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WRITING SAMPLES

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ON BEAUTY

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Beauty is found in the curves of an antique automobile, the refractions of light on a beetle's hardened exterior, and the strum of an acoustic guitar against a backdrop of distant thunder on an otherwise quiet night. By definition beauty is subjective and therefore difficult to articulate for one person to the next, yet it's a concept we all innately share and immediately recognize. Accentuated details and perfect symmetry are keys to recognizing beauty, however, an object itself does not define it. Beauty exists in the methods, motivations, and natural forces that created the object ... and in our emotional responses.

CREATE EMOTIONALLY ENGAGING CONTENT WITHOUT THE MUSH

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It's easy to incite emotions on the Internet, particularly anger and shock. Take a look at all the tabloid-style headlines advertised in the right-side columns and across the footers of numerous entertainment websites. If they aren't focused on digging dirt on the latest celebrity in the news to spur your rage, these headlines are enticing you to look at shocking pictures of plastic surgery mishaps. The creators of this content know you are tuning all it out, so they are doing everything they can to appeal to your emotions as quickly as possible at a quick glance. And if there is that one chance something grabs you, like a photo of cute kitten that's too special for words with the most precious headline ... they have you.

That's the culture we operate in.

Appeal to the Motivating Emotions

When it comes to creating effective web content, one key to resonating with the audience is to appeal on a motivating, emotional level. You want to reach in grab ahold of their hearts, guide them toward your call to action. Convert them to customers and complete a full transaction. We are aiming to influence and motivate using emotional appeal as our gateway, carrying the audience through the journey using information and education to complete the process. Let the positive experience from content to becoming customer be the reason this person continues to return.

No Dirty Tricks

We walk a precarious line in content marketing: emotional appeal without manipulation. That means no scaring, pandering, shocking, angering, or any other dirty tricks. There is a balance you need to strike among valid, authentic content that communicates the story you need to tell while engaging the necessary emotional nerve.

Let's say you are writing a piece about a new toddler-sized car seat with the latest safety restraint system. It's obvious you want to appeal to parenting instincts, which includes the desire to protect their children, and a mother and father's love. You could play on fear, as in here's what would happen if your child doesn't use this product if an accident occurs, but what are you truly accomplishing by saying such a thing? Not only are you cheapening the product and brand's image and the company's reputation by focusing on the what if scenario by playing into dread and fear, you are evoking a parent's worst fears. The attitude of the story is no longer a genuine one of helping the consumer; it has become an alarmist tabloid message meant to scare them into submission.

Focus on the positive: a happy, healthy child with mom and dad riding home from the playground safely in the back of the car. That might sound mundane, so you put your creative writing skills to work and build a fun, imaginative car trip home only a child's mind could dream.

Generate Inspiration

Strong content resonates with the audience because it is informational, educational, and moving. It calls people to action because their emotions have been engaged to solve an issue they can identify with based on the details they just read about.

They have this need to act; they are inspired. Being realistic, not every piece of content will draw inspiration out of every reader, though it doesn't hurt to thrive for it. Here's why: the audience picks up on your emotions, too.

It's a subconscious connection between artist and audience that has always existed. It transcends time and space, meaning the emotions behind what you wrote and published in a book five years ago communicate to and affect a reader tomorrow who lives 3,000 miles away. If nothing else, this should illustrate the power you have as a content creator, the power you have to influence others, and your ability to appeal to an audience's emotions when you want to and need to.

Stay Authentic

As you target a specific emotional appeal, make sure you are both true to the subject and true to yourself. Readers can sense fluff right away and will discard the content before finishing it. Portray the product or service accurately, get the facts straight, and communicate honestly.

YOUR BRAND DNA

Blog for Commit Agency – Published December 16, 2015

Your company's brand is its DNA. In fact, the term *brand DNA* describes the ins and outs of how the brand has been assembled. It covers every nuance imaginable, from the typeface used on corporate stationery and names of social media accounts to the entirety of tradeshow booths. Branding provides cohesion for your company built on core messaging, a culture that reinforces those messages, and a public persona that exudes those messages. All the while, your branding is intended to capture immediate public recognition. It's a big job your marketing agency is willing to take on.

Branding Helps You Stand Out

From design and function to packaging and advertising, you want to create a brand ecosystem for your company that is unlike anything else. Consider Apple in their trend-setting role of today. Their branding is consistent and recognizable from the design of their mobile devices, operating systems, brick and mortar stores, advertisements, and their computers. You always know Apple when you see it. Set this as a goal.

Standing out is achievable at any level in any industry, whether you manufacture PVC plumbing fittings or provide five-star hotel accommodations. Trust your marketing agency's creative professionals, their goal is to elevate your brand above the competition.

Branding Fosters Customer Loyalty

Think about some of the most recognizable brands around today and what you've heard from people in your life who stick by them. You might know someone loyal to Levi's jeans, for example, who has worn only the one brand of jeans for the past several

years. Levi Strauss and his partner invented blue jeans to withstand the strains of physical labor, a brand trait that still stands today. Many loyal customers undoubtedly identify with this working class aspect of the brand combined with its historical roots.

Brand loyalty can develop by evoking a deep-seeded emotional response just as well as delivering consistent high-quality experiences with your products. Your brand resonates with a customer to the extent that it becomes an aspect of his or her personal or professional identity. Without branding, there is little for your customer to identify with.

Branding Defines How You Do Business

Great branding defines every facet of a company, including how you do business. Your business conduct will derive from the core messaging you design with your marketing agency. These guidelines direct employee behavior in the public eye, whether it's social media, a public function, or a letter to the editor in the local newspaper. They define how managers recognize achievements among their staff and other aspects of internal culture. Internal culture directly affects how external facets of the business are managed, like customer interactions.

Branding is important to your business at every level. Let Commit Agency help you realize your company's *brand DNA*.

HOW AN INTRANET CAN TRANSFORM YOUR CORPORATE CULTURE

White Paper for Bonzai Intranet.

Corporate intranets have evolved to become the standard centralized communication and cultural hub for large companies with multiple offices. In the early days of intranets, a company's HR or corporate communications department used the internal website as a one-way communication vehicle to disseminate internal company news and announcements; a web portal employees would login to each morning at their own discretion, read the news, and then forget about.

Today, these internal websites share features with the social web, like enabling employees to comment on and discuss articles similar to public blogs, and even create content. These internal sites provide a sense of community among employees across a company regardless of geography where they can share news, alerts, access employee directories and department information, file libraries, and much more. When carried out well, an intranet not only serves as the core of corporate culture, it can transform it.

An Intranet Drives Culture

To have a strong understanding of a company's culture, it's important to first define what that means. At its core, corporate culture is made up of the shared values and practices that drive all aspects of the business, from product development and executive governance to customer interaction and product performance. Idealistically, the digital workspace is a reflection of the existing culture or a representation of what the culture should become, in which case it becomes a catalyst to promote change. In either case, an intranet takes on a company's central role of communicating its core essentials,

like corporate branding and identity, company-wide goals, successes and failures, corporate policies, industry news, and business changes.

Business culture is made of all those elements from the business side, but it's equally made up of the employee body: each individual's contributions to the company and their general attitudes about what they have accomplished. This is where the social aspect of the intranet takes on critical value; by empowering employees in their stakeholder roles it has a direct positive impact on the corporate culture.

Positive Culture Relies on Trust

As mentioned before, early intranets were one-way communication avenues. This was largely due to available technologies at the time, but it was not uncommon to find companies continuing this form of controlled communication long after the arrival of the social web. Sometimes, businesses were reluctant to give up tight control of all messaging on the site, worried that a single employee might say something that could bring about dissension. This reflects a poor culture, where fear permeates the environment. Unfortunately, open communication does not exist in such negative cultures; in fact, open communication is the key to turning them around.

A social intranet is one such key as it promotes trust in employees to act responsibly on a public forum. Rather than feel talked down to and controlled in those one-way situations, a social intranet empowers employees to bring valuable content and thought to the on-going discussions surrounding the business. They are contributing to the business on a core level that might influence processes and product development. These active contributions are helping to elevate the corporate culture.

Everyone Is a Stakeholder

To turn around skepticism of a new intranet in a negative environment, the first step is to help all employees understand they are now stakeholders. No longer are they only the recipients of one-way information of old, they have become content contributors. Through interactive tools like message boards and digital workspaces where team members can communicate and collaborate during off hours and over long distances across multiple time zones, they become part of a community with a vested interest in growing their business, to increase employee productivity, not just workers who show up in the morning and go home in time for dinner.

Breaking Down Silos

Common issues faced by large companies are the unintentional creation of silos. Silos are the result of geographic separations of offices and communication barriers among departments even within the same office building. Pertinent information is not passed on in a timely manner in its full scope, or at all, among these different segments of the business, resulting in fragmentation and inefficiencies that can hurt the company's revenue or production schedules. Senior managers work tirelessly to stay ahead of these compartmentalized issues, creating programs to increase communication, but it's not always enough to focus on only one aspect of the business where communication is lacking if this problem is widespread.

A corporate intranet in which every piece of the business is expected to make full use of it will help break down these silos. Using the digital workspace as a frontend portal to the company's file libraries residing in Microsoft SharePoint, for example, instills a broad sense of *we're all in this together*, which reaches all employees no matter where they sit. It reinforces the all-important concepts of communication and

employee collaboration that propels a successful company forward. In turn, culture is elevated, which has a direct impact on employee productivity.

All Departments Need to Communicate

Departments have the responsibility to use the intranet to communicate updates to their team members as well as the full organization as needed. Let's say the IT department needs to announce a planned outage of a few application servers over a weekend for upgrades. Making this announcement only by email is risky. Consider how many emails the average employee now receives on a regular day and may will skip over – about 28 percent of the work week is spent on email, according to the McKinsey Global Institute's study [*The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies*](#). Simply put, email has become an intense burden – more time is spent on navigating through and reading emails than is spent on actual productivity. Posting a simple IT outage alert on the intranet's homepage will assure all employees will see it quickly.

By encouraging every department to make full use of communication tools made available to them on the new intranet, they will slowly but steadily chip away at the silo barriers. Furthermore, departments that are spread across multiple locations will have the opportunity to develop a stronger camaraderie and employee collaboration in working together through on-going real-time communication.

Digital Workspace Collaboration

In the same vein as the communication tools, the digital workspace empowers employee collaboration like never before. Using Bonzai, which works in tandem with a company's existing SharePoint network, employees have a full suite of file

collaboration tools. All project files reside on the server and retain a history of edits, along with notes, team member tasks, web links, and ancillary documentation that together bring a holistic approach. A social intranet facilitates the creation of communities based around subject matter expertise and skill sets, forming ecosystems in which employees train and develop one another for the betterment of the company as well as increasing each member's visibility to other stakeholders seeking their expertise and skills for a specialized project.

Reclaim Wasted Time

The social aspects of an intranet, like those that Bonzai offer, has a direct impact on productivity and efficiency when fully employed. Employees are able to connect with one another in real-time and search for information and file libraries with immediacy, reducing wasted time and dramatically improving the effectiveness of an organization.

Referring back to the McKinsey Global Institute study *The social economy*, the implementation of internal social technologies such as Bonzai Intranet "could potentially contribute \$900 billion to \$1.3 trillion in annual value" across "four commercial sectors: consumer packaged goods, retail financial services, advanced manufacturing, and professional services." Internal social technology would eliminate a bevy of wasted time from the workweek, such as 28 percent of the week spent on managing abundant emails and another 20 percent spent on searching for internal resources and colleagues with special skills.

Bringing Remote Individuals Together

There is a particularly strong value in a corporate intranet when it comes to employees who work from home offices or in the field. Consider the account executive

who travels from one client or vendor to the next, spending less than a quarter of work time in an actual office. That person's office is the airport lounge, a hotel room, or some other makeshift spot while in transit. As for the home office worker, he or she spends most of their work time isolated from colleagues outside of phone calls and the occasional video conference.

These individuals do not have the benefit of day-to-day physical interactions with co-workers or the general sense of what is going on at work in a given week. It's hard to gauge the general course of a business when you cannot be present, missing small discussions with colleagues and managers, even a VP or the CEO. That is where an active intranet becomes useful. When everyone contributes to the intranet in comments on news items and carrying lively discussions, those remote workers are given an entry point to become part of the community.

Take this a step further by sharing photos or video clips of work-related events. Do this across all offices giving employees a window into seeing faces to put to the names they know only from an email signature and organizational chart. They can see office locations, inside and out, to get a feel for that piece of the company, or the world, for that matter, and it gives an employee who will be traveling to a remote office an idea of what to expect on arrival.

Suddenly, you have an enthusiastic employee body excited about what their colleagues in other parts of the world are up to. They want to check in with one another as they develop a vested interest in knowing their colleagues are doing well. Why? Because the formerly faceless email recipients and distant voices on conference calls are suddenly real humans with whom they have developed human connections, which they

count on to work together on a team. The stronger the human connection is the stronger the collaboration, even if it's between two people on opposite sides of the world and they are communicating through a social intranet.

User Adoption

Following implementation of a new intranet is the all-important user adoption. A critical aspect in employee roll out is offering a unique and customized user experience in which employees can customize the interface to meet their day-to-day and project needs, as well as provide quick access to communication tools to interact with long-distance colleagues. You want to promote the idea that the intranet is now a standard tool in everyone's daily arsenal to perform his or her jobs.

Other critical elements are user comfort and easy self-learning, with online help or training guides available. The purpose here is to avoid user frustration and pushback. Keep it simple and constantly seek feedback from employees to look for improvement opportunities. Seeing well-intended and useful suggestions take form in how the intranet functions will act as a driving force in early adoption.

First Thing Everyone Sees

To help promote this broad user adoption, set up automatic log-on to the intranet for all company computers and mobile devices when employees are connected to the internal network. The company's intranet homepage should always be the first thing they see. As such, it's important to keep the homepage content dynamic and up-to-date, showing a mix of current news about the business and the relevant industry, as well as internal content like an Employee Spotlight, announcements for upcoming company events, town hall meetings, and the like. Customized sections for the users are important,

so they can quickly access server and cloud-based applications and files they need to work with to begin their daily jobs.

Bonzai Intranet Offers These Solutions

Bonzai Intranet, designed to work with an existing Microsoft SharePoint network, and Bonzai Online, which pairs with SharePoint Online and Office 365, offer a company a mix of tools and features for delivering high quality intranet content and a digital workspace. Rather than inundating already over-populated inboxes with mass email invites, company-wide meeting and event information can be posted on the intranet that easily integrates with employees' Outlook calendars. News articles feature social and interactive aspects enabling employees to comment and carry conversations, thereby building the first steps of employee engagement.

Intranet Tools From Bonzai to Promote Culture

Bonzai Intranet offers a host of tools and features that promote communication and collaboration among employees for work-specific needs, but also to develop a greater sense of community among peers. Across these tools, and all of Bonzai's core features like the News module, are the social media-inspired interactions: like, comment, and share. These interactions might seem small, but they sit at the core of how we socialize on the web today; a social intranet is no different.

Events: Bonzai's Events module allows employees to view and save events to their calendars. Employees can show support for events by liking and commenting on them. Each event's location and timing is displayed, including a list of who is attending and the contact details of the organizer.

Employee Spotlight: The Employee Spotlight showcases a new employee's photo and bio on the intranet's homepage with a link to that person's homepage within the employee directory. There, interested staff can locate department information and contact details to follow-up with the new person and welcome him or her aboard.

Employee Directory: The Bonzai Employee Directory builds on the SharePoint directory with a clean and comprehensive interface featuring headshots with immediate contact details. Employees can search for subject matter experts, remote team members, and department heads among numerous other search queries to find the right person within the organization, a task that would have previously relied heavily on word of mouth.

Location Directory: In a multinational company, a location directory is invaluable. Bonzai's Location Directory module offers office hours, employee directories, location details, contact information, and office photos all in one place.

Marketplace: The Marketplace feature functions as an employee online classified site. It replaces the flyers and posters found on bulletin boards in break rooms. The Marketplace can be used to buy, sell, trade, and giveaway items and services while interested employees can watch, like, and comment on items.

Photo Gallery: Users can upload photos from company events, conferences, and such to the Photo Gallery module within Bonzai. Employees viewing the galleries are able to like and share the images, as well as save them into their own light boxes for later reference.

What Good Corporate Culture Needs

It's difficult in today's connected world for a corporation to forgo a digital workspace as a matter of efficiency and content and communication centralization. Furthermore, it's not realistic to expect employees to respond well to a one-way communication vehicle like the intranets of old. Good corporate culture depends on a two-way street between a company that respects employees and employees that respect their employer. This occurs when there is open and transparent two-way communication, and Bonzai Intranet offers the tools to make this happen.

FROM THE GRIDIRON TO THE NYC MARATHON – TIMEX TRAINS
AMANI TOOMER

Published on Timex Group corporate intranet – September 9, 2010

To coincide with the start of the National Football League's 2010-11 season, former New York Giants wide receiver Amani Toomer conducted a press tour on September 9, 2010 to promote his partnership with Timex in running the ING New York City Marathon (Timex is the official timing sponsor) on November 7. In all, Toomer conducted 19 interviews in the New York City area – 12 national and seven high-level local New York media outlets.

As Toomer explained in the interviews, Timex has supplied him with a personal trainer (Timex athlete, Chris Thomas) and the new GPS-enabled Timex Ironman Global Trainer watch with heart rate monitor. Using the equipment, Toomer is able to record his heart rate data in conjunction with the time and distance he has covered during his training, giving him the ability to identify areas of improvement and development.

Amani Toomer will run the New York City Marathon starting in last place. For every runner he passes, Timex will donate \$1 to the New York Road Runners' Youth Programs. Toomer is the first former NFL pro athlete to run the NYC Marathon since Lynn Swan ran it in 1993.

Click on the links below to view, read and listen to Amani Toomer's press coverage. Also visit [Facebook.com/TimexSports](https://www.facebook.com/TimexSports) for continued updates and coverage.

[List of media links]

Excerpts from

*HARVESTING CREATIVITY:
STAYING INNOVATIVE IN SPITE OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS*

BY
DAVID T. GRIFFITH

23. FACING CHANGE

Corporate change occurs for a variety of reasons, usually with the intention of some type of improvement. There is management change, when a CEO and other top-level officers are replaced; organizational change, in which the business unit, department, and reporting structures are reshaped with new and changed responsibilities; and there is cultural change, as a company's values, commitment to customers, and internal business relationships are examined and reformed. In each of these instances, employees tend to feel uneasy and morale drops. Sometimes this is caused by fear of leaving a comfort zone; other times it's fear of financial uncertainty and job insecurity. During my career I have been subjected to different phases of change in each of these three instances.

As a creative professional in such an environment, there is little else that has such an adverse effect on your creativity. Down times mute positive attitudes and smother burning passions. Project execution becomes burdensome rather than a labor of love.

We are habitual creatures when it comes to creativity, following patterns we have developed over time and grown accustomed to. Speaking as someone who has experienced change on the job more than once, I can tell you that personal drive is essential to maintaining your place in the company and keeping your sanity. No matter how negative the environment has become, you need to find that same burning torch deep inside of yourself that led you through school and on to this career path in the first place. It's easy to forget after years on a job feeling comfortable, and possibly complacent, what it took to arrive there.

This is a time to think in new attitudes and approaches, and process the emerging changed environment from new perspectives. This is the time to let go of fear and

plummet head first into the uncharted sea, set the course for yourself and those who work with you. Change is an opportunity to shift your career path and elevate your status on your team, to become a leader. It's the opportunity to set the tone, to build a renewed creative environment that supports your needs and that of your peers. You can do this.

Rigidity

“This is how it has *always* been done.” This is perhaps the most dangerous statement in the English language when it comes to business. Essentially, the person speaking it has no desire to change; no interest in seeing progress take shape as new methods are introduced and old ideologies are thrown out. This is the naysayer, the pessimist, or the traditionalist, the person who longs for the good old days of the company when he or she was a new hire 30 years ago and has managed to maintain a career built on complacency ever since. This person will thwart change at every opportunity, no matter how big or small, even if he or she doesn't realize it. It becomes a natural reaction to unrecognizable territory. This is the person that is hardest to appeal to when it comes to trying something new. This person is happiest when nothing is happening and stands guard at the slightest suggestion of trying something new.

Creativity thrives on change and progress; otherwise, it becomes stagnant. As a creative professional you should never utter the words “this is how it has *always* been done” with conviction. If you find yourself falling into this rigid mindset, it's never too late to change yourself. However, you have to want to change; no one else can initiate it.

Flexibility

The key to surviving change in business is flexibility. *Creatives* are flexible by nature, though we tend to bottle ourselves by rigid habits when it comes to our jobs.

Habits are easy to develop but hard to break, yet they must be broken. An open mind and ability to adapt to new situations are necessary growth skills in any business for any professional.

The flexible professional approaches changing situations with an open mind and healthy skepticism. Not every change situation will work out for a host of reasons, so a level of preparedness is in order for a follow-up change or return to how things were. This person identifies opportunities for personal career growth as well as growth around the responsibilities he or she performs. This person is an opportunist and an optimist, though he or she needs to know when and where to set personal boundaries and recognize when situations are beyond his or her control.

Why change matters

Change is mandatory for keeping up with the rest of the world: your audience, technology, lifestyle, and marketplace. Trends and fads come in, disrupt the current status quo, and go out leaving an opening for the next. Rapid changes in technology affect how products are manufactured, which has an impact on costs and design capabilities, as well as the product's performance and functionality. The marketing approach that worked beautifully last year can sink this year because the audience views it as past its prime and commonplace, or it is no longer relevant to the next wave of products.

The world will never stop changing; therefore business entities must maintain a similar velocity. When *stay the course* types talk about the good ole days, remember how different our time is from those earlier decades they might reference when change seemed slower to the point of being unnoticeable. The rapid onset of the technological evolution mixed with the immediacy in real-time communications changed everything in

our culture and how businesses must function. There are days when it sounds desirable to return to a slower, mellower time, that's only a fantasy at this point. We cannot un-ring this bell. Ultimately, it's an *adapt or die* situation for all companies now.

32. STAND OUT

It's easy to become complacent at work. You begin to let things slide, show up in the morning, work a few hours, eat lunch, work a few more hours, then go home for the day and forget about your job. Collect a paycheck and live your life. For some people, that's okay, if not desirable. For others like me, it's the first circle of hell.

Where you fall depends on your goals and where your passions lie. If you're passionate about your profession, complacency is your worst enemy. Chances are, like a painter who cannot refrain from perfecting a portrait, it takes a lot to keep you satisfied in your job. You need to grow holistically as an individual and in your career; it's not just a dream, or for more money or a bigger job. It's a necessity. You need a sense of belonging to something bigger than any one person, doing something good. You will stop at nothing to achieve those goals and the new ones that develop on the way. Meeting one goal is never enough. Like that perfectionist painter who continues to find new opportunities to improve upon, you need to keep growing.

Standing out from the competition and differentiating yourself from your peers is essential to career success. This requires more than just doing your job well; it means exceeding expectations, leading and helping others, and proving yourself as unique and irreplaceable. This is accomplished by a mixture of things: a positive personality, a combination of skills and talents that establish you as an expert in your profession, and the ability to adapt and grow with your role, your field, and your business. Perhaps a career change becomes necessary, or there is a need to evolve in your profession and into a new industry.

Here is some advice on how to stand out as you pursue your creative career.

Be bold

Take a lesson from William Zinsser in his wonderful craft book *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. The book is written for writers, but the message pertains to anyone – “Don’t be kind of bold. Be bold” (Zinsser 1976, 70). In writing terms as he described, avoid passive and indecisive statements, avoid clutter and jargon, and don’t be afraid to use “I” when it is appropriate.

Apply this lesson in your work. When it comes to decision-making, either for a project or how you handle your career, do you allow indecisiveness to disrupt your flow? Can you make a judgment call on the fly and stick with it moving forward? The ability to make strong decisions and to stand by them is a critical factor in anyone’s ability to succeed on the microscopic level as well as the grand scheme. It is a necessary trait for managers and leaders. It reveals confidence.

Confidence is a tough concept to grasp when you’re new to the working world. You might feel confident about your talents, but lack the experience and wisdom of your more seasoned peers, thereby lacking confidence. There is nothing wrong with this; we all start somewhere. Find every opportunity to build a mentor relationship with those co-workers you look up to. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or to offer taking the lead on a project when you have developed the ability to do so. The best way to learn on the job is from hands-on experience and absorbing everything your peers and mentors have to offer. Confidence is born from these experiences.

Being bold is about revealing your true self. Your experiences, your education, and your wisdom all come into play in how you represent yourself. Your ability to take risks shows fearlessness and creative exploration. Clarity and conciseness in your communication exhibits your expertise and will earn respect from your peers and trust

from clients. Trustworthiness sets the tone of your professional relationships; an impervious bond between you, your coworkers, and your managers is a step towards leadership.

Be real

In all of your business communications speak openly and honestly. Avoid drawn out superfluous information, and most importantly, don't be negative. When dealing with a negative situation, offer constructive solutions and don't feed into the pessimism, including excessive commentary. Anything you say should contribute to the problem's resolution.

In this communication vein, eliminate popular buzzwords and jargon, and don't misuse nouns like *leverage* and *impact* as verbs. Liberal use of jargon says a few things about those who toss them around: they are not thinking for themselves as they repeat these verbal fads and they will eventually disappear into the crowd.

Don't hide behind emails. Talk to people face-to-face when you can, by phone or video chat when you can't meet in-person. Avoiding confrontation shows a lack of courage and discounts your perspective on a subject. Assert your argument with positive overtones and an open mind, and then listen to the other party's point of view. It's respectable to change your stance if you are persuaded, no one should hold it against you. Strong leaders listen before they make a decision. Keep this in mind as you aspire for your next goal.

Be authentic

Most importantly, be comfortable with yourself. Every creative person needs to feel confident in his or her own skin, heart, and brain. Whenever the opportunity strikes

contribute your talents and skills to improve on a project, solve a problem, or assist someone else. Expose your inner self while maintaining humility and respect for everyone around you. Stay out of mob mentalities if morale is declining; rather, become the positive voice. If you are comfortable in your own skin at work or at a client meeting, you reveal your confidence and strength through your actions.

A culmination of several strengths, authenticity is not always easy to come by. It's easy for someone to hide behind undeliverable promises and false pretenses, throwing blame at others when those practices lead to failure. Sometimes the easy way is not the right way. No doubt you've heard terms like *transparency* in the business lexicon of late. Transparency holds an essential value in being authentic. You having nothing to hide, you express your expert opinion with no apologies, but you must do it with respect as to not create friction and adverse reactions.

Authenticity reflects your individualism through a blend of your talents, skills, wisdom, and personality. It grows out of honesty and passion, a yearning to do the right thing, and being true to whom you are. This is your differentiator. Differentiation is key to your success, no matter how you define it.

Be your own champion

Self-advocacy is essential to your success. No one knows your skills better than you. You are a subject matter expert. Only you can conceive the depth of your talents. When it comes to self-promotion to gain new business or self-advocacy to rise in the ranks at your company, only you are capable of taking the initiative.

Whether you are interviewing for your first job or your fifth, or in line for a promotion, the value of your self-advocacy does not diminish. Be yourself. Show you are

a subject matter expert, which can place you in a valuable and secure spot with your employer.

And finally, be creative

As you have learned throughout these pages, harvesting your creativity is what this book of essays is about. Collect your creative abilities, develop them, combine them, and apply them to your career in ways only you know how. It makes no difference if you hold a creative position like a fashion designer or a magazine editor, or if you are a professional in a field in which you can apply creative skills in finding a resolution, such as an accountant or a lawyer. No one can take creativity away from you. It's an extension of who you are and how you operate. You're born with it and you can develop it.

Creativity is a culmination of several traits: authenticity, expertise, open-mindedness, honesty, fearlessness, selflessness, and boldness. It's your gift to do with it as you wish.

Do yourself a favor and use your creativity to your fullest potential. Anything less is a disservice to you, your company, your team, and your clients. Harvest every last grain.

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