conversation

by Téa Silvestre Godfrey

A single conversation across the table with a wise man is better than ten years mere study of books.

-- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

We Crave the Sound of Your Voice and the Gaze of Your Eyes



What you say — the words you use to communicate and the way you string them together — is definitely important to how people understand you. But not nearly as important as your nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication represents two-thirds of our communication. And yes, the tone — or sound — of your voice as well as things like your blink rate, how long you make eye-contact, even the way you move your eyebrows, are all considered non-verbal cues.

If communication is key to meaningful relationships (and I'm pretty sure it is), it stands to reason that this is something we need to work on.

It's also why we form trust and stronger relationships so much faster in person than we do online. Because when you and I are sitting across from each other, we have access to the whole communication pie.

Knowing this, one of the first things I did after I launched my business online was to reach out to the folks on my list and invite them to Skype with me for 15 minutes. To share a bit about themselves and their lives. (I promised there'd be NO salesy conversations. At. All.) I even offered to buy them coffee!*

I must've held nearly 100 Skype sessions over the course of three months. And it was worth every minute.

I got to hear stories about where people lived. What they did when they weren't working on their business. And what mattered most to them.

Some of our conversations were deeply profound. Some were friendly and light. But ALL of them were a true gift.

Real. Human. Connections.

Today, I do a lot of my teaching and other work via Google Hangouts for exactly this reason. Seeing people "in the flesh" allows each of us in the meeting to put a face with the voice and to see nonverbal cues in action.

It's made all the difference in terms of depth of relationships.

Would you like to try it? Need a little practice? Let's schedule something!

The only rule is that we won't talk business. Okay?

*Yes, I was prepared to send each person a Starbucks card. Most folks generously told me they didn't need the coffee bucks and were just glad to have a heart-to-heart with me.

Your challenge: Invite one of your Facebook friends or email subscribers — someone you've never talked to before — to join you for a quick Skype or Google Hangout conversation. Don't forget to enable your cameras!

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Brandy Lynn: *Here's my take on old school communication. Random postcard exchanges. You are the facilitator; now get your list connected to each other! I did this in July with a fabric postcard exchange and got over 70 people involved from all over the world. Checkout #CQT podcast #46 at www.brandylynndesigns.com to learn all about it.*

Nicla Williams: *I totally agree that good old fashioned face to face contact and conversation can do wonders for building rapport and trust. In fact it has inspired me to offer a free skype session to my subscribers to get to know them better!*

Susan Loughrin: *I did not write today, because this topic, while I think it is a valuable idea, just did not resonate with me as a strategy for my business.*

For me, connecting with others becomes about time. I find the best way for me to be face-to-face is through workshops and retreats (big undertakings that are important to my work and bring in the face-to-face live).

I think it is so very important to connect face-to-face, but committing to this with my peeps, via skype is just not where I go for several reasons. 1. Time in my own schedule; 2. Time in others' schedules; 3. Over-stimulation for me to be on Skype and many of my peeps prefer a more anonymous setting

I have attempted monthly calls, monthly webinars with live "chats"...several ways to connect and I have found, at least for me, people do not show up (many reasons for this, too). This is of course different than what you are suggesting, however, it has many "blocks" for me that end up creating more work than connection with my tribe.

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *For sure this kind of thing takes time. And I'm not advocating you try to talk to everyone on your list in the same month. Yes - speaking and workshops and retreats are fabulous ways to have face time with the people who matter. But -- if you're like me -- it can be difficult to have a quality, private conversation with folks in those settings, too. There are different dynamics in groups versus 1-on-1. I don't do these conversations on a regular basis anymore for exactly the reason you pointed out, Susan. And I miss them. When we're done with the BYOR30, I plan to reinstate by setting aside ONE 15 minute appointment by Skype per week. Obviously I won't be able to chat with everyone. But the connections matter. Even in small, tiny doses.*

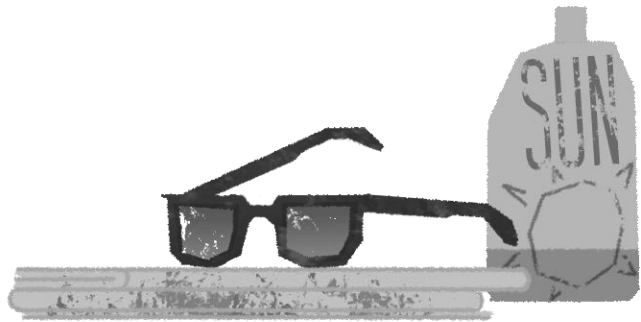
Shine Light on Someone Else

by Tanya Geisler

What we really long for, as human beings, is to be visible to each other.

-- Jacqueline Novogratz

*Many (many)
years ago, I
signed up for a
course that Pam
Slim and Chris
Guillebeau co-
created.*



I knew OF Chris, to be sure, but took the course based on my (fabulous) experience of working with Pam.

The sign-up process was smooth and seamless. Several hours later, I received a separate email from Chris on my iPhone. It was so long ago that I don't have the words verbatim, but it was along the lines of:

*Hey. Great to meet you. Love your site. Love your Mom's mantra.
You're clearly living it well. - Chris.*

I actually remember stopping in my tracks and rereading it three times. Nope, it was clearly not an auto responder.

Shaking my head, I walked on, wondering:

Who had time to go through and read every registrant's website?

Who had time to respond to each registrant, shining such light on them?

Chris did. He MADE the time.

Since then, I've purchased his books, interviewed him in my Thing-Finding-Thursdays series, flew across the country (twice) to attend his World Domination Summit (and have invoked dozens of other people to do the same) and speak often of him and his work (in fact, just did this morning with a client).

Yes, yes. He does good work, is a prolific writer and has reams of good information to share. But I've been a devotee of his since THAT email. In less than 10 minutes of his time, and in under 20 words, his desire to connect to where I was, his desire to shine a bit of light my way has been a gift that I have cherished and have learned from. He's been in my heart ever since, and from that place of deep trust, I've helped build his audience.

++++++

So often, we stop short of sharing what we see in others. We think that by doing so, we are being arrogant, or ego-driven, or overtly bold. We wonder if they'll doubt our sincerity.

But what if you dared to shine the light on someone else anyway? You have it in abundance. What if you just.gave.it.away?

Your Challenge: Think of five people in your realm that you admire. It could be someone in your audience, your client base, your colleague/peer group, or someone you look up to.

Tell them what you love about what they're doing or standing for. Right now. Be honest. Be specific. (For inspiration, you can try any of the following options below ... or all of them as long as it's authentic.)

Thank you for modeling xyz for me. It's an edge I continue to want to grow, so I'm grateful to you.

From your work/words/teachings, I've learned/I am learning xyx.

Because of what you've shown me, I am shifting xyz.

The impact of shifting xyz will mean this in my life.

And when they ask to use these words in a testimonial, say: yes, of course.

Because you meant the words. They were rooted in your truth and in your heart and you have plenty more of that to give. PLENTY.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Shining the spotlight on others is something I already do, though could arguably do even more. And I'm pretty specific in letting people know what I value about our relationship and interaction. The challenge here for me would be to identify that for some newer relationships.*

Melanie Kissell: *Today's challenge is right up my alley. Thanks, Tanya, for a beautiful post on a bright and shiny subject. Truth bomb: Nothing makes my heart smile more than finding opportunities to add a little something special to someone's day. It's unconditional giving. I don't look for acknowledgment, nor do I expect it.*

When I see good work -- something that excites me, inspires me, rings a bell, or floats my boat, I share it. One of things I love doing is linking to colleagues and fellow blogging buddies in my posts. It's my way of giving

credit where credit is due. It's my way of saying, "Thank you for being YOU."

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Shining the light thoughts...this was a thought-provoking post for me, Tanya Geisler. Thank you. And for reasons beyond just the advice you've gifted us with.*

One of the things I've noticed while wrangling projects like this one (AND participating in them), is that my expectations of the ways we interact in the digital world are constantly challenged.

For example, I have every intention of staying personal, replying personally to every email, and staying on top of my promises and obligations. As do others, I'm sure. But when I fail to live up to my own standards (or someone else fails to live up to mine), I get a little crazy. I'd like to NOT get that way.

Do you ever feel this way? If so, how do you deal with those feelings? Do we lower our standards? I'm pretty sure I know what you're going to say, but I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Tanya Geisler: *At my very best, I try to remember that I'm human. That as long as my intentions are good and that I am managing the impact of my actions in the best possible way that I know how, then I am satisfied.*

At my very best, I try to remember that everyone else is human...and to assume the best in their intentions and that they care about their impact. That is at my best.

The reality is a little more malleable. I worry about disappointing people (a LOT.) I worry about not meeting others' expectations of me. AND I see that this is a trap. And a trap that can keep us from opening up in the widest possible way as we are concerned that people start to disconnect from us if we don't give them exactly what they want. About tipping the scales from connection to disconnection.

I'm a little less concerned about being disappointed by others, mind you. If they are someone who is in close proximity to my heart, I am willing to have the intent/impact conversation and look to redesign with them: "you can count on THIS from me and I'd like to be able to count on THIS from you...and am open to what you would like from me, etc." And if they are not, well, I am working towards sending light and love and thanking them for the lessons. That again, is at my best.

Jen Loudon: *I notice that most of the stories about people answering all their emails, etc. are young men, or just men. Maybe they don't have a life outside of work? Anyway, I don't know how they do it and frankly, I don't care. It's just another standard that someone else set. What's my standard for connection and care? What's human and sustainable for me today?*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *LOL, Jen -- I was totally thinking the same thing. I DO know that before Mr. Perfect and all the kids moved in, I got a LOT more done in my business. Having a well-rounded life feeds me. I suppose I'm still measuring myself against pre-family standards?*

Jen Loudon *Or just some standard that's not yours today. What's here today?*

Tanya Geisler *"What's my standard for connection and care? What's human and sustainable for me today?" - Jen Loudon. Oh yes.*

Janelle Hardy: *Tanya I just read your Blooming post, and it is so resonant with how I try to live my life, and be in connection with people.*

I have a couple examples. One came this morning from a friend I rarely see, she lives in Ottawa, I live on Vancouver Island. However, she is expressive in her appreciation of my writing, and in fact she is one of the reasons I finally started a newsletter and blog. The simple note she sends once or twice a year, in which she confirms she's silently read every single letter and story I sent, and in which she tells me, in a couple brief sentences, how much they mean to her (and how she sees me). This means the world to me.

My own way of trying to shine a light comes from a pet peeve. I really don't like getting Facebook friend requests without a personal note attached. Even when it's someone I know. But a request without a message seems to be the cultural etiquette these days. To deal with that, if I make a request, and if I accept a request, I ALWAYS accompany it with a personal note. And if I've had an interaction recently with that person, I try to shine my light on how we're connected, what I've seen in them and how I'm feeling about bringing them into my fb circle.

Finally, when I get a newsletter or read an article that I love, I let that person know. Briefly and specifically. I find that is always appreciated, and I usually get a response - in part because I have no expectation besides wanting to appreciate their artistry and brilliance.

Build Someone Else's Tribe

By Kim Doyal

You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want.

-- Zig Ziglar

*I'd like to think I
don't learn
everything the
hard way, but
this wouldn't be
one of those
times.*



About two years ago I decided I needed to do things a little different. A LOT different. I used to use the excuse that I was too busy with client work to “show up” more in my business (and by show up I mean show up as myself, no more playing it safe).

I would blog as consistently as I could and share my content socially (although my social media efforts left something to be desired) and I felt “stuck”.

The ‘stuck’ feeling existed because I had created an idea of who I thought I was supposed to be. By choosing to brand myself as “The WordPress Chick” I felt like I should be all over the ‘code is poetry’ mentality but a coder is the last thing I ever wanted to be. I simply fell in love with WordPress six years ago, found I had a knack for explaining it to people and knew I could make a living doing something I loved.

The path to my showing up as myself started with my decision to start my podcast. I didn’t have a strategy in place and I wasn’t too sure what I was going to talk about, especially since most of what I was doing then was video, but I didn’t care. I wanted to start a podcast and jumped in with both feet.

That’s when I realized the magic that is supporting other people.

I knew I didn’t want to do a solo show only, but I also didn’t want an interview only show (I knew I had plenty to say). I had NO idea that sharing what other people were doing and giving them the opportunity to share their story (because I wasn’t interested in doing a rinse & repeat style interview) would be life changing for me.

The simple act of reaching out to people that I wanted to interview (and I knew they had something of value to share with my audience) has literally changed my life.

The relationships and opportunities that have shown up since starting the podcast continue to amaze me, but that’s not the lesson I learned the hard way. The lesson I learned the hard way was to trust myself.

But that’s not the point of this post. Because it took me so long to really show up as myself I realized it was much easier to show up and support other people while I figured out exactly what it looked like for me personally.

I remember exactly when I had this light bulb moment.

Someone had followed me on twitter and then shared my content. I went to

follow up her back, liked what she was sharing and went to check out her site. When I got to her site she had a 'coming soon' page up (with an opt-in) and said to connect with her on Facebook while the site was being finished. When I went to her Facebook page I was in awe of the engagement and content. She was building a community (where her audience was) by sharing whatever she found that she thought would be valuable to her audience. She built an amazing following because she just wanted to share cool stuff! And she was super appreciative of my support of her (because then I tweeted about the awesome resources on her Facebook page)... and now we're friends. :-)

Here's the thing though...EVERYTHING she shared was someone else's content!

Of course I'm not saying you don't want to share your own content, but in her case she didn't have any yet and it didn't stop her! It was the first time I really "got" that we have a chance to connect with people GLOBALLY -- and I don't mean just friending and following people all over the world. I also started paying attention to what other people shared. And one thing became glaringly obvious to me.

There were a handful of "old school marketers" who NEVER shared anyone else's content.

EVER.

Not once.

Nada.

And it's such a shame. There are SO many amazing people they're missing out on (not to mention the impression you give off when all you do is talk about yourself). You just have to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone.

And the easiest way to do that is to help build someone else's tribe.

Your challenge: Find someone NEW that you can support.

Share their content. Interview them. Reach out and ask how you can support them.

Even if you're already supporting other people and sharing their content, it's good to step out and find new people to share with your audience, just make sure they have something of real value to offer your audience. We all know when someone is a 'super fan' of someone else because they share everything that person does. And that's fine...but there's a fine line between sharing because it provides value to your audience and sharing because you adore someone. Make sure you're on the value side of that sentence.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Melanie Kissell: *I'm a big advocate of introducing my audience to all the goodies and goodness of new people I discover online. I'm grateful to say I don't ever need to go mining for them. I tend to uncover these gems through the wonderful people I already know. Sweeeet!*

Sharon Hurley Hall: *I took a leaf out of Téa's book for this and went to my email newsletter subscriber list. I found someone new-ish (turned out we were connected on LinkedIn but had never exchanged a word) and sent her a personal email to ask about her freelancing journey and find out how I could help her via my site. I also connected with her on Twitter and found something on her blog to share.*

Linda Resca: *What comes to me when I read your post is how it's so easy to be in the illusion that there's not enough to go around so best to direct folks only to me/you. Of course, this narrow tight way of being/thinking*

ultimately creates a closing versus opening and ultimately helps/supports no one!

Gloria Miele: *I do love today's challenge, and share other people's stuff relentlessly! So, Kim, when you say, "new," do you mean someone you've never interacted with before but find their content interesting or maybe someone you've met recently and have never shared their content before or something else? Just wondering if you had a more specific definition of "new" (of course, I can create my own).*

Kim Doyal: *Either Gloria (although I love Melanie's suggestion of creating your own definition). Anyone with whom you haven't shared their content would work- someone who would be new to your audience, your followers, etc.*

Teach What You've Just Learned

by Jen Loudon

The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.

-- Mark Van Doren

*I wanted to talk
today about teaching
what you just
learned.*



I have found this, honestly, to be one of the best ways to build my business and to connect with others through social media.

What do I mean by teaching what you've just learned? Well, I'll give you an example from the last few weeks in my life. I am in the middle of launching a Life Navigation Course. It's based on that book back there, The Life Organizer, and really the best, the most time-tested of the personal growth tools that I've been writing about and teaching about and coaching about for 22 years.

And to do that launch, I instituted or curated a series of guest posts with well-known women about how they shape and create their truer lives. And in the midst of doing these guest posts and all of the other things I was doing, and life in general, it occurred to me one day I've been feeling quite blah and really depressed for a few weeks.

This happens. We all deal with depression. Well, maybe not all of us, but I do and I have and found lots of ways to deal with it. But then, what happened next, which comes to the teachable moment, is that I realized that I was feeling out of integrity with the curated guest post launch. Because it looked like, Oh! Look, creating your life is always, I don't know, not easy. But there was a sense of agency and power and success that I was going for. Because that's what I want for women. It's not the whole truth.

So what I did was really sit down and reflect on this depression and what I was learning from it right then, and I wrote a post about it. And the post was quite popular and quite useful to people. And what I could reflect that you might find useful about doing this for yourself is I only shared what felt true and clear for me.

I didn't share out of a sense of, *Pay attention to me or save me or feel sorry for me*. There's, none of that there.

So when we're teaching what we've just learned, it's a quick post on Facebook or a longer blog post, or a video, or a whole course.

My course Teach Now, which I teach every Spring, is very much based on many, many years of suffering, and teaching and facilitating, and what I learned doing that. We have to make sure that we've learned it, enough to give a takeaway, to give something that's of use that has clarity or a clearness to it.

Number two, we have to pay attention to what we're learning. We have to have a way to reflect. Meditation and journaling, and in our brain trusts and mastermind groups with our coaches and our friends. And then, really recording those. Don't just let them go away. They're ephemeral and then we need to develop them.

Point number three, we need to develop them into slightly larger teachings. We have to give a bridge or language examples, stories, from other people. Especially for longer blog posts, videos, or courses. So that the other people can see themselves in what we're teaching. We don't have to do that so much on social media or Facebook posts.

So, teaching what you've just learned. Think about that as a jumping-off place to interact with people in social media, to create content, to create your deeper courses, retreats, speeches, books. It's really core for many of us. And, also what a humble, real way to be connecting with each other. This is what I just learned. It doesn't have to be always polished. We just want to make sure that we share it from a place of truth and not from needing to be taken care of.

I hope that is as useful to you as it has been to me, to understand this is something that I do to become aware of it. And the challenge is share something today, in our Facebook group. It's private, it's safe. What's something that you've learned in the last day, in the last week, in the last month? You don't have to build a bridge to the rest of us. Just share it with us, so that we can learn from you and maybe connect with each other on a deeper level. And we can practice doing it. Languaging it.

What's something that you've learned recently? What has it taught you? What was the takeaway? It doesn't have to be neat. It doesn't have to have a big bow on it.

Your Challenge: Think about something you've just learned (maybe it was this tip!) and then share a bit with your folks on social media.

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Jen, I loved today's lesson (OK, who am I kidding? I've loved them all!) I spent a 5 year stint teaching journalism and getting students excited about doing the job I'd been doing. And I started my writing blog to share my lessons about freelancing online. But I love the idea of sharing even small things you learn with others. And I look out for opportunities to learn things (especially new words) and share them with others.*

Linda Resca: *Thank you Jen Loudon for your video. Reminds me of something I heard years ago: "We teach what we most need to learn." Another way, I think, of saying what you said.*

At work this week, I truly felt, in my body, something I teach to care-givers. I arrived for my early morning shift with my client who is in Hospice Care in her home. I feel that when people are in this very vulnerable physical state, it's critical to be precise/accurate with medications/medical interventions. That's a big "duh !!" - to me. When I know that this is required, something in me goes into hyper-alert, I'm not relaxed and I am tight. The stakes are HUGE and there is no room for error. Or so I perceive it to be this way.

So, here was the teachable moment: as I sat at the kitchen table with my client, instead of thinking about what had to happen next, documenting her breathing difficulties I felt covered with rest and ease. A moment of Divine Grace, for sure. It was not a state arrived at via thinking. I felt and enjoyed the quiet within and without. This quiet place is where we want to speak and act from as caregivers. My client has specifically requested that things be quiet around her. I hope that my inner state, while sitting there, was transmitted to her.

Sandy McDonald: *Jen, lovely to meet you through your video and Day 12's lesson.*

I watched it and thought about how I coach these days and am happier doing this work than any of the previous work titles I've ever appended to myself in the last 40 odd years!

Is it because in coaching, I'm passing on every last bit of knowledge gained during those years? Is it because now when I learn something in a group like this, or a course, or a video, or a book, instantly it's translated into, 'who needs to know this right now?'

Up until this minute, there was a part of me thinking I was an impostor, (The Word Carnival bloggers did a series on this syndrome, in as much as only a portion of what I pass on is original thinking. Most of it is an amalgam of learnings from others.

I'm a curator. Maybe that is what teaching is about. Not sure as I don't have an educational background. But those who I pass it onto are always grateful and often delighted and that makes me very happy.

Christine Sheehy: *Sandy, I composed a very similar post to this in my head today! I too have felt an imposter when drawing on others work, even though I know that all great teachers have learned from great teachers, and that in passing on the lessons I add my own unique perspective.*

Jen Loudon: *Oh we talk about this in Teach Now a lot, and of course Tanya Geisler has a ton to say about it, but the main thing is -- that's how we all teach! In science, nobody pretends to invent everything. People get Nobel prizes for a small but important innovation that builds on decades and centuries of other people's work. I wrote about that here <http://jenniferlouden.com/claim-your-lineage-proudly/> (Claim your Lineage Proudly or Why Stealing Other People's Stuff has Got to Stop). The subtitle of that post makes it sound harsh but it's all about saying "oh my gosh Téa taught me blah blah" or "I was reading on the plane this story about..." and off you go. It's what I've done my whole life and 6 books!*

Bobbye Middendorf: *Others' wisdom, acknowledged and honored, as noted by Jen Loudon, then filtered through your unique lens of life experience, is a wonderful gift for the people who are meant to "hear it" from you. Curator is brilliant and greatly valued!*

Sandy McDonald: *What a great conversation to come into this afternoon. Jen, fine post. You know when you read a line and think, I so wish I had written that, this is one of those: “hyper-fast, hyper-fluid learning soup” moments. That is exactly it. Exactly what we have all been immersed in for years. Broiling away! For the most part it makes for a tasty broth. And just as we give the recipe for fine soups to our friends and family or anyone that asks, you are so right to ask us to loudly and proudly acknowledge those who we have learned from in our hyper-fluid learning soup.*

As is my wont, I immediately thought “Oh hell, have I done that?” And then I remembered instantly that I quote all my mentors and coaches and teachers all the time. It was a feeling of warm relief!

Thank you Bobbye, it is true that when you have learned something that resonates with you, when you layer it onto what you already know it’s coloured slightly differently. Maybe the layers just keep on enriching the lessons. That is a good thought to work with.

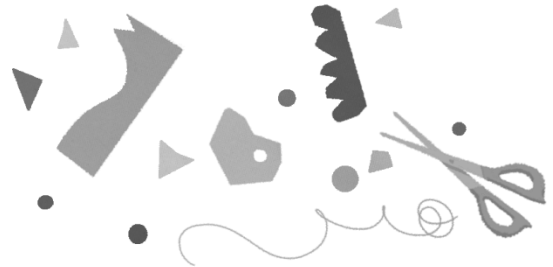
Martie Barth: *I appreciate your comment, Jen Louden. It is exactly as the Chinese proverb said: “I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.” While teaching, I did my best to help my students understand through experiential learning. We had the most fun in the classroom that way.*

Ask Better Questions

By Phillis Benson

Judge someone by his questions rather than his answers.
– Voltaire

*Whem -- how many
times have you fallen
into that mental trap of
trying (really trying
hard) to be just like a
Guru?*



They tell you that ...

- You have to post four times a day to all social media outlets
- You have to give away a lot of 'gifts'
- You have to follow my blueprint success formula
- You just follow blindly ... right? After all, they are the so called 'experts'!

This is what I call the Cookie Cutter Mentality

How's that working for you?

Are you (really) getting the results you wanted?

Or, were promised?

The key to building (and blooming) your online relationships is to share your 'OWN' specialness ... and in the process, create an online presence that will attract your perfect followers and people -- the ones who are in alignment with you and your business!

My CHALLENGE to you is Stop the Cookie Cutter Mentality

First, take notes on what you like about how others are showing up with their conversations in social media and how they talk about message their business and services on their website ... BUT, take those good ideas and make them your own.

Just because 'it works' for them, doesn't always mean what they're doing will work for you ... After all, people are following you and joining your groups and commenting on your posts because they're relating to you / your business / and how you show up!

Quick Action Tip ...

Spark Unique Conversations by Asking Engaging Questions

Try this and how quickly things can change!

What -- say what? I know you're thinking, "But I'm already asking questions on social media like ..."

- What should I have for dinner?
- Where can I find a new pair of cool shoes?
- What should I do - go to the ball game or movie (or stay at home with my sweetie)?

Those are Cookie Cutter questions -- everybody asks them.

If you're wondering how you can ask better, more engaging questions and spark unique conversations, here are a few suggestions that work ...

- Ask questions that are current and show your knowledge and expertise.
- Ask open-ended questions – they're a great way to start a conversation (try to stay away from yes/no answers.)
- Start a question with 'I'm curious – what do you think about this ...'
- Or 'Am I the only one that feels this way?' (could be funny, serious, or newsworthy)?

Don't just 'sell - sell - sell' ... Have conversations that are current and relate to your audience -- be engaging!

Your Challenge: Ask a question on your Facebook page or in other groups

And... don't just drop a link to your blog posts and leave. Or just 'like' someone else's post.

Do have real conversations ... just like you would if you were having coffee (in-person) with someone.

Be authentic and inviting ... make it easy for others to want to learn more about 'you' and your business...

So doable -- right!? Remember ... Keep It Simple Sweetie!

Melanie Kissell: *Good point, Phillis. I get completely turned off by the “What should I fix for dinner tonight?” questions on social media. I mean, really. They’re frivolous and I oftentimes think, “Can’t you just do a Google search, get some ideas, and land on a recipe?!” Not that sharing recipes is a bad idea, mind you. To me, that’s far more engaging. Tell me what you made for dinner and how I can make it, too. The questions on social media I like to answer are those that require a one, two, or three-word answer. Just sayin’ ...*

Lisa Braithwaite: *So Melanie, I must have annoyed you with my question asking if anyone had a good recipe for amaranth. I post questions like that because I don’t want to Google 101 recipes for amaranth; I want to know what people have already made and liked, so I can go straight to a good recipe and not waste a ton of time! But we all use social media differently. I like the deep questions as much as the simple questions. And I’ll be honest... when someone doesn’t EVER post anything personal, and EVERY post is some deep question or a challenge to “better myself” in some way, I find that annoying, too! I want to get to know them -- I don’t need them to constantly be trying to impress me with what a deep thinker they are. Definitely needs to be a balance.*

Melanie Kissell: *Nah ... that kind of question wouldn’t annoy me, Lisa. Asking for a recipe for a specific dish or drink or dessert is A-Okay with me. It’s those general, generic, boring, overdone ones that get my goat. And you know what else? I have a tough enough time trying to drum up ideas for dinner. I have no desire to help someone else figure it out! LOL!*

Lisa Braithwaite: *I met someone at a networking event this past week who asked the best questions. Although I felt a little put on the spot when he asked me for my five best public speaking tips -- not the same as social media, where you have some time to think about it! But I was impressed with how he just “went there,” and I was inspired to ask similar questions of the other people at the event. So this past week, I read a quote in a book that I thought was interesting and I wondered what others might think of it. I posted it on my timeline and asked if people agreed or disagreed. It*

turned into a nice thread. I personally don't have any problem with surface-level questions on Facebook, because my personal and business conversations mingle on my personal profile. But throwing out something a little different from time to time sounds like a great way to get some different conversations going.

Give them a Gift... Just Because

by Lisa Braithwaite

"When you give everything and expect nothing in return, only then will you be in a position to gain anything."

— Jarod Kintz

Those of us with online-based businesses can easily get sucked into "constant-launch" mode.

There's always a new program or offering to launch, and everything we do in launch mode is about building the list, building the list, building the list.



Get people to sign up for the preview call or webinar. Get those who signed up to actually come. Get the people who do come to the call to sign up for the program. And on and on in a repetitive cycle of list-building, launching, and selling.

Even those of us with a ton of free content like e-books, blogs, and newsletters (hel-LO — I have a blog with 1,435 published posts) typically require some sort of opt-in, and sometimes forget that it's okay to give something for nothing. (And here's a blog post I wrote about people who are just plain afraid to give stuff away for free because they fear their

community will just take and take and never actually become paying customers.)

So I will, from time to time, offer a gift to my list or on social media, just to say “Thanks for being a part of my community.”

One year, I offered a “Buy Nothing Day” giveaway the day after Thanksgiving, an audio interview I had on hand that hadn’t been made available to the public. Another time it was a free e-book that I’d just finished. No upsell, no expectations.

Just recently, I decided to offer my e-book on my experiences with panic attacks as a free download with no opt-in required, after Robin Williams’ death got me thinking about how hard it is for some people to find the resources they need to deal with their mental illness.

Without a community, it’s awfully hard to transform people’s lives, and it’s awfully hard to have a business.

Your Challenge: Come up with a free treat for your community to show your appreciation and gratitude for their loyalty.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *I do not have a lot of ebooks or products to gift to my community, but I do give in a big way to individuals.*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Generosity is still generosity, whether you give just 1 to 1, or 1 to many.*

Maggie Dennison: *So true Téa. I was getting rid of some books and I found one that directly related to the business of one of my clients, so I gave it to her and she was thrilled because it was so relevant to her. It didn't matter that the book was published in 1990 and my copy was at least 20 years old (in excellent condition though!)*

Lisa Braithwaite: *Linda, you don't necessarily have to give products or e-books, although that's just what a lot of us have on hand! You could schedule a time to have a Google Hangout with your community and offer a free Q&A session or quick seminar on something you're an expert in, for example. When you think creatively about it, is there something you can offer to your whole community that would be of value to them?*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *I'm with Lisa Braithwaite on the importance of giving gifts withOUT strings attached. "Gifts" are often used by marketers as incentives (some might say, bribes) to get their audience to opt-in, buy something, or take some other action. All of which are perfectly legitimate things to do. But if you want to be different (and I think everyone here qualifies), why not turn off the quid pro quo mentality for a bit and say, "Here. This is for you. I think you might like this." This [Blooming] project is definitely a passion project for me. It's one I've wanted to do for a few years now, but it never made sense for my business because it wasn't going to be a money-maker. I finally said, "this is too important to NOT do it now." Business strategy or not. What have you thought would be an awesome gift but you've held back because giving it wouldn't make "good business sense"?*

Find a Partner (or Two)

By Deanna Fenton

Friendship is essentially a partnership. -- Aristotle

*Sometimes
social media is a
scary place for
an introvert like
me.*



There is the sense of anonymity online, which can also lead to a tendency to, well, lurk and not participate. As a typically private person, I have to balance the desire for a genuine connection with my inherent tendency to keep my private life private.

Of course we want to reach out and connect in a more meaningful way. But, come on, let's be honest here. Most of us are in business and we want our online relationships to help support ourselves both personally AND professionally. And haven't we all been told that social media is the way to reach more prospective customers and build our businesses?

So while we are connecting online, we should keep our eyes out for power partners. We can connect, engage, and chat online, but making friends AND good business is the Holy Grail!

So, about a year ago, I reached out to someone who I only knew online and had followed for a long time. I admired her generosity, her friendliness and the way she described things as coo-coo.

Since then, she has become my coach, a business partner and, of course, a dear friend.

Your Challenge: Look at your online relationships and reach out to someone you think you can help -- and who could help you -- in your business. You may not only make a powerful business connection, you may find a great friend!

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *I love creating powerful partnerships and also want to add that it is important to choose your partners carefully. A couple years ago I created a program with another coach, ended up doing most of the work, and then she took a job at Disneyland and dropped out at the last minute. Yes, Disneyland. But, for the most part, my partnerships have been really great. I get to connect with new ideas, perspectives, and people as we support each other in getting our messages out to the world. I have a couple of potential ones in the wings now....*

Lisa Braithwaite: *I was never sure how exactly I would partner with others, and so was only partnering with those who invited me to participate in projects. But in the last few months, I started the Audience Avenger Alliance and its speaker series, and have been having such a blast finding people to interview that will expand my community's speaking and communication skills. I've interviewed someone on using improv for business, I interviewed someone on "conscious connecting" through networking, and I've interviewed someone on how understanding core temperament can help your speaking. I've invited people I've barely met and people I've known but were intimidated by - never thinking*

they'd want to partner with ME. It's been really fun and now I'm emboldened to approach others whom I never would have considered six months ago.

Blaze Lazarony: *A few tips on Partnerships:*

1.) Some last a lifetime, others only hours, weeks, or months. What's important is to try, to risk, to experiment, to find your unique zig even when others may be zagging. Chalk it up to personal growth--our greatest partnership is with ourselves!

2.) Refrain from judgment, for both yourself and others. You never know what experience is cleaning you out for a new opening or what others are going through. Your experience is not theirs and vice versa.

3.) Your past does not dictate your future. Every partnership is new, different, and singular. You're different, they're different, even when it appears on the surface that everything is the same. The world is always changing whether we notice or not.

4.) Everything shifts with love. Yeah...especially LOVE in business. Take the time to speak love, nurture love, and be love. Where there is no love, there is the giant sucking sound of fear. Fear burns bridges and starts wars. Be love, and most of all when you're scared--be love.

5.) Fierce conversations are critical. Open, honest, aka fierce conversations, without blame or shame allow you to speak your truth--practice fierce listening too! For when we are heard, and so is the other, our entire relationship can level up to a higher vibration.

Those are my favorite five ponderings for today on partnerships.

JudyAnn Lorenz: *You have me really looking for a partnership. Sometimes it is lonely in the cloud. I look at what I do and think there is not a good option except solitude.*

Blaze Lazarony: *JudyAnn...please share what you do. Would you be open to suggestions for partnerships? Or are you currently in a place of solitude? Both are valid options.*

JudyAnn Lorenz: *Thank you, Blaze. I don't want to hijack your thread, so will try to keep it simple. I work virtually with clients all over the country; currently authors, real estate, artists, a museum and other virtual professionals. I do enjoy solitude which is essential to be able to do this.*

Molly Gordon: *What lovely points for reflection, Blaze. Thank you. I especially like the first one. Some of my partnerships have been tiny and brief, others large in scope and extended. What makes the good ones work--as reflected in your points--is creative intent, quality connection, and openness to (even the conviction that you will receive) unanticipated benefits.*

Blaze Lazarony: *Alas JudyAnn Lorenz, the space that Téa has created here is vast and deep, all voices are welcome. I hear the sweetness of your solitude, the reverence and space you give it are refreshing. And the longing is there...I feel it. What are the qualities of the partnerships that you are seeking? Please share here if it suits you.*

As for me, I've written four books, all collaborations with other talented authors. Two are books of poetry, and two are books on business. You'll find more about me at www.BlazeABrilliantPath.com

Paula Tarrant: *So, just have to jump in here and say something about the beautiful Blaze Lazarony. We met virtually through an online thingy a couple of years ago, shared a bit online, found out we didn't live that far from each other geographically, and thought it would be fun to get to know each other better through a voice to voice call. We chatted about all kinds of things, business and not so much. And we've been traveling in the same virtual circles ever since.*

Making heartfelt connections is in Blaze's DNA. It just comes naturally! No surprise that such useful and insightful tips would flow from her keyboard. XO

Blaze: *That's the thing, when we let the love in, good things happen. We're human beings, and loving is a huge part of who we are and what we seek in our relationships --- even our business ones.*

And when hearts align, much like they are on this Blooming forum, magic is more than just possible, it's happening!

Holly Higbee-Jansen: *Thank you Blaze. I'm having some "aha" moments this week. Being successful in business or a partnership doesn't have to mean stress, headaches and difficult clients, especially if it's all coming from the right place. I was successful in my last business, extremely stressed out, and not happy. I'm building this one with intention. Thanks!*

Janelle Hardy: *Fantastic list! I'd add one more: Knowing when to let go with grace.*

Perform a Random Act of Kindness

by Téa Silvestre Godfrey

"Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly, and most underrated agent of human change."

— Bob Kerrey

The World is Hungry for More Kindness

Just before the BYOR project was ready to launch, Robin Williams died of suicide.



It touched so many of us, for so many reasons.

I processed my feelings about his death by writing this email to the folks on my list.

Words fail to describe what the responses meant to me. They were heartfelt messages and personal stories. And they left me sobbing at my desk. (In a good way.)

One of those replies was the inspiration for today's challenge.

I was able to get permission from the woman who wrote it (Lisa Evans) to share with you here:

Precious is the right word. A good day is one to be celebrated and cherished.

A hard day is one to be shared, too, but more in an offering of strength, a hand to hold, or even to put yourself out there as a whipping post, if that's what needed to get through the day. I know you know what I mean.

But that's what we do for the people we love, isn't it?

We know they love us back. Sometimes, they can't say it; sometimes it's even hard to believe, but it's there just the same.

And we keep going. We have to.

As a person, and as a community, too.

My family lives 3 miles from where Sandy Hook Elementary once stood. We have tons of friends in Newtown, which is also where our favorite movie house, ice cream stand, and diner all live. My boys have friends who went to SHE, now temporarily moved to Monroe, and we see them as much as we possibly can.

The terror of that day has receded – to a degree – the pervading loss is still present, sometimes achingly so. Yet we go on.

We go to the ice cream stand. We go to baseball games, the school concerts, we say hi to friends in the local grocery store. We go on, as a group, but as you say, the loss remains. That stays with us in a million ways.

I know MANY people, myself included, who were forever changed that day. We were changed, in many ways, for the better.

You know what you don't hear about in the news? Random acts of kindness. ALL THE TIME.

Right after the tragedy, families asked for people to perform random acts of kindness – just do something nice for someone you don't know with no idea of recognition or recompense. You know what? It hasn't stopped. Not around here, anyway.

Nearly every day I hear about something great that happened to a friend, a colleague, the family of a friend. It can be someone buying coffee or lunch for all the cars behind them at the drive through window, picking up the tab for the family with the crying baby at a restaurant, or dropping off a big bag of groceries for a family that's in difficulty.

I really hope these kinds of things are continuing to happen in the wider world because around here in CT, it's become the norm, and that's a VERY good thing.

Reaching out and touching someone, whether it's via a movie screen or a phone call or a random act – it all works and it all helps.

Hang on. Hold on. Hug on.
– Lisa Evans, Bethel CT

Lisa's email inspired today's tip: Do something kind for someone.

I know you're a person who already does lots and lots of kind things for people. But today, do just a little bit extra. And if you like what happens, try to start each day with MONKEY time (More ONLINE Kindness Everywhere). It's a monkey on your back you might actually enjoy!

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking:

- Send a small gift digitally: Tweet someone a coffee, send an iTunes or Amazon gift card, there are lots of gifts for \$5
- If you know someone's hurting financially, you could send them a gift card for an entire meal (grocery stores have these on their website)
- Send someone an e-card
- Give a client an extra 10 minutes of your time
- Drop an old customer an email, just to see how they are
- Thank a vendor or contractor for their hard work via social media — let everyone else see how much you love them

- Compliment a fellow solopreneur — either publicly or privately
- Forward an email coupon
- Leave a rich comment on someone's blog post
- Share a music playlist with a friend (you can build playlists with Spotify or even create a favorites list in YouTube)
- Make a donation to someone's cause or Kickstarter campaign
- Send someone a bouquet of digital flowers by posting a beautiful picture to their Facebook wall or via private message
- Send someone a digital book that you know they'd enjoy (Kindle books make great gifts!)
- Send someone a link to an article that you think they'd enjoy
- Open your friends list, close your eyes and pick someone at random – post something nice on their Facebook wall
- Donate some of your time to helping a cause
- Write a note to the boss of someone who's helped you and made things wonderful
- Buy something for a stranger from their Amazon wish list
- Promote your client's awesome work online
- Record a thank you video and send it off to someone via email

Your Challenge: Pick **one** person you're connected to online and do a kindness for them. Repeat as often as you dare!

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *Performing random acts of kindness has been a way of life for me for several years. Even conversations or actions that can feel uncomfortable can ride on the energy of love and kindness. One of my favorite RAOK is to write inspirational letters and leave them on car windshields. They say things like. You are loved. You are special. Etc.*

Recently I decided to de-clutter my email inbox and unsubscribed from several people's lists. When it felt right, I included a note about how they inspired me, their gifts to the world, or something positive. Turns out, people actually read those things. I just got an email this morning saying that it was the kindest unsubscribe she had ever received.

Let's make kindness a way of life. We could start a ripple and contribute to changing the world in a positive way!

Cindy Clemens: *One of my favorite ways to do an act of kindness is to give a client a free coaching session for their birthday. I don't tell them ahead of time but at the end of a session that is on or near their birthday I will tell them it is on the house. Always makes them feel special.*

Sandy McDonald: *Perform a kindness. This sat in my chest for days after I read it. Was I kind I found myself asking? I mean really, really kind? All the time kind? I thought about how I had snapped at my husband for asking me a question while I was working. That wasn't kind at all.*

What about the immediate curse that rose unbidden when I got an email from a client querying the hosting charge for her website? That wasn't kind. She had a right to query it as she didn't understand what hosting was. And didn't that suggest I had failed in not explaining it to her which wasn't kind either.

I rang her today determined to be kind as opposed to defensive. She was fine. All she wanted, was to have it explained and a little bit of kindness in my understanding her point of view.

This is not quite what you meant I think Téa by perform a kindness. I think what you suggest is in addition to serving our clients with kindness. But for me, this was quite cathartic. I'm grateful for the opportunity to reflect on this in this forum, where it is possible to share one's vulnerabilities and know that they will be treated with kindness.

Soothe Her Fears

By Dina Eisenberg

"Where we cannot go, our kind words can travel there, to solve problems, resolve conflicts, comfort and liberate in times of pain, sorrow and trouble."

— Bamigboye Olurotimi

Why can't people just talk to each other?

Téa Silvestre Godfrey is a marvel, isn't she? I heard an audible 'click' when I met her at an event this past April. My hunch was confirmed when we shared a funny lunch. I like the way her brain thinks.



And, lately we've both been grouching over the way online relationships are becoming more superficial, formulaic and untruthful. It's icky out there, people. Some days I can barely bring myself to contribute to the noise by blogging.

With all the commotion, how can you enjoy a deeper bond with your peeps, your followers, your tribe or whatever you call them?

Be emotionally smart

This is what I really wanted say: Be emotionally smart and soothe her pain, worries or doubts.

Let me explain.

Self-employed folks are typically emotionally smart. All that means is that you understand and can manage your own emotions and the emotions of others, even if you aren't consciously aware of it. If your clients rave, 'you get me' then you've got a high EQ-emotional smarts quotient.

Conscious business owners are usually attuned to the emotions clients feel as they face the challenge you help them conquer. Sometimes that's because you faced the same challenge. Other times, it's because you are empathetic. Either way, you want to put this talent to work for you to deepen your relationship with clients.

Soothe her pain

One way to be emotionally smart is to pay attention to your client's fears, even in the midst of being excited for their transformation. Grown-ups still get growing pains.

Do you remember what it is like to be the beginner who did not know how? To feel that rush of excitement and possibility that is so quickly marred by the weight of doubt, anxiety and insecurity. Of course, you do.

Meet your clients where they stand with those feelings then build a trust bridge that gets them to the transformation you both want.

Build a trust bridge

We have a resistance to learning new things because it's scary. Trying something new reveals our inadequacies and weaknesses, which drives our inner bitch wild with fear. The best way to soothe her is to reason with her.

Remember, her job is to protect us from harm, so when she speaks up it's out of love. When you can connect with and calm your client's inner bitch, your client can trust you and take the next step with you.

How do you connect and build that bridge?

Make it safe for your client to take the next step with you

All of us humans have a great desire to fit in (be loved) and be acknowledged (be seen), I've noticed during my 21 years as a mediator and Ombudsman. We don't do things that could potentially jeopardize our standing or membership in the group (whatever that is).

When you answer these questions, directly, your clients can connect with your transparency and trust you to lead them across the bridge to their new transformation or result.

Here are the questions I try to answer for my clients.

Feel free to use these or make up your own.

1. Who else is doing it? (Will I belong and be welcome in the group?)
2. Will I look dumb? (What will I experience and what do I need to know?)
3. Will it work for me? (Can I do it?)

For example, 'will I look dumb' is a big worry for my readers, who are new to outsourcing on Fiverr. Throughout my materials I make of point of speaking to that question.

I remind my readers throughout the book that Fiverr.com is not a hard place to figure out and that they will master it. I point out areas where they might make mistakes so my readers feel empowered and in charge on the platform. I make it easy for readers to try their first project by providing a recipe. I explain why a lot. It works.

Readers are becoming doers because they feel heard and safe.

Your Challenge: Pick one of the questions above and answer it for your tribe. How can you make someone feel welcome in the group? (Téa is great at that). What do you need to do to reassure your clients, readers, tribe that they can accomplish what they want to achieve? What stands in the way, and how can you remove the obstacle.

Wow, that's a lot of questions. Occupational habit. But puzzling them out does a business good.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *What do I say when my clients ask, Will I look dumb? - Possibly, and you will learn good stuff too. Consider it play. A game. After all, whatever you do will really just be one grand experiment that provides data. Now, go explore and have fun!*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *I JUST had that conversation with a client, Linda. We were talking about owning a business being “work” -- and how heavy and difficult that felt. I asked her to make a list of all pieces of owning a business that felt like play. (With the goal to make sure she does at least one of those each week.)*

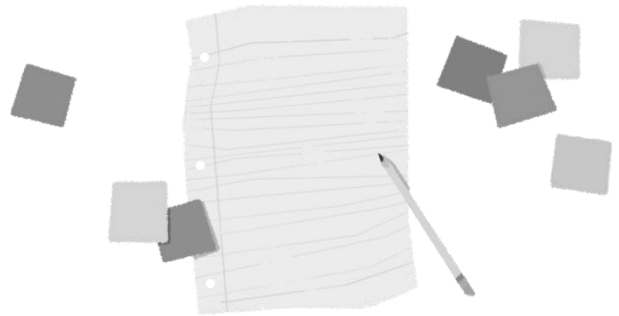
Edith Swiatek: *There is a certain grace found in willing to look dumb...in willing to be imperfect with witnesses to it, especially in our professional lives.*

Ask for Advice

by Deborah Gallant

You are never strong enough that you don't need help.
— César Chávez

*There's a huge difference
between having a big list
and having a good list.*



To build a community, to have engaged participants is far more valuable for you and your business than merely getting to big numbers (whatever big means to you.)

I've been a business coach for over ten years and every single time I do a talk, workshop, webinar or promotion, I collect email addresses and include these opted-in names in my monthly newsletter list. I also have an "offer" on the front page of my website that lets folks opt-in. A list is hugely important to me and the success of my business.

I was so pleased to hear about Téa's Bloom Your Audience challenge because she totally gets this concept of connecting authentically with your community, not just list-building to get big numbers.

My tip is to ASK FOR ADVICE.

I figured this one out by doing it myself. My daughter was about to graduate from high school and I reached out to all of the significant adults who had touched my daughter's life, from her grandparents (and even great-grandmother) to aunts, uncles, adult friends and her grown-up cousins and I asked them all the same question: What advice do you wish someone had given you when you were graduating from high school? The responses were thoughtful and some were quite extensive. One of my aunts even took it on herself to reach out to her own network and gather more voices and advice.

I was delighted to assemble them all into a photo book which we presented to my daughter at her graduation dinner.

Our family and friends loved participating in this project and many of them asked if they could borrow the idea themselves. I was delighted with the outcome and my daughter was completely surprised and broke into tears when she received it.

All of this was going on in my personal life. My work world is usually quite separate: I'm a "strictly-business" business coach. In June of this year, I went out on a limb and shared this project along with some of the wonderful advice in the emailed newsletter.

I gave the newsletter the subject line "What Advice Would You Give?" and that month's open rate, forwards and thoughtful email responses were amazing. People took the question to heart and thought about the advice they wish someone had given them.

This asking for advice angle can work on a whole bunch of levels as you look to bloom your audience. Use it in social media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+, or Twitter. One of my favorite maxims for my coaching clients is that there's no prize for accomplishing business goals on your own. Superman is a myth. Everyone needs help and support sometime.

If you have a real business problem, being honest and asking for help makes you a real person. No one has all the answers and admitting you can use their insight makes you human. It also gives them a glimpse into you as a person...especially if the advice isn't just business-related, like my question. My graduate school recently used this approach—what advice would you give new students to our school? And as a recipient, it did make me pause and think about it.

Some final tips: If possible, thank everyone who responds with a personal email and consider publishing advice/responses in a subsequent newsletter or blog post (at least if the tips are good!)

As you shape questions to put out there, keep in mind your Ideal Client profile—who do you want to reach? Ask for advice that will interest and engage them!

Your Challenge: Ask your connections for advice on something. Bonus points for asking a question that's also relevant to your Ideal Clients.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Cindy Clemens: *I so yearned for a safe place to be real, not the expert, that I asked 8 of my favorite smart interesting business women to meet every two months for an evening of wine, potluck, and open forum for asking each other for advice and brainstorming. We call ourselves the Sisterhood of the Giant Brain. The rule is it is a safe, confidential place to be real. So nice to get to the deeper level and tap into the amazing collective wisdom of women.*

Deborah Gallant: *So excited to see my post as today's feature: Ask for Advice.*

If I was rewriting it, I might have written "Ask for Input" or "Start the Conversation."

The book on my nightstand is The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August by Claire North...the main character relives his life from the beginning over and over again, with full memory of the lives before. (A little like Groundhog Day?). Got me thinking about what I would do differently next time around. So far, I am sure I would have: begged my parents to go to private school. Chosen a different college. Moved to New York sooner.

So my advice/conversation question for today: If you had your life to live over, what would you do differently next time?

Get Naked & Share Your Failures

By Michelle Barry Franco

Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.

— Brené Brown

*For today's
challenge
invitation, I wrote
you a letter. On
the surface, it's all
about me... but I
share it for you. I
hope it serves you
beautifully.*



Dear Thoughtful, Caring You,

Though we've never met, I sort of feel like I know you.

I'm guessing that you care not just about building a sustainable business – but about building one that makes a positive difference in the lives of your clients. You want to do work you enjoy and you want to make a meaningful contribution in the world through that work.

Essentially, you care about people as much as you care about the business you are building.

We have a lot in common, you and me. I feel the same way about my own work. In fact, I'm sure that's why we find ourselves together blooming our audiences through this awesome challenge of Téa's.

When Téa invited me to share my insights in this challenge my first thought was, "What the heck do I know about blooming my audience? I have made more list-building mistakes than anyone on the planet."

Just as I finished that thought I realized, maybe that's what makes me an excellent person to share my learnings in this challenge. Goodness knows I've had many!

I'll save the 101 Mistakes Not to Make When Growing Your Audience for another time. For now I'll just share with you one thing that I ended up doing right, even though I had no idea how powerful it would end up being when I made the choice. After all...

It started out as a complete failure.

I'm not going to launch into a big hoopla about how important it is to fail, don't worry. I know there's a lot of that going around. It's useful stuff – it needs to be out there. Instead, I want to talk to you about...

Getting naked.

And who doesn't like to talk about getting naked, right? (Nod with me here.)

So, last year I created my first totally online, fancy schmancy group course. I chose the content based on five years of gathering information about what

my Right Clients really need and want. I felt awesome about the content I had and amazing about the promise I was making in my marketing. I created one of those sales pages with the brightly-colored (but on-brand, of course) checklist of benefits and “Buy Now” buttons. I produced a content-rich three-video educational series to kick off the launch of the course. People signed up for the series and told me how fabulous they thought the educational videos were. I was beaming with pride and excitement about the impending success of my first online course.

And then... no one signed up.

Not one single person.

Holy moly, was I heart broken. Wait, what is the actual term for what I was feeling... hmmm, that feels more like... humiliated.

How would I ever “show my face” to my email community again? I felt totally stuck between two absolutely intolerable options:

1. Tell them the truth – that the course was a complete flop; or
2. Never say a word about the course again and just hope no one asked me directly.

Frankly, I had spent the first four years of my business dancing in the second camp – pretending that things were going much better than they actually were. Or, in fairness to me and my precious heart, continually “re-aligning” with what I really wanted to create with my business (and therefore rarely offering anything at all to anyone in the way of services). I just couldn’t do that anymore.

I chose option #1 – to tell the whole truth.

This decision went against everything I had learned about “branding” and confidence and attracting clients. I knew about the power of telling your messy story, but it was always prettily buttoned up with the shiny coat of “transformation.” To “protect my brand”, I needed to create a successful course that lots of people signed up for and THEN I could tell the truth

about my flopped course. Because then, people could be inspired by my story.

The only problem was, I didn't have a transformational story to tell yet. And I felt I owed my community a note that continued our recent conversation about communicating with confidence, clarity and charisma. Essentially, I needed to remove my fancy "I've got it all together" brand coat and just share the naked truth. And it felt pretty much that scary to do... but, deep down I knew that they deserved to know the truth.

As you might be already guessing, the outcome of my sharing astounded me.

My inbox filled with notes of appreciation and even, to my great surprise, admiration. People wrote to me about the crickets they've heard after putting themselves out to the world with their products and services. They told me how shocked they were that my shiny, professional looking offer didn't bring in any actual sales. They shared how my telling the truth was a real insight into the old adage we all hear that "things aren't always what they seem." They thanked me for telling the truth and being an example for them.

A few of them even hired me to be their one-on-one coach (at a much higher price tag than the course).

You and I both know that deepening our relationships with our communities isn't just about getting clients. That said, without clients we go out of business. What I learned after sending that "naked" email that I still remind myself of today is that the truth is way more important to me - and my clients - than my "brand." That for me, business is about real, honest connection. And telling the scary truth - with confidence, clarity and as much charisma as I can muster even when times are tricky - is the only way I want to be in the world.

Turns out, my community - and my clients (who keep coming, even with my decidedly imperfect but always honest email ways) want this from me most of all.

And it feels most awesome to be doing good, honest work that makes lives better for those I am meant to serve. To know that I am now strong enough to say the hard and scary stuff – when I know that it will truly serve my community.

I hope my story serves you today. It's such an honor to get to share it with you.

And since this whole challenge is about taking one action every day in service of deepening our connections with our communities...

Your Challenge: Make five minutes to take a walk outside or sit somewhere new and lovely today. Do this to activate the parts of your brain that open up when in fresh air and/or novel surroundings. Ask yourself this question: *What have I been afraid to tell my community that would actually serve them to know?*

May you bloom brightly right along with your audience.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Linda Luke: *I have yet to find a way to use my story to help inspire others. It is full of yucky stuff including abuse, rape, my son's father being an alcoholic, and even a man I loved dying suddenly.*

I do not want my story to become the focus of my work and I only bring up pieces of it that feel relevant to what a client is experiencing. The clients usually respond in a big way and think I'm all inspirational and stuff, and sometimes even ask why I never told them before.

We all have stories. I have done a lot of healing work and feel pretty neutral about mine. My story is not me. I have no need to share or not to share. But, there is this little voice that wonders if sharing it would help me serve others in a bigger way.

I am curious to hear from any of you as to the pros and cons of sharing your gritty story as a way of "getting naked."

Annie Sisk: *I have an ugly story too. Some of the same elements as you, some different -- an emotionally abusive relationship with a controlling older man, losing the best man I ever knew, a rape, a pregnancy resulting from that rape, an abortion. Here's one thing I know for sure (all apologies to Oprah): Our stories are never finished. If you'd asked me six months ago to tell you that story of mine, it would have looked like a tragedy, full stop. Six months later, I've reconnected with that amazing man I lost over 20 years ago, found out he felt the same way about me this whole time, and now we're planning a life together. Voila -- a love story, and a fairly epic one at that. (Suck it, Shakespeare!)*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *People want to know why you. Why should I work with you? What's different about you? Your history may not be who you are, but it did make you who you are today. I don't think you need to tell every gory detail, but obviously, if you're helping people with a certain issue and you've been there before (and come out victorious on the other side), that's relevant. That's important. I wouldn't hide it. If it were me, I'd speak to those elements you find relevant to your ability to help others on your About page. As I said, you don't need to tell people all the details. Just that you've been there.*

Michelle Barry Franco: *Yes, yes, yes to everything here. First, big respect and gratitude for your share here, Linda - because even in this response, you used your story as a way to help me and others. I am sure there is so much more to your story, but you shared what was needed to engage here. Also, in hearing just an overview of your story, I feel a connection with you - there are parts of our story that are shared, it seems. I completely hear you on not wanting to be defined by our story (a particular set of stories, even) because no one story (or set of stories) is all*

of who we are. Katharine Jones Law says it perfectly -- I always ask myself, "Will sharing this story make life better for my clients? Will it serve them to hear it and how?" And then I proceed depending on my answer. I have many stories that would be riveting (some shocking, as I think so many of us do) from my history but they would not help my clients communicate with more confidence, clarity and natural charisma - and that's what I'm here to do.

That said, I do find that the more I share my more vulnerable stories, the more I actually find ways to share other deeper stories that do serve my clients... not sure what that's about... I just kind of keep practicing it and seeing how it feels for me and works for them.

Lisa Braithwaite: *When I started to "come clean" about aspects of my experience that my clients would be able to identify with, I found myself able to serve them better and I found them better able to relate to me. My "gritty" (love that word) story isn't relevant to every client, nor is it relevant to every audience, so it's not a story I tell on a regular basis. But to the ones who can relate, and when it *does* fit the occasion, it creates an amazing connection.*

Jeda Lewis: *Personally I think each person's 'story' is a combination of so many facets -- their wisdom, tenacity, values, strengths, beautiful imperfections, chaos, patterns, complexities... not just their archive / experience. I think it's okay to feel very nervous about sharing something you feel compelled to share (whether to reach out for support or to deepen a connection). It sounds like you, Linda Luke, and many more are doing just that. Nothing wrong with being measured in our sharing -- our intuition probably knows best.*

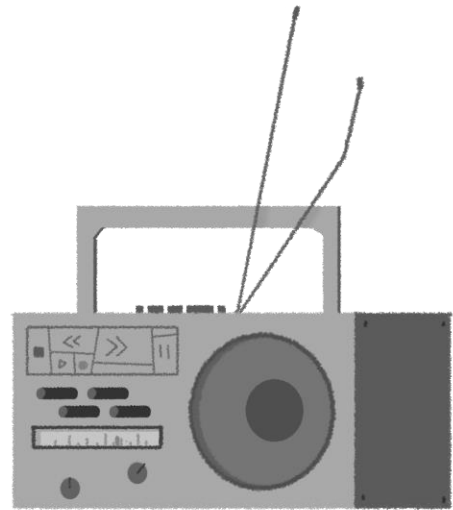
Show Them You're Listening

A conversation with Andrea J. Lee
By Téa Silvestre Godfrey

"Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable."
— David Augsburger

*My own business coach is
the fabulous Andrea J.
Lee of Wealthy Thought
Leader.*

When I told her about this "Blooming" project, her enthusiastic response made me think I might persuade her to join in the fun.



And I wasn't wrong. She generously sat down with me (by phone) to talk about how we can do the most important work of relationship blooming: listening.

Here's a bit of that conversation:

Téa: I am on the line with Miss Andrea J. Lee and she's about to talk with me a little bit about this idea of listening. And Andrea, you had written some wonderful things in a private Facebook group that I'm a part of and I

wanted you to kind of expand on that a little bit. So can you do a short recap of what that was about?

Andrea: Yeah, I was remarking upon how the act of listening, and how we do that, has changed a lot in the last, even just three or five years. When you think back to the beginning of internet time, when e-zines were rare and you would get an email from a publisher of an e-zine and it had your name in it and it was exciting!

Dear Andrea,

Today I am going to talk to you about how to do this . . .

Wow! This e-zine is for me. That felt like I was being listened to, and it was remarkable. Since then, though, you know we've all become a lot more sophisticated. We know that there are, and if at any point, you want to sign up for a hundred e-zines, you can. And when you fill your name in, that's what makes it possible for the e-zine to feel like it's to you. Because you're giving them something to put into the spot where the robot puts your name in.

But that robot's not really actually listening to you, so the thing that I would suggest people do is to really consider how to truly personalize your email communication. Depending on the size of group you're communicating to, it could be that you take fifteen of your most favorite clients and reach out to them with something that has an invitation to consider something of yours happening in a couple of months and actually personalize it. So that might look like:

Dear Téa,

How is it going down there? And Is Leyton doing alright with his art?

Different things that are actually true. I once did this, actually did this not too long ago, and I had startled responses from people who thought it was just a stock email that had Dear Name, but four or five paragraphs down, there were actual notes from me that said, you know:

How's your ankle doing? and I hope your Mom's ok. and I remember that it's your 15th anniversary coming up in a few months, so we need to take that into account.

And it was actually personal, and gave people the real, present-day feeling of being listened to, and being heard, and being seen.

That's my invitation — to actually remember people. Remember details. Breathe into your own life such so you have the space and presence that you can actually remember people. Not just their Facebook birthdays. Those doesn't count. [both laugh] Ok?

But, I saw a teal blouse and I know that's your color and I thought of you.

Téa: Yeah

Andrea: Real relationships.

Téa: I love that. I try to do that as much as I can. When I, when I read an article that I think someone will like because it's something that they've been thinking about for a while. To just share it on their wall and say, Hey, I was thinking about you and I saw this. I think we don't have to plan these things out, if we're gonna remember 15 things about 15 of our favorite people.

So do you just keep this all in your brain, Andrea? Or you, do you have a way to do that?

Andrea: You know I am blessed.

Téa: Do you keep it all in a file somewhere? [laughs]

Andrea: I have a file on every one of you. I'm blessed with a really good memory, but I do think it's something that can be cultivated. If you allow yourself to actually care about individuals, rather than how many thousands of people can I have the email address of? You will free up brain space to remember things. But even if that's not the case, even if you have a lousy memory, it's actually not that hard to remember. All you have to do is poke about their Facebook page or whatever social platform they are on and

remember. You will remember if you actually care.

Téa: Yes, and it does show that you are actually listening to them and paying attention to them, which is the thing.

Andrea: Here's the counterintuitive thing. When we all came online to build our leveraged online businesses, this was the exact opposite of what we were taught. Leverage! Mass! None of these custom-made shoes. Make it like a factory. This was a long time ago. Relating and listening, being personal isn't the place you want to leverage.

You can leverage using systems. You can leverage with a team. There are other places you can leverage where it does not sacrifice the connection.

Téa: For sure. It can be done.

Andrea: You do it so well.

Téa: I do try to do it. I do think I could do a better job, but that's why we're doing this. So I can remind myself what's left.

Téa: And thank you for getting here.

Andrea: Oh my god, thank you.

In summary...

Show people they matter by listening to them and paying attention to who they are — beyond the confines of their business. And when you get the chance, let them know you noticed by writing real notes or emails that mention those things. Do they have a child going off to college? A pet that just passed away? Are they creating a new garden? Say something to them about that in your next interaction. It makes ALL the difference.

Your challenge: Show one or two of your favorite online connections that you've been listening to them by sharing a personalized note, message or email with them.

RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Andrea J. Lee: *I'd like to ask a follow up question. I have found that one of the best tests of my listening is to ask myself regularly, 'When is it the hardest for me to listen, and really hear something' followed by 'What is happening for me in that moment' which of course is asking what can I listen to in myself...*

This lovely little curlicue of a question set has really helped to advance my ability to listen even when my stomach is tied up in acid-covered knots, my whole body is rebelling, and even sometimes, a blow up of a conversation is threatening. Whether this is a performance review of a team member that has dropped the ball badly, a situation where I was the client and felt horrendously mistreated, or when I was the service provider and felt mistreated by what seemed clear only afterwards, was an abusive situation.

As entrepreneurs, I think we're given a really special gift of having to learn to relate to many more people, in more diverse power dynamics, than other humans experience. And this of course leads to more needed communication in which listening and being listened to is necessary. I'm writing a book now called 'We Need to Talk' and what's ironic is that of course, what's even more true is 'We Need to Listen!' but that doesn't make as good a title.

I'm curious and would love to hear: in what way do you feel the question of listening - especially when it is the hardest for you to do so... offers some good learning for you today?

Michelle Barry Franco *I have such intense curiosity about the inner lives of others that I actually have to be careful not to take them down roads of inquiry that really don't serve them just for my own curiosity sake. So, my biggest challenge with listening is checking myself to be sure the exchange is good for all involved. I know it's not all my responsibility (these are interactions with adults after all), but I also find that people are really starved for someone who is truly and genuinely interested in them and so it is easy for us both to get caught up in the deep digging.*

*Though I do love listening so very much and I try hard to be present in it, I'm definitely not a perfect listener. It is really hard for me to listen *cleanly* when I have already decided what the other is trying to say -- especially if I don't like what they are saying or I feel attacked.*

Jolina Karen *I'm aware of 3 qualitatively different not-listening experiences. I tune out when I'm bored because the subject matter is just not linking to anything I'm interested in; I shut down when I feel under attack, just don't want to hear anymore and want to fight back; I go blank when someone says something that hits a deeper truth in me that I can't quite get my head around. In these moments I know there is something for me to acknowledge and learn about myself. That's when I take it to my journal with the most curiosity.*

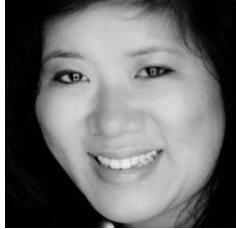
Katharine Jones Law: *Téa Silvestre Godfrey I like that you ended our 30-day extravaganza with Andrea speaking, instead of writing, to us. I realize that speaking may have an easier way for Andrea J. Lee to participate, but, no matter the reason, hearing her voice -- and your voice -- deepened my experience and my connection to both of you and to everyone who's participated in this amazing 30-day experience. This is a great way to conclude the challenge!*

Sharon Hurley Hall: *Loved this tip from Andrea. I've always been more of a listener than a talker and using that to deepen connections with people feels natural to me. I'm still in conversation with the person I connected in via the "reach out to a subscriber" tip and we've talked about her recent trip and some other stuff. Any time I email her again, we've got something non-businessy to talk about.*

Téa Silvestre Godfrey: *Thank you, Andrea for today's wisdom. I love listening. And I think that comes from a deep sense of curiosity about people and their stories. Who are YOU? What matters to you? You tell me in little ways and big. I also know that when I approach marketing from a stance of listening (to you as well as to myself), rather than broadcasting my latest offer, things definitely click easily into a more satisfying place. It's one of the reasons I say storytelling is at least 75% listening. How are you going to tell a story that someone wants to hear if you don't listen first? It really should be called the art of story-listening, not story-telling. Yes, I admit, I'm not perfect when it comes to hearing and seeing all the details. But for me, it's definitely what makes life (and business) more fun. Stay curious!*

Our Contributors

ANDREA J. LEE



Andrea's coaching style is part "how the heck did she know?!" intuitive wisdom, and part drawn from decades of doing ACTUAL coaching (not paint-by-numbers.) Her business background includes start-up all the way through the many financial milestones – multiple six-figures and million-dollar-plus? Check! Also, bankruptcy, team revolt, or even nervous breakdown on the entrepreneurial path? All is fair game for her steady, watchful heart. Her passion for making things better is only surpassed by her compassion for making things right for you. Find her at wealthythoughtleader.com

CIGDEM KOBU



Cigdem Kobu is the founder of Peaceful Triumphs, an education and publishing company that crafts transformative community experiences and digital learning resources for ethical women entrepreneurs and creatives. She has cracked the code on how to build a thriving solopreneur business the peaceful way. Find her at peacefultriumphs.com.

CRYS WILLIAMS



Crys Williams tells tales of universal truth through letters about her curious life and sends them by real mail. Her biggest wish is that her ideas and insights, observations and experiments, and her flailing eff-if-I-know moments will give you a good laugh and something to ponder on, but most of all the easy comfort of things familiar. She's pretty sure courage and creativity are contagious. Find her at cryswilliams.com.

DEBORAH GALLANT



Deborah Gallant is a business coach and calls herself the Fearless Leader of Bold Business Works, specializing in working with small business owners and service providers to get unstuck and grow. She's a frequent teacher, workshop presenter and public speaker and works one-on-one with clients as well as in small Mastermind groups. Her company also sells a simplified WordPress-based website builder that empowers hundreds of small business owners to build and maintain their own professional websites. Find her at boldbusinessworks.com.

DINA EISENBERG, JD



Remote Work Maven and Digital Strategist, Dina loves helping self-employed folks, consultants and small business owners to monetize the content they already created into profitable products and services. Dina is remarkable for her talent of matching your best stuff with the right platform and cutting edge tools. A warm blend of creativity and practical know-how, you can read her blog on upcycling at InfoProductDoctor.com/blog.

DEANNA FENTON



A Digital Strategist with the single-minded goal of guiding entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations to online marketing success, Deanna says she spends waaay too much time on Facebook and reading up on the latest on online marketing strategies and tactics, so you don't have to. As a marketer first and technology person second, her goal is to emphasize that technology is a tool for effective marketing and to show nonprofits and small business owners precisely how to harness the power of online marketing for their own success. Find her at deannafenton.com.

HEATHER PLETT



Heather Plett is a teacher, writer, coach, and facilitator who helps people make deeper connections with themselves, others, the sacred, and the earth. She gathers people in circle both online and off to share stories, ask questions, make art, and build community. She is a practitioner of The Circle Way and The Art of Hosting, two practices which she uses to foster meaningful conversation in her retreats and workshops. She teaches courses such as Mandala Discovery and Creative Writing for Self-Discovery to help people connect more deeply with themselves. Find her at heatherplett.com.

JENNIFER LOUDEN



*Jennifer Loudon helped start the self-care movement with her first book *The Woman's Comfort Book*. She's written 5 more books including *The Woman's Retreat Book* and *The Life Organizer*, created numerous large online communities, led hundreds of retreats and online courses, and spoken around the world, all in service to helping women choose vibrant lives they love. Find her at jenniferlouden.com.*

KAYA SINGER



Founder of Awakening Business, mentoring and community for women visionary entrepreneurs. Kaya, in her ageless wisdom, stands as a champion for passionate women who want to fully step into their mission and grow their business from that place. She's the author of "Clear Your Focus Grow Your Business," as well as 20 other ebooks and programs." Her new book, "Wisdom from a Wild Woman Entrepreneur." will be published in January 2015. Her community, Awakening Business Virtual TeaHouse is a haven for women solopreneurs who know there is a woman's way of doing business. Find her at awakeningbusiness.com.

KIM DOYAL



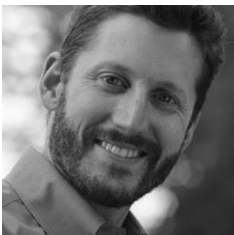
Known as "The WordPress Chick," Kim's an entrepreneur, coach, author, movie producer and speaker. She has built her lifestyle business using the platform of her choice, WordPress, through sheer determination and commitment. Kim works with entrepreneurs to build their online presence, connect with their ideal clients and 'show up' in a way that resonates with them. Find her at thewpchick.com.

LISA BRAITHWAITE



Lisa Braithwaite started performing at the tender age of three when, confronted by her mother about why there was cleanser all over the bathroom, she responded, "Out, damn'd spot! Out, I say!" More recently, she successfully faked her way through an interview for a Chicago Tribune article about faking public speaking. Lisa's philosophy of public speaking is that it's fun, that it's an awesome way to express yourself creatively, and that passion and enthusiasm are worth more than a thousand techniques. Also, that public speaking makes you richer, thinner, and better in bed, but you'll have to read her blog to find out how! Find her at coachlisab.com.

MARK SILVER



Mark is the founder of Heart of Business and a successful business teacher and healer who brings an active connection with the Divine to his work. Heart of Business has helped thousands of entrepreneurs and small business owners to integrate the nitty gritty of business with the heart-opening truths of spirit in a way that actually helps the business be profitable and make a difference in the world. Find him at heartofbusiness.com.

MEG WORDEN



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Meg Worden is a writer, speaker and health coach working with clients all over the world to redefine health as an easeful and excellent adventure, rather than a boring chore. Her work goes deep, gets hilarious and motivates mountains. Meg loves entrepreneurs, artists and your face. Go tweet her something nice. @megworden. Or visit

MICHELE LISENBURY CHRISTENSEN



Michele instigates everyday sensuality using yoga, brain science, and candid tales of personal trials and triumphs. In the past 15 years, she's co-crafted a playful smokin' 13+ year marriage, had two happy kids, and been a trusted advisor to more than 2000 couples, business owners, and high-level corporate leaders around the world. She helps men masterfully handle their partners, women open to receive, and couples create lasting love and renewable passion. Toe-curling pleasure on a daily basis gives Michele the rocket-fuel to serve and scintillate her clients and her readers at hotloverevolution.com. Visit now to take the free Hot Love Check-Up and learn what's limiting the intimacy and pleasure in your relationship. Find her at hotloverevolution.com.

MICHELLE BARRY FRANCO



showcase their expertise and talents. From presentation skills coaching

Michelle Barry Franco is absolutely certain that the path to satisfying and successful work is paved with radically clear communication, big courage and unexpectedly delightful truth-telling. With this recipe, she has helped hundreds of individuals – from CEOs to entrepreneurs to college students – create careers and businesses they love that also

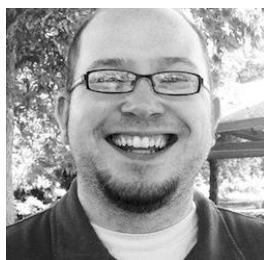
*and training to book writing and business messaging, if it's about "What to say and how to say it," Michelle has done it and has loved it! Michelle is the author of *Soul Power to Your Message: The Presentation Skills Guide to Making a Real Impact with Your Life-changing Message*. Find her at michellebarryfranco.com.*

MOLLY GORDON



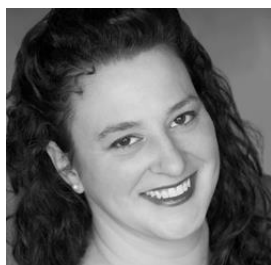
A professional coach since 1996, Molly is one of only a few hundred coaches worldwide who have earned the Master Certified Coach credential from the International Coach Federation. She is the author of "The Way of the Accidental Entrepreneur: How to Close the Gap Between the Work You Love and the Income You Want" and "Authentic Promotion: Grow Your Business, Feed Your Soul." Find her at shaboominc.com.

NICK ARMSTRONG



Nick Armstrong is unapologetically awesome at making marketing FUN for small business owners. He rocks at explaining difficult-to-grasp marketing and web technology concepts, making them much less scary. Nick's goal in life is to fix stupid. He asserts that you can do it by marketing "smart" better. His small business marketing firm WTF Marketing has made marketing fun again for a large number of happy clients. Find him at WTFmarketing.com

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As an author, speaker, accomplished air guitar player, and tamer of finance fears, Nicole Fende enjoys helping entrepreneurs grow their profits. She coined the moniker The Numbers Whisperer® to reflect her unique, fun approach to business. While Nicole's credentials may impress (Actuary, Chief Financial Officer before 30, Investment Banker in Asia), her true claim to fame is her ability to make finance fun. Find her at thenumberswhisperer.com.

PACE SMITH



Pace Smith helps pathfinders follow their hearts to a wild crazy meaningful life. She's a Pathfinding coach, a teacher, a writer, a bi poly trans gamer geek, an open-source Reiki healer, a spiritual misfit, and a tournament-level Dance Dance Revolution player. You can find her at PaceSmith.com.

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Rachna is a marketing and business coach who works with her clients to help them become more profitable and popular online. Two of her specialties are content marketing and search engine optimization. She's a psychologist by training and the author of "Internet Marketing for the Rest of Us: Your In-Depth Guide to Profitable Popularity." In her free time, she makes jewelry, mosaics, and pottery. She also loves social dance and digital photography. Find her at profitablepopularity.com.

SALLY ANNE GIEDRYS



Sally Anne is a personal and career coach, writer, business owner, marketer and strategist – and a fervent believer in practical reinvention. She specializes in working with professionals and entrepreneurs who want to re-tool their lives or their work, define success on their own terms and design healthy, balanced lifestyles that fit them perfectly.

SANDI AMORIM



Sandi Amorim is a Master Coach, NLP Practitioner, and modern day freedom fighter whose passion is helping you break down the walls between you and your freedom – a passion she directs with all of her fiery heart at SandiAmorim.com. Her new program, the 100 Day Promise, is overflowing with 20 years of studying what makes us tick, what keeps us stuck and most importantly, what helps us thrive. It's this combined experience of freedom and thriving that her clients love and use to create new futures for themselves.

SUSAN GIURLEO



She's a mom, psychologist and entrepreneur. She's learned in her career as a human and helping professional is that honesty really is the best policy. She calls things as she sees them. Her superpower is understanding the psychology of your clients-knowing what they need, want, what they will buy and communicating that authentically and honestly through awesome marketing. Find her at drsusangiurleo.com.

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TÉA SILVESTRE GODFREY



As Proprietress of StoryBistro.com, Téa gets goosebumps helping her clients find clarity about who they are and how they want to share their stories with the world. She’s also the author of “Attract and Feed a Hungry Crowd: How Thinking Like a Chef Can Help You Build a Stronger Business” (available on Amazon); and the forthcoming book, “Delicious: How to Find, Create and Tell Your Remarkable Branding Story.”