Dear Amazon, please think about the outside of the box.

Dear Amazon,

Thank you for creating Prime and fast home delivery. I love how I can get such a huge variety of healthful products from a single source, pay fast, and have it delivered to my front door! Plus, I love your easy return policy. I keep about 99% of the things I order, but every now and then I do return something.

A few days ago, I received this box. Today I’d like to do a virtual box return. It didn’t quite work out for me for a few different reasons. First, I don’t like “fights” in or around my home. Another thing is that it’s ok to ask me to be aware of something pertaining to Amazon, such as an upcoming sale or something that represents your corporate values. But please send only good things and good news to my home.
After the Whole Foods buyout, will Amazon stand up for the longterm health of its customers?

Should I ever get in the mood for bad news, I know I can turn on the daily news, pick up a newspaper, or do a hashtag search any number of bad news topics related to death, disease and discontent.

The reason I’d like to return this cancer box to you is that I’m much more interested in solutions instead of problems. You recently bought out Whole Foods, so this is a great opportunity to create awareness on how food has a huge impact on kids’ health. I’d much rather you put a message on a box that tells me about the benefits of eating carrots instead of burdening me with negative thoughts about diseases that come as a result of the toxins in children’s foods and environments.
“Go Gold” sounds like a status ranking of a credit card or frequent flyer program. But after doing a quick search on it, I discovered that it’s nothing more than an extension of the misleading #Pinktober campaign. Why not tell people The Truth About Cancer?

If you send messages out like #GoGold or #FightLikeAGirl, you’re perpetuating the problem instead of the solution.

Don’t count on pink to save your hooters from cancer.

Wearing a pink or gold ribbon, or creating awareness about disease does nothing, in itself, to solve a problem. Instead, why not inspire your customers with preventive measures, contributions to remedies, and stories of people who have overcome disease by making healthful changes in their lifestyles?

It’s hard to find campaigns that promote good health, in part, because it’s harder to get collective funds to brand carrots or apples sold by scattered farmers. But it makes good business for Mars to put out money to sell colorful and deceitful M&M’s that come off their own synthetic production lines.

Cancer can be killed.

Google offers an enticing and colorful new message almost
daily, plus they offer Doodle4Google contests where kids can create, inspire, and win scholarships. Here’s one cute example made by middle schooler, Alyssa Anderson, to help create awareness about animals that are at risk of extinction.

When I see a cute design like this, it makes me curious to know more and to look at the positive solution-side of an issue. Look how cute these creatures are. Of course I want them to stick around with me on the planet! Is there anything I can do to help?

Alyssa Anderson, a 7th grade student at Wright Middle School is one of the 53 state winners of the “Doodle 4 Google” competition.

One of the things I like most about Amazon is that I can buy a bunch of healthful products in one shopping cart, hit the Buy Now button and have these things show up at my front door within a few days:

- essential oils
- Raw Organic Chia Seeds
water distiller
The Detox Miracle Sourcebook
a documentary about how Cancer Can Be Killed
plus lots of other products that support good health.

Why not tell your customers about the good things you offer instead of sending a mixed message with words like gold, awareness and cancer? My first impression when I saw your box was a reminder that big corporations and the pharma industry profit from disease. As Burzynski points out, Cancer is Serious Business. Many corporations, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies earn their gold by promoting synthetic “foods,” drugs, and procedures that both cause and exacerbate symptoms and disease.

A Cure for Cancer? Eating A Plant-Based Diet

As far as I can tell, Walmart has never put much effort into helping its customers improve or maintain good health. Their stores are well stocked with oversize bottles of sodas, oversize bags of chips, clothing sizes for people who are obese, and a pharmacy where people can pick up drugs that exacerbate their waning conditions. Yes, they offer some items that are organic or more healthful than others, but it’s certainly not their focus.

Do you realize that, with your influence, you have an opportunity to lead people to good news, life-changing
information and better health faster than they ever thought possible?

Minions and Amazon plot to take over the world. Will they succeed?

Your boxes are dropped on porches and end up in homes and businesses all over the place. Cats climb in them, people use them as moving boxes and kids build forts with them. You have a powerful opportunity to send out all sorts of good news to the Minions about what Amazon has to offer to improve lives. Do you want to lead with: A) sickness and fear, or B) health and prosperity?

HINT: B is the correct answer because your customers will live longer, buy more stuff from you and be more loyal.

If kids were to build a fort with Amazon boxes, what message would you want them to see? Would you like to tell them that they need to fight cancer? Or would you like to let them know about the good news from books they can buy at Amazon such as:
I’m excited about Amazon’s recent purchase of Whole Foods. I wait with anticipation to see how you might make it easier to get tasty organic fruits and vegetables into the hands and stomachs of your customers. Instead of promoting fighting and diseases, please stand up for your customers and support natural solution-oriented organizations such as:

- Gerson Institute
- Dr. Morse’s Herbal Health Club
- Nature Works Best Cancer Clinic
- Utopia Wellness
- Infusio
- Marinus am Stein Clinic
- Cancer Tutor
- Natural News
- Dr. Josh Axe

Thank you for taking the time to hear me out. I normally take my Amazon boxes to my local U-haul store where customers can take a box, leave a box. Even though you partner with Give Back Box to return unwanted boxes by filling them up with items for charities, I’m going to toss this toxic cancer box into a recycle bin with hopes that it will be recycled into better news.

To anyone else who’s reading this, please feel free to leave a comment if you have another healthful message or resource you’d like to print on Amazon boxes and beyond.

Peace 🕉️ and Love 🖤,
Lorraine
Write to Clarify Your Message

Before you engage in a conversation, do you take time to clarify your message? Do you think about what you want to say in advance? This is easy when you’re texting or sending an email. You can write, edit and send. But when you’re speaking, it helps to plan ahead.

Clarify your message with friends.

Taking the time to clarify your message is an ongoing process. As your life changes, you have different messages to send. If you have children and someone asks if you want to do some fun activities with kids and you say yes, you’re saying yes to something that’s fun as defined by you. You may not know what fun means to the person who’s asking. And the same is true if you’re the one doing the inviting.

If you’re asking a couple to join you for dinner, it’s helpful for everyone involved to know specifically what you’re asking. Is it an indoor potluck or an outdoor barbeque? Will you be making all the food? It’s helpful to confirm whether or not
there are any special dietary needs. If you enjoy playing board games and you’re expecting everyone to play along, it’s helpful to mention it in advance to avoid disappointment. Did you remember to mention you have pets?

Clarity helps others makes decisions, and it’s equally beneficial to you as well. What if your friend left frustrated because she sneezed all night, her eyes teared up, and she went home with an allergic reaction because you have several cats, but she didn’t know. Remember to mention you have cats.

**Clarify your message at work.**

Another level of clarifying your message happens at work. Whether you work for another company or your own, it’s important to be clear about what you do best and what services you offer. This is especially relevant for company leaders, marketing departments, and people who work in sales. It’s important that messages are clear. Colleagues and customers are much happier when they know they’re basing their decisions on transparent truth. Clarity is a soothing oil that helps to keep relationships running smoothly.
William Zinsser, a writer’s writer who taught that clutter was the enemy.

Lawyers, big companies, government and the IRS are known for messy messages. They say “at this present time” instead of now. They say things like “explosive expressions of dissatisfaction” instead of protest. William Zinsser advises in his book *On Writing Well*, that it’s critical to remove all redundant and unnecessary words. What shows up as clutter on the page is an insult to the reader who is genuinely interested in your message. Keep your message succinct. Respect your time and his.

Gobbledygook is so rampant in government that an organization sprung up in the 1990s to help remedy the problem. The Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN) is a group of federal employees form different agencies and specialties who support the use of clear communication in government writing.
The entire legal industry exists because of the tangled messages and complicated interpretations of the law. You can only hope that you’re doing the right thing and not breaking a law. We know the basic laws, but if we ever happen to get involved a legal battle, experts would advice us to seek the counsel of an attorney who has learned to read the complex laws and navigate through perplexing paragraphs.

**Clarify your message for family.**

As you clarify your message for others, it essentially helps you clarify what you want. You might state that you want to go on a vacation, but where? It’s much easier if you mention to your spouse that you’d like to go to a nudist resort in Costa Rica for your birthday. This states a specific type of place and a time. It’s clear.

Let’s say your husband asks if you’d like to head north. You reply that you don’t want to go anyplace cold and ramble on with more of what you don’t want. They’re all wasted words. There’s rarely a reason to state what you don’t want. In fact, doing so is counterproductive.

Before you mention what you do not want, know that what you’re about to say can be eliminated both in writing and in speech. There’s no point in mentioning what you don’t want because this could go on endlessly ad nauseum. Where will this end, your listener or reader will wonder?
The only thing that’s important to mention is what you do want. And this takes thought. We seem to have gut feelings about what we want, but in many cases, we have been conditioned to ignore our inner wisdom.

Write to tap into your inner wisdom.

As you clarify your message, you also clarify your wants. As you clarify and communicate what you’d like to see manifest in your life, you’re much more likely to enjoy the world around you.

A lack of clarity in your message is a reflection of befuddled thoughts. If you’re not sure of what you want, just say so. “I don’t know.” Take time to sort out your thoughts and convey your message later.

In fact, when you’re describing any aspect of your life, whether it’s what you want to do on a weekend or how you want to redecorate a room in your home, the more you can clarify your message, the more likely you are to get what you want. By learning to clarify your message, you will be able to tidy up not only your thinking, but also the world around you.

If you’re interested in pursuing clarity as a part of your writing career, get inspired by Alan Siegel’s TED talk where he demonstrates what he’s doing to help simplify jargon.
Exercise:

Think of something going on in your life that feels chaotic or unclear. Sit down and write about it. You’ll have to go through the fog to get to clarity, but when you do, it’s worth it. Often, you’ll find simple solutions to your problems simply by taking the time to get clarity on what you want. When it comes to defining what you want, you’ll be the first to know.

Can you describe your ideal work day?

“Can you describe your ideal work day?”

Since you’re reading this, there’s a good chance that you’re not experiencing your ideal work day at this moment. If you
were, you’d be busy doing what you love to do instead of reading an article to help you get where you want to go.

Stay with me. I’m here to help. One of the most important gifts you can give yourself is the same one that you can give to everyone you work with. It’s to align your heart and talent with the work you do.

This is the only way to live wholeheartedly.

If you settle for anything less, the work you do will suck the energy out of you moment by moment, day after day.

As you take strategic steps to spend more time doing what you love, you’ll inevitably work less and less. What you’re doing won’t feel like work. Keep in mind that working and being busy DO NOT equate to a higher cash flow. Doing what you love to do doesn’t guarantee a higher cash flow either.

So assuming that you’re going to do activities every day that add value to your life and to the lives of others, doesn’t it make sense to choose activities that you enjoy?

If you don’t have a clear picture of your ideal work day, don’t worry. Most people don’t. And even if they do, they haven’t done what it takes to make it their daily reality. If you doubt this, feel free to conduct your own poll. Ask some people you know to describe their ideal work day and then ask if it aligns with their daily life. If so, you might have just found yourself a mentor who can help you transform your life. If not, please share this article with people who desire to align their cash flow with the work they love.

How many people do you know who
absolutely love what they do?

Now imagine someone you know who hates his work. It might be a colleague, a family member, or a cashier at a place you shop. Assuming that all men are created equal, what’s the biggest difference between someone who loves his work and someone who doesn’t?

This isn’t a trick question. It’s a question of the heart. One has positioned herself to be happy with her work. One hasn’t. If you dare to ask someone who hates his work, he might give you a long list of excuses about why things never seem to work out for him.

Ironically, his miserable situation creates opportunities for others.

Unhappy people are just as important as happy people. If you’re a compassionate listener who loves to counsel and coach people, you might be more than willing to listen to his stories for hours. Or if you love to write country music, you might be able to capture some lyrics for a new song.

“Nothing is neither good nor bad, but thinking makes it so.”

Shakespeare

Do you think it’s possible for you to make your ideal work day a reality for you? The best answer here is “yes.” If you don’t believe it’s possible, then you’ll surely prove it to yourself over and over again. Why torture yourself? You deserve to be happy. And so does everyone around you!

Regardless of what you’re feeling right now, just assume for a moment that you do indeed deserve to be happy today and every day. Keeping this in mind, schedule a little time to vividly imagine your ideal work day. Here are a few ideas to get you
started:

- make journal entries over the next few days to describe your ideal work day with as much detail as possible
- gather up some magazines, scissors and glue and make a collage that gives you a visual illustration of your ideal work day
- brainstorm a list of things you love to do and note ideas on how you could position yourself to start earning income with some of these activities

If you’d like to be on the fast track to turning your creative passion into profit, check out the Path to Profit Academy. They can help you eliminate the fear, doubt and lack of clarity that is stopping you from creating the freedom, flexibility and financial independence that you crave.

You deserve to be happy . . . every day!

Tips to manage your business reviews

Business reviews are more important than advertising. Customer reviews can have a big impact on your business. Opinions about your business are easy to find and buyers are more informed today than ever. Regardless of whether you’re selling a ten-dollar widget or a ten-thousand-dollar service package, buyers read about your product or service before they ever step foot
into your business or try your product. This is equally true if you’re a nonprofit or any other organization who wants to attract people to whatever it is that you have to offer.

Buyers can browse through reviews and read other’s opinions about your business or organization before you have a chance at a first impression.

Decision-makers are armed with smart phones. They can stand at your front door or see your product on a (virtual) shelf and quickly learn what others have to say about it. And even if they don’t have time to read reviews, they can take a quick glance to see how many stars you have compared to other options they’re considering.

Good reviews are helpful because they let you know what customers appreciate. Bad reviews are helpful because they help you learn how to improve your business.
After reading reviews, buyers approach your business with expectations based on what they’ve already read. Since they’ve chosen your business, it’s likely because all the stars have aligned. You’re positioned at the right time and location when they’re ready to take action.

So what can you do as a business owner to embrace business reviews and attract more customers? Take a look at some of the following ideas to see what might apply to you:

**Accept negative reviews as opportunities to learn**

Yelp is recognized as one of the most popular business review sites. Lots of small businesses owners have a love-hate relationship with Yelp. The good side of Yelp is that a small hole-in-the wall coffee shop has the opportunity to outrank a big franchise such as Starbucks. It gives small businesses a chance to get noticed and thrive. But lots of small business owners also fear that Yelp can hurt their business. Consider some of these Yelp experiences:

No one likes to be judged. By their very nature, judgments are attacks. Business owners who get bad business reviews can and do get dismayed. And Yelp, no doubt, feels the same about this upcoming Billion Dollar Bully documentary by Prost Films.

The best way to look at Yelp and every other review tool is that these are extra doors to your business. Some turn out to be more welcoming than others.

Release your grievances toward others and you’ll find that
they begin to melt all around you.

**Learn from your competitors’ business reviews**

Amazon reviews can affect your business whether you’re selling through Amazon or not. If your customers are shopping in a brick and mortar store, they can check to see what others think about a product and do a quick price comparison. If it’s cheaper on Amazon, they can add it to their cart with a quick click knowing that it will show up at their front door within a day or two. Amazon has had a big impact on both online and brick and mortar stores. If you’re selling products that are also available on Amazon, or if you’re selling through Amazon, these reviews can affect your business.

This David Horsey cartoon offers insight into Amazon’s company culture. Behind-the-scenes Glassdoor business reviews can influence the talent you attract and the ultimate results you get in your business.
Ask every happy customer to write a business review

Google reviews and ratings conveniently pop up when you’re searching for places on Google maps. Google maps search along route feature is useful when you’re trying to save time and make convenient stops. Whether you have a brick and mortar location or not, Google encourages you to remind customers to leave a review. Learn more about how to get reviews on Google.

Google Maps lets you search for food, gas, and more along your navigation route.

Foursquare brands itself as a “location intelligence company.” It’s also a good contender for finding food, nightlife or shopping business reviews and ratings by location. If your business falls into one of these categories, it’s a good idea to keep an eye on your Foursquare business reviews.

Disable ratings and reviews

Facebook allows you to choose whether or not you want to enable business reviews on your business page. Go to the
Facebook Help Center to learn how to allow or disable ratings and reviews on your page. If you go to Facebook’s @facebook page, you’ll see that they, ironically, do not have this feature enabled. If every business review system gave you the option to disable the ratings on your business, you could choose to ignore ratings altogether. But going dark online also makes you invisible to potential customers who use online search tools to guide their buying decisions.

Yelp vs Google vs. Facebook Reviews: which should you focus on and why?

Hire bloggers to provide you with business reviews

Bloggers are a terrific resource for business reviews. Bloggers can educate people about your business. They can share reviews that highlight the benefits of your product or service. They can share a customer testimonial telling what it’s like to work with you. You can find bloggers on just about any topic. They can help you come up with creative ways to share your business. Many are willing to barter in exchange for product or service samples, so it’s worth asking. If you’d like to go this route, here are some tips on how to ask bloggers for backlinks and reviews. By the way, if you’d like me to blog about your business, contact me today to discuss the possibilities.

Invite YouTubers to film your product or service

YouTube offers a platform for anyone with a smartphone who wants to share their thoughts about a flight, an electronics product, an RV, or anything else on their mind. YouTube is an ideal way to let people get a glimpse into what you have to offer, especially if it already lends itself well to an
audience, such as a church or a school, for example where preachers and teachers are already talking to an audience. Although YouTube is driven by videos, anyone can comment on the content. This, in essence, is a form of a business review to a YouTuber. And if you’re part of the video, you can get feedback as well.

YouTubers who have lots of subscribers can have a big influence on their followers. And they have the freedom to tell stories on just about anything, including educating people on new products. Consider this “Hands Free Segway thing” review post by YouTuber Casey Neistat:

Snap photos of happy customers

Instagram tends to be a happy place. It’s a terrific app that allows you and your customers to snap, post and share attractive pictures within a few minutes. If your customers are taking the time to mention you in their Instagram feed, it’s probably positive. Smile and welcome the photos.

In addition, Instagram gives you the opportunity set up your business profile on Instagram and self-promote with annotated photos. Be sure to use hashtags to attract your ideal customers.

Connect with your community

Nextdoor offers a feature for recommendations. If you depend on local work or walk-in traffic, this is a great way to connect with people in your neighborhood. If your business isn’t already listed, you can add a business in recommendations for free. This is a great app to spark face-to-face friendships and goodwill referrals within your community. Once you establish your reputation, satisfied customers will naturally want to share brief reviews along
with their referrals.

Respond to business reviews

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) touts itself as a tool to help “people find and recommend businesses, brands and charities they can trust.” In practice, however, the BBB tends to be the go-to place where customers log serious complaints against a business because they know this is a place where the business owners might actually take action to resolve a complaint. Click here for an overview of how BBB ratings are calculated.

A BBB rating is not an indicator of the success of a business. Amazon, for example, is one of the biggest businesses in the United States. Although the majority of its customer reviews are negative, Amazon maintains an A+ rating with the BBB.

Make it a high priority to be responsive to complaints not only on the BBB, but anywhere else where they might pop up.
Respond to questions about your business

Quora defines itself as “a place to share knowledge and better understand the world.” It’s a great place to engage with chatty intellects who are willing to answer questions posed by its users. Buyers don’t necessarily go directly to Quora for business reviews, but if you offer a complex product or service that costs a few hundred dollars or more, you might want to take a serious look at Quora. Chances are, people are talking about it. Some brands are so prominent that all their questions are grouped together. If you’re an Evernote user, and I highly recommend it by the way, check out some of the Evernote Q&As posed on Quora.

Review your customers

Uber, Airbnb, OfferUp, OpenTable and more companies are not only giving customers a chance to rate the service provider, but also giving the service provider a chance to rate their customers. When both parties know they’re evaluating each other, it tends to result in a more cordial interaction. And this is reflected the exchange of reviews and ratings. If it makes sense for your business model to offer mutual ratings,
Join a matchmaking site

Angie’s List is a membership site that “eliminates anonymous reviews giving you trusted, more credible info to make the right choice.” If you’re a contractor, for example, and finding high quality customers is important to you, Angie’s List might be a good fit for you. Be prepared to go through their background check. If you’re interested in listing your business, check out Angie’s List Business Center to learn more.

Consumer Affairs provides “expert resources and verified reviews” to help customers make smarter buying decisions. Their philosophy is that “everyone deserves to make smart decisions based on unbiased feedback and research-driven information.” They encourage visitors to write business reviews about their experiences with their member brands. Check out their Brands platform to see if it might be right for your business.
Participate in a business review site that makes sense for your niche

If you own a restaurant, you might want to consider Zagat which helps foodies “cut through the clutter of available dining choices” to find the best places wherever they are. Or OpenTable where your customers can “make restaurant reservations the easy way.”

If you manufacture a product, you might set a goal to be a featured product in Consumer Reports or the Environmental Working Group “whose mission is to empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment.”

If your business depends on your reputation as an expert, consider writing a book. Goodreads is a terrific place for you as a leader to share your bookshelves and review books. Between Goodreads and Amazon, indie authors have an opportunity for their books to rise to the a bestseller and they have the opportunity to compete with all the big name publishers. Goodreads is a terrific tool for authors and their readers. And it’s also a great place to find, read and review books in your industry. To make the most of your reviews, follow Goodreads Review Guidelines.
Keep Twitter on your watch list

Twitter’s mission is “to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers.” This means that you can share information about your business while tagging anyone you want. And it means that others can do the same to you. For better or worse, others can also create fan clubs such as Trader Joe’s List or protest groups such as InequalityAtWlmnt. Twitter is not a main contender when it comes to business reviews, but depending on the type of business you operate, you might want to keep it on your watch list.

Highlight customer testimonials on your website

Nearly every business can benefit by having a website. It’s the one place online where you can define your brand and the intent of what you have to offer. It’s a great place to highlight a variety of customer testimonials that give insight into the benefits of what you have to offer.

If you have a content rich and attractive website, buyers are more likely to check it out to see what you have to offer. This is the one place where you have complete control of your customer testimonials.

Provide great customer service to everyone

Your best line of defense is to treat all your customers and
employees with love and respect. Encourage everyone in your business to read and discuss books that help to develop their people skills such as: How to Win Friends and Influence People.

If you need a writer to help with responses to your business reviews, or assist with content marketing on your website, let me know. I’d love to help. Contact me today.

Dr. Lorraine Haataia has expertise in several industries including education, construction and transportation. She believes that our thoughts create our reality. She’s passionate about writing because it gives readers the opportunity to learn on demand, expand their minds, and benefit by seeing the world in a new way.
Relational Selling is a Big Deal

Relational selling is a great strategy that’s falling by the wayside in a virtual world. Perhaps we’ve lost sight of the fact that our decisions have a big impact on real people. Ultimately, most problems are people oriented and most solutions are as well.

Connecting with your client unlocks unlimited potential.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with a sales executive, Bill Stallings, who’s had considerable success in capturing new business by deploying a number of different selling strategies including relational sales strategies. Here’s what he had to say:

Everyone will no doubt agree that the wonders of technology have had an enormously positive impact on every aspect of our
lives. Consider the multiple means for instant communication on a global scale such as:

- social media
- e-commerce
- powerful analytical tools
- vast storehouses of knowledge
- and a multitude of other optimization tools

These all contribute to making our lives easier and more efficient. The world has become a much smaller place. With so much potential for life enhancements, it’s easy to overlook missed opportunities.

In Business to Business (B2B) sales we have come to rely upon:

- automation
- remote call centers
- programmed or instant messaging
- virtual assistants
- Skype
- virtual meetings
- the standardization of protocols

Perhaps less noticeable have been the unintended costs that are hard to identify and difficult to measure.

Virtual operators and customer call centers often fall
short in serving customer needs. Is it really a cost savings when the cost has only been shifted to you, the customer?

For the professional sales executives invited to the bidding processes of a Request for Quote (RFQ), the protocols of the process create great challenges in effecting change. How do I convince my customer to change their buying habits to favor my products or services?

For most buyers, protecting the status quo is a valid priority because change involves risk and cost. People don’t like change. So there needs to be a compelling reason to justify putting the organization through the trauma and expense of change. The buyer is reluctant to change because of the risks of departing from status quo.

The key challenge for the sales team and sales management becomes:

How do we overcome these inherent sales obstacles to having a breakthrough with target accounts when the systems that we and our buyers have implemented are all working against us?

The “missing link” is now the human element. In many cases, deploying a sales strategy of relational sales may very well be the difference between status quo and discovering
breakthrough opportunities. Developing new business is the goal.

When was the last time you captured new business at price levels higher than the lowest bidder?

Several years back I was working with my sales team on an RFQ from a major pharmaceutical company. They issued an annual RFQ for ocean transportation services from Puerto Rico to three distribution centers in the United States. Products ranged from over-the-counter medications to highly expensive life-saving drugs. Refrigerated and dry ocean containers were required and pricing had to include ocean and inland transportation services.

Every year, each of the four competing ocean carriers were invited to visit headquarters to present their bids in person for a targeted volume of business. Each ocean carrier sales representative was invited to sit before a transportation council seated behind computer screens at the end of a dimly lit room.
“I’ve attended bid presentations where I couldn’t even see the people behind a bank of computer screens,” Bill Stallings said.

At the designated time the ocean carrier representative presented their lowest possible bid knowing full well that the incumbent would bid last and be given the “right” of refusal to match the lowest offered price. I can think of no greater example of an impersonal setting and bidding protocol that devalues the relationship and services of a vital service provider while preserving status quo.

After three consecutive years of futile bidding, I changed our sales strategy.

During the year leading up to the RFQ deadline, my sales team
and I invested time in getting to “know” our target account in a way that we had not tried before. The buyer had insulated himself from any meaningful contact. However, there were still many people involved with the company, both internally and externally, that had insights, information, and impact on the decision making process. We talked with truckers.

![Trucker in cab](image)

Some of the best answers to complex questions can be found in overlooked sources.

We visited the distribution centers and got to know security guards, dock workers and warehouse supervisors. We observed the traffic patterns of product arriving and leaving the facilities. We got to “know” the people and what was important to them. These would be the people that would be living with the decisions of our buyer. Most were very open and willing to talk about their ideas and experiences. They were all trying to do the best they could for their employer.

In getting to better know and understand our customer, we learned that the three distribution centers were closing and would be consolidated into one location in a state more centrally located for the entire East Coast market. We visited the new location while it was under construction and studied
the logistics of how this one distribution center would handle the considerable volume arriving each week from Puerto Rico. We came up with many more questions than answers regarding the new facility. When the RFQ date arrived we went to the meeting prepared and determined NOT to offer any prices until we got several key questions answered.

Our buyer was stunned when I told him I wasn’t comfortable offering a price for services that were not clearly understood.

After he chastised me for my lack of preparation, I explained that I did have a variety of pricing models to consider. But unless I received the answers to very critical questions pertaining to his business, it would be impossible for me to offer the “best” price. The buyer wasn’t interested in answering any questions siting that the RFQ contained everything that was relevant and insisted on my delivering the best and lowest price. I held my ground.

Soon, a transportation executive who had been observing the process spoke up and said “OK, you’re trying to make a point. What is your first question?”

I knew I might only get the chance
“What is the capacity of your new distribution center for unloading inbound containers in one day?” Bill asked. The reply was very revealing about the buyer and the RFQ process.

“What does that matter to you?” he asked.

I explained that my competitor—their incumbent—had ships arriving every Friday at ports along the East Coast and each of the three distribution centers were accustomed to receiving 30 to 35 containers the following Monday for unloading.

Transport trucks line up and wait to drop off their shipping containers. This backup results in extra time and cost for everyone.

Since all of their volume arrived on Friday when services were provided by our competitor, this opened the opportunity for a real dialogue.
“Is your new distribution center capable of handling the combined volume of over 100 containers on Monday? If not, have you contemplated the hidden cost of per diem fees at the port? Have you thought about the detention fees from truckers for delayed unloading? And even worse, are you comfortable with one of your containers full of valuable medications sitting in a Kmart parking lot over night while the trucker is waiting for his turn to unload? Have you thought about overtime or an additional labor shift required if all containers must be unloaded on Monday? These “hidden costs” could very likely overwhelm any savings achieved through price reductions,” Bill said.

No one knew the answers to these questions.

It turned out that the new facility could only handle about 40 inbound containers from Puerto Rico on Mondays and they could get by with holding about 20 more containers over until Tuesday. Since our ships arrived a day earlier than the competitor’s there really was no other alternative other than awarding our company the remaining volume.

In spite of these RFQ conditions, we succeeded in capturing 40% of this accounts business at a price
level that was 35% higher than our bid the prior year.

It turned out that we discovered a value proposition that was much greater than permitted by the RFQ process. We would have never discovered this unless we had gotten to know our customer far better than we ever had before. We overcame the sales obstacles of the RFQ process by investing time in getting to know the people that would be most affected by the results of the bidding process.

Relational Selling is NOT about being best buddies with your customer.

It does NOT mean wining and dining the customer every month or spending “quality” time on the golf course. These are perks of the relationship, but are by no means evidence of a healthy relationship. Relational Selling is only one of many sales strategies. It’s something to deploy it in a surgical kind of way. It doesn’t work in every case, but it can be an effective sales strategy when properly positioned.
Bill Stallings is inspired to lead by example, succeed as a team, and motivate with integrity. His career spans over 20 years in the ocean transportation, intermodal, and logistics industry. He has achieved exceptional results in executive level sales and new business development roles, complimented with a strong aptitude for operations and customer service processes.

In every position held, as a sales manager, vice president of sales or managing partner, he has offered a solid track record of strategic and tactical management, assembling and developing high performing teams, and designing and implementing performance management and training programs.

He offers superb interpersonal and communication skills, useful in negotiating with a diverse clientele and in building meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders while significantly contributing to the continuous improvement of bottom line results.

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**Interest Cancellation is Your Ticket to Financial Freedom**

“Interest cancellation is one of the secrets of financial freedom. What you’re about to read is unbelievable. It’s legal and the banks and mortgage companies are KEEPING this INFORMATION FROM you and your family,” says Kimberly Daly, a business developer in Silicon Valley.
The word *mortgage* is derived from two Latin words: *mort* which means *death*, and *gage* which means *pledge*. What many people have with a *mortgage* is a pledge until death.

“But don’t worry, I’m going to show you how easy it is to escape this pledge and manage your mortgage and other loans to your benefit. You can build equity in your property and own it in a shorter period of time,” Kimberly said.

**Mortgage brokers know next to nothing about helping you manage your mortgage.**

Banks and brokers are out to make sure that they get a big commission on your mortgage. What does this mean for you?
Most people don’t spend as much time and attention learning about their mortgage loan as they do on the property they purchase. But the reality is that, in the end, the loan costs more money than the property itself.

After 15 years of paying off a 30 year loan, you still owe over 90% of the original amount borrowed. And after 24 years, you still owe 50% of the original amount you borrowed.

Few people realize that they make 120 unnecessary mortgage payments in a 30-year loan.

Would you like to slash your mortgage by as much as 80%?

The ordinary homeowner is locked into a crippling mortgage plan. This proven reduction system will help you build equity in your property and pay off your mortgage quickly.

“It’s not what you make, but what you keep. I’m giving you facts and information that banks and mortgage companies don’t want you to know. It’s guaranteed to save you tens of thousands of dollars on your existing mortgage. It’s perfectly legal, but there is a right and a wrong way of doing this. Those who do it right hardly ever talk about it. That’s why
99% of the people have no idea how to pull this off and remain a financial slave to their property for most of their lives,” Kimberly said.

This requires no refinancing of your first mortgage and no alteration to your current standard of living. Conventional banks only offer these options:

- make biweekly mortgage payments
- make extra payments
- refinance to lower your interest rate

But with **interest cancellation**, you can eliminate next month’s interest now.

**What is interest cancellation?**

Here’s how it works. By working with the bank’s amortization schedule, you maximize the interest cancellation effect. You can work with the bank’s system to save yourself up to 120 unnecessary mortgage payments.

Here are some typical numbers for a closed-end mortgage. You
take out a loan for $340,000 at 3.99% interest for 30 years. Here’s what it looks like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Principal &amp; Interest</th>
<th>Number of Payments</th>
<th>Total Payments</th>
<th>Original Loan Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,621</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>$583,651</td>
<td>$340,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional amortization information

CLICK HERE to calculate the loan amortization chart for your mortgage.

Here’s a new versus an old way to pay off your mortgage. In a closed-end loan, you can eliminate interest. This allows you to control your money so your money isn’t controlling you. This also allows you to get your money working for you instead of you working for the bank.

As long as you’re willing to manage your amortization schedule and principal balance, you can get reap the benefits of interest cancellation.
Let’s say you have a $340,000 loan at 3.99% interest for 30 years. In 20 years, you gave the bank $389,100, but they only applied $179,793 to your original loan. You still owe $160,207!

This is what makes the banker happy. In the first 20 years of your loan, all the damage has been done. The majority of your payments have gone to interest, not principal. Very few people live in a home for a full 30 years. Most people sell their house before the end of their mortgage. So most of their payments go toward paying off the bank, not their home.

With interest cancellation, you can gain control of your money. This is good news that will brighten up your day . . . and the rest of your life. This ONE FINANCIAL TIP can change your life for the better.

How can you apply interest cancellation to your loan?

You can run your numbers for free. Here’s what you’ll need:

- your monthly mortgage amount
- a copy of your last or current mortgage statement breakdown
- your total finance amount, your principal
- the length of the loan, or the term
- your original finance date
- your finance percentage %

Here’s how it works. Make this month’s payment, plus the
principal amount for the following month. For example, in the month of October, you would make your payment of $1621, plus you would pay the $492 principal for the following month. See the amortization schedule below.

![Amortization Schedule](image)

CLICK HERE to calculate the full amortization schedule on your loan.

Check with your bank on their requirements to ensure that your payment of $492 is applied to principal only. And follow up to be sure that it’s applied appropriately. By doing this, you eliminate the expense of the interest payment of $1129 that would otherwise be applied to the following month’s payment.
Interest cancellation is your ticket to financial freedom.

In just six months you can save hundreds or thousands of dollars, depending on the balance of your loan and the number of remaining payments. And you have additional benefits:

- No refinancing is necessary.
- This works for all mortgages except for balloons.
- You don’t have to make extra payments.
- You can apply additional principal payments at your discretion.
- You learn how to keep your money in your pocket.
- You now know how to pay off your loan quickly.
- You can build equity effortlessly.

Many people are afraid of being responsible for their own money. Financiers and bankers are counting on your fear and lack of knowledge to keep you paying forever.

“Lots of people start doing this, but then they don’t continue. What else is going to pay you hundreds or thousands of dollars for just a few extra hours work each year?”
Kimberly asked.

It is worth it to be persistent with your bank to figure this out. You have to be persistent. Once you learn this, you’ll wonder . . .

Why doesn’t everybody do this?

You have to be conscious and stay at the front of your mortgage. The bank doesn’t care. They hope you’re going to be late because they make more. Banks don’t want you to pay off your loan early. There’s no one out there promoting interest cancellation.

“I learned about interest cancellation in college, but I swept it under the table until I got my first home. I had forgotten all about it, but my father reminded me to do this. I started doing it on my own, and continued to do it from then on,” Kimberly said.

Make sure all your numbers match and once you get it, you’re pretty much ready to go.
By applying principal only payments to your mortgage, you can save thousands of dollars.

Whatever amortization tool you’re using, it’s important that your numbers match the bank’s numbers. You have to play their game. You can call the bank each month and ask for next month’s principal amount. You do have to care about your money and be proactive about this. If you take a few minutes on the phone each month, it can save you hundreds or even thousands of dollars each month. By making a principal only payment one month in advance, you eliminate the interest in that following month.

You can pay your principal down even faster by applying extra money when you get a bonus or tax return, for example. You can always pay more, but you have to make sure it applies to principal only. Look at the numbers for the next six months and calculate the amount. If you want to make extra payments, you can calculate the principal for the upcoming months you want to pay off and add it up for the upcoming months.

“I want to empower people to take care of their money. Finances aren’t scary. I have done presentations all over the US about this. I’ve shared this information in offices, homes and special events. I encourage you to share what you learned today with your family and friends. It’s simple to manage your money. It’s just a mathematical equation,” Kimberly said.

Kimberly Daly helps companies acquire new customers and sell
additional products or services to existing customers. Her role is a crucial one for any business with the ambition to expand or diversify its clientele. As an effective business developer, she listens to what you want and where you want to take your business, including business-to-business, business-to-customer, and even non-profit organizations.

If you’d like to learn more about interest cancellation, call Kimberly at 817-382-8375.

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**Essential Components of a Content Marketing Strategy**

“One of the primary purposes of a content marketing strategy is to influence your ideal customer to make a decision to buy. One of the strongest influences is: ‘what do other people like me think about this product or service?’ One of the most powerful examples is a customer testimonial. Another classic example is an endorsement from a famous person. This content you’re producing is to encourage them to buy,” Bob Haataia said.

A content marketing strategy is essential for driving sales. A strategy is a living document that defines your actions. It gives you a basis for continuous improvement. Bob Haataia, a senior product leader, recommends a documented strategy with answers to the following questions:
What are your goals?

In your content marketing strategy you should have goals so you know why you’re doing what you’re doing, whether it’s increase your sales by 10% in three months, or doubling your business in eighteen months. It’s important to know why you’re trying to get your message out.

“With content marketing you have to think in terms of getting traffic over time. You have to think more about the long term. You can pay for Google Ads to boost traffic, but you have to continue to pay over the long term to keep traffic coming. With content marketing, the traffic builds over time, and is sustained long-term because of the content. It’s the classic example of deciding whether you want a million dollars now, or a penny in an account that doubles every day?” Bob said.

A penny doubled every day produces more than $5 million dollars in 30 days.

It’s important to have SMART goals is so you can find out what’s working and what isn’t. For example, if you start out with a six-month marketing campaign with a number of activities, you’ll be able to track those activities that bring you closer to your goals. It’s important that your goals are business results, not activities. A business result is a
15% increase in your traffic, versus an activity such as Tweeting daily.

Here are some examples of some SMART content marketing goals:

- increase website traffic by 25% in the next six months
- educate customers on new service in the next thirty days
- collect 500 email addresses in the next ninety days
- increase revenue by 5% over the next six months

“In the beginning, you may not know if your goals are realistic or not. Even if you don’t achieve your goals, by having SMART content marketing goals and tracking your progress over time, this will help you set better goals in the future,” Bob said.

Who is your ideal customer?

Why is it important to know your customers? The more you know and understand them, the better your content is going to meet their needs. By knowing your customers, you can provide information at every step of the buyer’s journey. Customer education is a key ingredient to drive sales.

“Whether you’re a consumer business, or B2B, you want to know who buys your product or service. For example with a hair
salon, you might get a lot of everyday consumers who are in a particular age range. By understanding this, you can start targeting your message and services to this age," Bob said.

It can be very helpful to document this. You can do this through personas. These are generalized representations of ideal customers you’re trying to bring in.
Large marketing organizations, such as Yelp, create customer personas to better target their messages and build better products or services. They describe what a typical customer does for a living. They often even describe their hobbies. What do they like and what do they do in their spare time? Part of your product or service is making their life easier.

“Buyer personas are fictional, generalized representations of your ideal customers. They help us internalize the ideal customer we’re trying to attract, and relate to our customers as real humans. Having a deep understanding of your buyer persona(s) is critical to driving content creation, product development, sales follow up, and really anything that relates to customer acquisition and retention.” – Hubspot

It’s helpful to know your customers so well that you can predict their questions. Once you understand their common questions like:

- What is it that I need or want?
- What does it do for me?
- What’s included in the product or service?
- How much am I willing to spend on it?

These are deeper rooted questions than ‘what is your location’ or ‘what services do you have?’ As you look at all your service offerings, you can decide where you want to focus more of your attention. It’s important to know if the services you provide are meeting the needs of your customers.

You can go one step further and look at the competition. How does your ideal customer see you compared to the competition? How is your product better? When you know your customer, you look at your competition in a different light. You need to know your strengths to ensure your key messages stand out.
“This is how you develop your content marketing strategy to ensure your content is centered around answering the questions your customers have. In the beginning, these are questions they don’t even know they have. They may not know they need a product or service because they’re not even aware it exists. Your content needs to expose the problem so they can recognize how they might benefit,” Bob said.

By better understanding your customers, you’ll be better able to answer their questions before they even ask them.

What are your key messages?

In your content marketing strategy you’re going to have core messages to address customer questions along the buying journey. You want to limit your content to some key themes. In these core messages, you build your brand and stand out among your competitors.

“In content marketing you can answer all your customer questions. Ideally, over time, your website will answer every question a customer might have. Once a person discovers you through social media or advertising, they can look deeper into your website to find answers to their questions. This can save a small business many hours of answering the same questions over and over,” Bob said.

I recently began exploring conversion vans. By browsing through articles I found answers to questions I didn’t even know I had, such as:

- How do you take a shower in such a small space?
- How long will batteries last?
- What will solar power do for me?
- Can I get internet everywhere?
- Where can I park?
“Everybody likes to hear a story. This is another advantage of content marketing. I recently read an article about a couple living 100% in their conversion van. It was fun to read their story. I learned about some of the challenges of living in a tiny space, but I also learned about the exhilaration of parking near the ocean and hearing the waves. They talked about going to a campground and having dinner outside in a Redwood forest. A customer story is a great way to capture your customer’s attention. A content market expert knows how to tell stories to promote your product or service,” Bob said.

“Telling stories captures people’s imagination. In reading the article about living in a conversion van, I learned that there are many people who live full-time in a conversion van. I also learned about boondocking. I didn’t even know what it was, but now I’m interested,” Bob said.

“The questions in the early buying stage are different than later on. In the beginning I may be looking at floor plans. And later I might be looking for answers on how to fix my
propane tank. So the content you put out is not only what a person might ask before they buy, but also what they ask after they buy. Through the process you become a trusted partner,” Bob said.

**Where are you going to share your content?**

“Start off with recognizing the vast number of channels where you can place content on the internet to be found. It’s virtually impossible to get the information everywhere, so you have to make good decisions about where you’re going to expose your information,” Bob said.

There are lots of different ways you can share your content. You’re going to post it to your website, but you need a strategy for which social media channels to use. Depending on your customer demographics they will most likely be using at least one of these channels:

- Facebook
- Google+
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- NextDoor
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- Yelp
- YouTube

“As a small business, your content marketing strategy should reflect the actions it will take to increase your sales. Maybe you need advertising, or a new social media channel depending on the product and competition. Maybe you need to place an article in a magazine. Maybe you need to start a YouTube channel. Maybe you need a Facebook page, or maybe you need a Snapchat channel. A lot of younger consumers are moving to
SnapChat. A lot of people in India use WhatsApp. In a small business like Restoration Illumination, I imagine that most of her customers are on Pinterest,” Bob said.

For a small business owner, it can be effective to work with a content marketing specialist to develop your content marketing strategy because all of this can be time-consuming and overwhelming.

“A few years back when I was division governor in Toastmasters, I did some analysis on Facebook. Roughly half of the people in Northern Florida were on Facebook. What other medium can you use to get to nearly half of your target population? After that, the district governor created a social media chair and I helped to develop the strategy,” Bob said.

“All of the technology we’ve talked about here is essentially free. There’s not a huge investment that’s required. One of the most important reasons to have your own website is that
you can measure your results much better. You can still post your information out on these social media channels, but with your own website, you can track the results of your efforts. It’s vital to have a website that’s driven by a content management system, such as WordPress or HubSpot,” Bob said.

As a small business you have limited time. You can look at your analytics on Twitter and Facebook and a lot of other places, but with your own website, you can get all the information you need in one place. Google Analytics is good enough for most small businesses.

**How are you going to measure results?**

“The reason it’s important to have measures in place is to know which activities are hitting your target market. If you see lots of traffic coming from another potential market, you might want to up your investment into that new market. This is one of the reasons why you need to do content marketing for several months. There may be another need you can meet. If you publish services that are coming soon, and you see lots of hits in that area, you might want to fill that need sooner,” Bob said.
“You want your activity to translate into purchases. By measuring results in these areas, you can find out who is being educated appropriately and decides to purchase. By measuring all this, it helps you to decide what content to publish,” Bob said.

Paying attention to page analytics can be helpful. By looking at Google Analytics, you can see whether your information is coming from Google, Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest for example. And you can adjust your efforts to get better results.

How are you going to improve your content marketing strategy?

“Content marketing is not a silver bullet. You can’t write one article and expect all your traffic to come. The way Google search engines work is that it takes a consistently updated website to get it to the top where it can be discovered. Having this as a long-term strategy and finding out what really resonates with your customers will help you target content that translates into sales. It’s important to have a continuous improvement plan in place for all your marketing
activities,” Bob said.

Not everything you do will always work, but knowing what works better allows you to focus your messages and continuously improve.

“Let’s say you have a menu of services and one or two of your pages is getting more hits, but you aren’t getting a lot of sales in that area. By paying attention to these numbers, you might be able to make small changes to convert these into sales,” Bob said.

When you have a lot of different services, you may have one that is yet to be discovered. One of the benefits of having a content marketing strategy over a six month period is that it allows you to potentially tap into new markets you weren’t aware of.

When you try something like Groupon, and it doesn’t work, this becomes part of your living document. As important as it is to track what you’re doing right, it’s equally important to track what isn’t working. This is why it helps to have a six-month campaign. After your first six months, your strategy is going to be so much better than it was in the beginning.

“When I was at IBM, we decided to do a Google AdWords campaign
with a $10,000 budget. I got the team together and brainstormed all the keywords. After doing this, we discovered our web traffic didn’t increase at all. We spent $10,000 to find out that Google AdWords didn’t work in driving up traffic to the IBM support website. Even though Google AdWords didn’t work, we were able to increase traffic by two million hits over twelve months by understanding other activities that were working and doing more of it,” Bob said.

By answering these questions, documenting your content marketing strategy, and taking action, you will see an increase in your sales. This will also provide sustained traffic to your website over the long term which will make introducing new products or services that much easier.

Bob Haataia is a senior product leader with success in delivering complex solutions to achieve significant revenue. He solves today’s business problems with technology and the latest Agile development methodologies. He focuses on increasing global sales and services, lowering support costs, and delivering premier product experiences. He provides complete product management from inception to end of life. He believes that a content marketing strategy is essential for driving sales.
How a mompreneur used online learning to startup a biz

Most people don’t think of YouTube or Pinterest as online learning sites, but when used properly, they’re a rich source of knowledge.

Tami Shidawara-Vazquez started her business after she had her second child. After maternity leave from her FedEx job, she was looking for ways to earn some extra income. She was trying to think of things she could do at home. This is when this Silicon Valley mom decided to become a mompreneur and educate herself through online learning.

“I started making cakes for events. I love creating sculpted cakes. It’s an art form for me. The kids go crazy for it when they see the cake come out. They love it. I love the reward of seeing kids’ and adults’ faces. They’re so wowed by it. It’s fun to see their reactions,” Tami said.

Tami made this train cake for a boy who was turning five years old.

“I also like the fun of trying to figure it out. Most of the time I’m creating something I’ve never done before. I have to
Google the theme or go on Pinterest to see how other people have done it. Pinterest is my usual go-to place for ideas and online learning. Sometimes I find helpful DIY videos and tips,” Tami said.

“But doing cakes was hard with the kids. It was too hard to do baking and decorating with kids who need constant attention. They were always trying to sneak a lick of frosting or stick their fingers in the cake. It was too hard to juggle a cake business with kids that age,” Tami said.

Tami Shidawara-Vazquez (left), pictured here with her friend, Violeta Sy (right) at the DeAnza Flea Market in 2013.

Tami started looking for other things she could do. That’s when her friend, Violeta Sy, introduced her to shabby chic.

“Violeta was thinking we could do the flea market together. I started painting furniture and some wall decor. We went to DeAnza Flea Market together to see if our stuff would sell. She did really good. I did ok. It was a fun experience. I met some people who really encouraged me. I got some really good
feedback from customers. It made me want to keep going and learn new stuff and try new techniques. It worked out and I started doing more and more pieces,” Tami said.

The first project she did was an old wood toolbox that her boys did with her. Tami picked up this toolbox at a garage sale. They sanded it and stained it. Then they planted succulents in it. Ricardo was five and Mateo was three when Tami kicked off her wood restoration business with this first project.
This handmade toolbox is one of the first wood painting projects Tami did with the boys.

Tami chose Restoration Illumination as the name of her business because she wanted to restore things and give them a new life. “Restoration” is a means of giving an old item a new life. “Illumination” is a way of seeing things in a new light. She also liked that the name rhymed. Check out some of her pieces on Instagram at Restoration Illumination.
Tami liked the idea of starting a business where her boys could get involved.

Online learning opened up a whole new world for this former FedEx manager. She taught herself how to do shabby chic by watching YouTube videos and clicking through Pinterest links. By following along, she learned the techniques. From there she discovered farmhouse style, French Cottage, industrial, Funky Junk, and Trash to Treasure.

Online learning offers the flexibility that this mompreneur needed to gain the skills to build her business. As she was learning new techniques, she taught her boys the basics along the way.
The boys are always eager to help out. Tami loves watching them paint even when she has to redo their work.

“I have a home workshop. I started working in my back yard with just a couple projects. As I started getting more projects in, I started using the carport. I took over the carport and then as I added on even more projects and the work started coming in more, I took over one part of the garage. Then as it grew even more we built a little overhang. It’s been three years now. I’ve taken over the whole back yard,” Tami said.
“My boys love any chance they get to use power tools. They know that safety is first. They can’t just play with them. They know that they’re actual tools and they can’t use them unless an adult is with them,” Tami said.

In addition to learning from YouTube videos and how-to articles, Tami also learns from shows on HGTВ, DIYNetwork, and Great American Country.
“My older son enjoyed prepping and sanding this vintage chair for restoration. This was one of our earlier projects,” Tami said.

Tami is a big fan of Joanna Gaines, the “Magnolia Mom,” and host of HGTV’s Fixer Upper show. This is one of Tami’s favorite shows for online learning.

“I’m inspired by Joanna’s down-to-earth personality and style. She renovates homes that others wouldn’t want and helps them to see the potential in it. They’re low-key and fun to watch. I love how when she’s staging, the kids come over and they have dinner together. I love how she involves her kids and makes time for family,” Tami said.

Tami is also a fan of Flea Market Flip, a competition where two teams have $500 to spend at a flea market. They have three projects that they have to do and one day to complete all three projects. Whoever has the most profit in the end wins.
There is $5,000.

“I love seeing what the teams come up with. They have a list of projects to do. I like seeing what they pick and how they turn it into something very unique or something with a new purpose. I like seeing the whole thought process of what they do,” Tami said.

Tami’s boys like going with her to the flea market because they get to find something fun for themselves, like Pokémon cards or Legos.

Salvage Dawgs is another one of Tami’s favorite shows.

“They go into old historic buildings that are being torn down. They get to go into a building and save pieces from inside before it’s demolished. They’re saving history and repurposing it. They find a lot of great stuff, a lot of architectural salvage. They usually show one project they’re working on and how they repurposed it for their shop,” Tami said.

“I watch shows after the kids go to sleep or when they’re at school. Or I watch after dinner is done and the homework is
done. The boys get bored with the shows. They prefer to watch cartoons or play video games,” Instead of watching TV, I like to do things with them outside, things they can get involved with. Gardening is one activity that they do at school and we do at home. They were interested in planting a garden. They picked out some plants from Los Altos Nursery,” I like the gardening. It’s an activity plus it gives them a sense of pride that they’ve picked it out, they care for it and they get to watch it grow. It also gives them the responsibility to keep checking on the plants,” Tami said.

“The reason I started this business was because I wanted to take care of the kids and be with them at home. When I’m at home and working outside, the kids can be playing outside or they can be helping me out and I can still watch them while I’m working,” Tami said.

The boys love using their repurposed milk jug
to water the garden they planted in their back yard.

“I started selling on Craigslist. As people came to buy things like a dresser, I would ask them if they needed anything else for other parts of their house. I got people interested in doing more work just by asking. Then I’d get referrals from them and it grew from there,” Tami said.

Most of Tami’s repeat customers are people who purchased one item from her and turned to her for help in finding more pieces. Tami especially enjoys working with these clients and shopping for them, finding the perfect piece. She likes working with customers who want to do an entire room in a new theme.

“Now Ricardo is helping more. He’s seven. When Mateo helps out, it’s more for fun and I usually have to redo it. He just turned six. Ricardo is getting to the point where I can use his work. He does signs and distressing. He’s good with banging up wood and distressing with hammers and chains. He’s good at it and he likes to do it,” Tami said.

“Sometimes they’re eager to help out and surprise me. I’m just afraid one day I’m going to come in the house and find out that they distressed all the furniture with hammer and chains,” Tami said.
Tami is especially excited when customers think it’s an authentic piece, but it’s something she just painted.

“You can learn a lot on YouTube! I love what I do. I can easily work twelve to fifteen hours a day,” she said.

Today, Tami considers herself a junker who loves shabby chic and French Cottage design. She also likes farmhouse style, especially for kitchens. She enjoys creating decorations that pull everything together.

If you’re interested in seeing some of Tami’s repurposing projects, check out:

9 Ideas to Repurpose Junk Into Treasure

“If you’re a working mom looking for a way to spend more time with your kids, I would definitely say to do something that you’re passionate about. That makes it really easy to love your work. If you need more skills, online learning is a great resource and a lot of it is free. It’s easily accessible, right at your fingertips. Even my boys use online learning for school to learn reading, spelling and math. If it’s something your kids can do with you, you can get them involved and use it as a bonding experience. It’s a chance to help them
learn new skills. The more you can get them involved, the more time you get with them, and maybe you can even start a family business. The main thing is to just do what you love and try to keep the kids involved. But don’t get so wrapped up in your work that you’re not present with them. You need to be there not just physically, but for their needs as well. If they ask for help with homework or they want to show you something they did at school that they’re excited about, don’t put it off.
Make time to be there for them when they need it,” Tami said.

Morris the cat rules at Orange Cat Cafe

My husband and I walked to Orange Cat Cafe from a beachside condo where we stayed the prior night. I ordered an Americano, and oatmeal with bananas. Bob placed his order and paid.
Morris the cat saw us before we saw him. He decided to get up and greet us.

We sat down to wait. A cat tip-toed toward us, whispering “meow” to welcome us. Bob reached his arm out inviting him to come closer. The cat circled around a few times before he jumped up on the deep window sill to get closer. He stepped onto Bob’s knees to greet him.

I love pet-friendly shops. I reached over to pet the orange cat and he stepped over to my lap.

“What a sweet cat. What’s his name?” I asked.

“Morris. He’s 19.” Karen told me.

“Seriously, 19?”

“Yep, he’s lived here his whole life. This is his house,” she said.

“Really?”

“Yeah, this used to be a flower shop.” The previous owner passed away several years ago. In her will, she
said Morris had to stay with the property. He has his own house over there,” she pointed toward the small building next door.

“We keep our bikes in there, but he has his own couch and entry.”

“He’s 19?” That’s pretty old for a cat. He didn’t look a day over 10. “What do you feed him?” I asked.

“It’s funny. I tried to change his food, but he wouldn’t eat it. The 9Lives people probably don’t want to hear this. This Morris likes Friskies. He likes the dried and canned stuff.” she said. “He usually gets about a 1/2 can of the canned stuff every day and he can eat as much of the dried stuff as he wants.”

While waiting, I did a quick search on the 9Lives Morris the Cat. He has more than 300,000 likes on Facebook! I got curious to learn more about this famous cat. All the cats that have played the 9Lives Morris have been rescues, I read on Wikipedia.

I followed Orange Cat Cafe Morris outside. He kept looking back to see if I was behind him. He meowed at me, as if he were inviting me to visit his home. He rolled in the dirt and then posed for this picture. I swear he understood everything
that was going on. I soaked in all the positive energy.

Morris the cat at his estate.

I wondered how many customers this friendly cat has greeted over the past few decades.

I noticed a black and white cat on the side of his house. So did Morris. He walked back toward the other cat. The black and white cat walked through the fence posts, obediently exiting Morris’s space. Morris stood guard near the gate for a few minutes and then jumped up to relax on his throne.
Hello Kitty, is the dirt is browner on the other side of the fence?

“Morris definitely rules the streets around here,” Riley told me. “That black and white cat is Baby Face.”

*Does Baby Face believe that the dirt is browner on the other side of the fence? Does he wish he could live like Morris?*

“Do you have customers who come just here to see Morris?” I asked.

“Yeah, people come see him and they don’t even order anything. There’s a campground a few blocks away. Some people have been coming to Pismo Coast Village every year for ten or fifteen years. When they come in for coffee, they ask how Morris is doing.” Riley said.
Morris the cat in his front yard at Orange Cat Cafe

Service was in true form to its location: beach-casual. The coffee was great. The homemade cinnamon/honey oatmeal was delicious. Morris was delightful.
Few cats have private estates. Not many animals are given the chance to have a life and legacy like Morris. I look forward to running into this sweet tabby again on the other side of life. I’m excited to hear the rest of his story.
10 Tips from an entrepreneur who built a global brand

Is it possible for one man to build a global brand?

“The answer is a resounding YES!” says Bill Belew (a.k.a. Wilby).

“I am a content marketer. What that means is I am blogger who has grown up. I would say matured, but my wife would likely dispute that,” says Bill.

Content marketing is when you create something—a video, an article, a graphic, an image that is so cool that your created content begins to market you. In other words people come to know you by your content. Your content gets passed around so much that people ask, “Who made this?” And then they come looking for you.

How do you brand yourself globally?

1. Think globally.

“I’m quite fond of a quote by T. S. Eliot that I read many moons ago – it was in a poster on a wall in my dorm room,”
says Bill.

*If you think the sky’s the limit, you have limited imagination.*

Content marketers and bloggers seriously dream of creating a global brand, that is, they want to be reach the world and be recognized all over the world.

“*I can say without exaggeration that some 95 million people know my name. I know that because I have had at least than many unique visitors to any one of the web sites in my network. Those visitors have viewed well over 125 million pages. I know that, too, because I have the analytics,*” says Bill.

Do you know what happens when your web site reaches 100 million page views? The answer – nothing. The meter just keeps on ticking. The blogger, the content marketer has to keep on working.

*If you don’t plan to reach the world, you won’t.*
2. Don’t let anybody tell you can’t go global.

“When I started blogging I took aim at the whole world. Naive? I don’t know. Don’t care. Bold? I don’t know. I don’t care. It never occurred to me that I couldn’t reach the world,” said Bill.

To build a global brand, you need to defeat your tigers.

“I don’t drink. But there’s a story of a Chinese dude who once wrestled and defeated a tiger ... because he was drunk and didn’t know he couldn’t win. So he did. I take this attitude soberly,” says Bill.

Avoid the naysayers. They’re hungry tigers who want to eat your dream.

3. Travel the world with your brand.

“I have traveled the world virtually. I can see from my web analytics that I have had visitors from EVERY country in the world. No kidding. My name, my content, my brand has visited the world. I have also visited many of these countries physically,” says Bill.

Traveling is the best way to take your brand global.
“For a long time I had a huge following in India. I spent some time there while on a missionary trip. While there I learned about the religion of India: cricket,” says Bill.

Content Marketer, Wilby, pays cricket in India.

“Not only do I physically visit those countries, I also visit them BEFORE I have been there and also leave something there AFTER I am gone. My research takes me there BEFORE. It’s my brand that I leave there AFTER,” says Bill.

Create aspects of your brand that people from different parts of the globe can relate to.

4. **Have a brand worth sharing to different cultures.**

“The way I got the invite to Singapore was because I had been at a conference speaking in Thailand,” Bill said.
Wilby dressed for the occasion to speak in Thailand.

“In Bangkok, I met a fellow who was impressed enough with my topic, my presentation and my expertise to invite me to speak at the National Library of Singapore,” Bill said.

If your brand is effective in one place, be so good that people will wonder out loud and take action to the point that they will want to see you and your brand in their country.

5. Have a brand worth recognizing.

Wilby is the name of the character that represents BillBelew.com.

“People who know me know that I am playful, yet I take my work and getting results with utmost seriousness … usually, but not always in that order,” Bill says.

Wilby is just such a character … playful but hardworking and results-oriented.

“Not long ago, I spoke at a conference in Singapore to a large group of children’s book writers. Before going I learned that the Merlion was the national marketing icon of that country.”
Wilby became Merlion for a group of imaginative writers in Singapore.

Create a brand that makes your audience say, “Hey, that’s my country.”

**6. Have a brand that people can identify with.**

“While speaking in Singapore after doing some due diligence, I learned that there would be attendees from a variety of countries around the equatorial city. When I put up this slide of Wilby in Australia, the Aussies in the crowd let out a big ‘Whoop!’ I love that about the Aussies,” Bill said.
“There were also some attendees from Vietnam. When I put up this slide, they said nothing. I wasn’t surprised,” Bill said.

Wilby went bananas in Vietnam!

Have a brand such that people can see themselves.
7. Draw from a deep well of experience.

“I had lived Japan for nearly 20 years before ending up back in the US in Silicon Valley and reinventing myself as an online writer/blogger/content marketer and now speaker and consultant on the topic,” Bill said.

Wilby wrestled for his global brand in Japan.

“I often say that my work ethic is a combination of American creativity and Japanese kotsu (head down working hard) diligence,” Bill said.

To have a global appeal for your brand, you must have global experiences to draw from. You may not be able to travel the world physically, but you can easily travel the whole globe virtually.

8. Diversify with your global brand

“Asia is not the only continent Wilby has visited. Though he will be going back to Shanghai next year. And he has spent time in Siberia,” Bill said. “You have heard it is cold in Siberia? It’s true. It’s so cold in Siberia that the Russians
tell jokes in November but nobody laughs until March ... when their words thaw out.”

A global brand can adapt . . . and then it can go anywhere.

Wilby bundled up to take his brand to Siberia.

Visualize your brand in every culture throughout the globe.

8. **Flex your global brand’s muscle.**

Wilby can not only do cold and the eastern hemisphere, he can do the western hemisphere, too! Wilby has been to Mexico to speak to a large group of writers.
Wilby went to Mexico to teach people how to get 65 million hits!

He has also been invited to speak to writers’ groups throughout the US.

Wilby wore a black suit when he spoke at a writers’ convention.

Visualize your brand in a variety of situations before all kinds of audiences.

9. Work your global brand.

“Make no mistakes, I work hard abroad and in my own country,” Bill said.
Wilby does business, too ... even in the Big Apple.

Wilby ate up the opportunity to speak in the Big Apple!

“It doesn’t do any good if your brand is fluff. There must be substance behind your project with your brand. As for me, not only my brand but I took New York City like the big monkey,” Bill said.
Wilby will do whatever it takes to keep his global brand on top!

10. Find a good brand artist.

“This was an easy step for me. All my Wilbys are drawn by an ex-Japanese animator, Sakaguchi Benjamin Akeala Belew. The style he does for me is not even his favorite. Still he does these for me because I asked him and he knows me. He’s my son. He’s really good at what he does and can create any style for any brand. He produces hand-drawn, original, high quality art. Good, um, great, uh superb!” says Bill.

You can hire family if they are good. But if they aren’t, you’ll never go global.

Want to gain the skills and brain-power to take your brand to the world? CLICK HERE now to SUBSCRIBE to Rascal Radio.

“We’re incredibly fortunate to be living in the age we are. All we really need to go global is an Internet connection, a publishing platform and a head-down persistence to reach the world. Oh, and something worth sharing—that’s your brand.” Bill says.
Now that you’re armed with Bill’s secrets of how he created his global brand, it’s time for you to get to work to take your brand to the world.

If Wilby can do it, so can you!

Bill Belew is a business brand storyteller and expert in content development. He teaches bloggers and journalism school graduates how to make a living as freelance writers.

He’s a professor of social media marketing at the graduate level in Silicon Valley, CA. He is also a paid professional speaker and cruise ship lecturer who has spoken throughout the world.

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Life’s a Beach tips from No Fear and Bad Boy Club artist

Some young people are so into the partying thing. When I used to party I had some really mind-opening experiences. I could see through all the crap that other people were about. I took this and applied it to my art. Every time I partied, I painted. After each party I had a piece of art to show for it. It was passive aggressive destruction. Back then I had a full
mohawk. I was surfing in Florida with cut-off jeans.

I met up with three guys who were motocross racers. They came to Miami to make jams. They were all from Chicago and none of them knew how to surf. They asked me to make them a logo, but I didn’t.

About three years later, I was strolling through California asking people if I could paint on surfboards to make some money so I could eat. Then one day I came across a Life’s a Beach ad in a surfer magazine. I called the number and drove out to see my old friends. I showed them some of my work.

Later I met up with them and made the logo for their clothing brand. They wanted to call it the Bad Boy Club so that’s what they had me do first. Life’s a Beach. I sat there and started drawing a pissed off character, a bad boy. God gave me the Bad Boy Club logo.

When I showed it to Mark Simo, he lost it. He said it was perfect. I wanted to fix the letters, but he told me, “no it’s just right. It’s perfect just the way it is.”

“Are you kidding me?” That’s what I was thinking. This logo generated millions and millions of dollars. LATimes.
From then on, life was perfect. The bad boy is so bad that he’s good. Life’s a Beach! They were into what they were creating. I kept making choke T-shirt designs and they kept giving me money.

Inside the shirts there were care tags with little tips that said things like:

- be kind to animals
- don’t be a cement head
- don’t play with matches

We did that for the mothers. They loved that stuff.

After I did the first logo, they wanted me to put a different spin on their Life’s a Beach logo. Here’s what I came up with:
Life’s a Beach logo design by Mark “Boogaloo” Baagoe.

No Fear was our second company which was dubbed as dangerous sports gear. No Fear was all about dangerous sports goods: boxing, big wave riding, extreme fighting, mountain climbing, guys on skis killing big mountains, skaters, surfers hitting 100-foot waves, drag racers . . . that sort of stuff.
After designing and creating lots of T-shirts designs for No Fear, I was able to afford a five-bedroom house on the beach in California. I carpeted the floor and walls of my garage. We played music there and I painted there. Quite often I’d stretch my own canvas. I had a safe full of cash. I’d burn a hundred dollar bill in the garage just because I could. It’s not about the money for me. It never was.

Flame skull designed for No Fear by Mark “Boogaloo” Baagoe.

I am a true American artist. Our educational system is shit. I doodled in school. And then years later lots of kids recognized my logos. Now when they see them, they’ll want to read my story and it will draw them to the higher power.

When I asked Boogaloo what he would say if he had the opportunity to stand up in front of a stadium full of people, the first thing that came out of his mouth was, “Mommy.”

“I wouldn’t want to stand up in front of a big crowd of people, but I’ve been doing so many art shows that I learned to enjoy meeting people who come to my shows. But I do I want to write a book. Want to write my story?” he asked.

“I can’t promise a book,” I said, “but I can do a blog post. What do you want to tell the world?” Here are the lessons he learned that he’d like to share:
1. Always be true to your God-given talent.

I’ve reached a point in my life where I can’t deal with the bullshit anymore. I know what’s good for me and what’s bad for me. I’m at that age and maturity where I understand these things. I’d been looking for this place forever and I finally found it. Always be true to yourself and your God-given talent.

2. Find where the pieces of the puzzle fit.

You have to find the pieces to the puzzle. They’re linked with God and spirituality. I’m a big fan of numbers, math and geometry. I love shapes. Shapes make art. Math is undeniable. Our birthday is a certain number. There are 12 apostles and 12 months. Three is my favorite number.

My favorite letter is R because it reminds me of the color green. Maybe because Robin had an R on his chest. My mom was good on a sewing machine. She made me a batman costume when I was a kid. I didn’t take it off for two weeks. I slept in that thing. Then my little brother wanted it and he slept in it for about three weeks. When all the pieces finally start to fit together, then you’ll see the big picture.
3. Don’t forget where you come from.
We’re nothing. We’re just a vapor in God’s universe. I feel like a rock star on stage, but then I remember I’m just a vapor in God’s eyes. And then I’m at peace. It helps me realize it’s not about me. I’m two different kinds of people. My Chinese sign is the rat, so I’m a survivor. My astrological sign is Leo, the lion. I’m like a cat. I’ve always landed on my feet because I have protection.

<insert pic of blue black lines>

4. Stay in the loop.
It’s not a time line. It’s a perfect circle. A lot of people think they have a hurdle to get over to get back on a line.
But life isn’t like that for me. It’s more like a loop. Now things are going up and then it comes back full circle with my life and my art. I started out baptized as a baby. I was brand new. My name Mark was written in his book. He had my destiny predetermined before I was born. By keeping your finger on the pulse, you’re staying in the loop.

Six Foot Shacks mascot Surfer Joe designed by Mark “Boogaloo” Baagoe in 1980.

Now I see how all this loops back around, but now I’m better. It’s all about perseverance and being dedicated and being prolific. I’m still surfin’ at 54! Here’s one of my recent ventures in T-shirt design: Six foot shacks. Get shacked!
5. Ride the wave.

I’ve always been trying to paint what God looks like. But the only thing I’ve been able to paint that looks like God is a wave. Nothing can withstand the force of an ocean. Everything can be destroyed by a wave. Water is all-powerful.

In 2003 I went to Maui to visit a friend. After seeing the waves in Maui, I went back Florida to pack up all my stuff to move to Maui.

6. Be prolific.

If you work on your talent every single day, even if it’s just one brush stroke every day. If you do this for 365 days over and over again, you’ll be successful. As you get older, you realize you don’t have to drive as hard to get where you want to go.
7. Success is one failure after another.

If I didn’t pick myself up every time each time I failed, I’d be a compete failure. A failure is someone who doesn’t pick himself up. When you get pounded by a wave, do you just lay there and get pounded? No, you get back up on your board. It doesn’t mean you’re a failure for the rest of your life. You’re going to catch some of the greatest waves of your life. When you’re under water and you get pounded by a wave and you can’t see anything but grey and clouds of white, you reach for your leash and pull yourself to the floating board. When you finally get to the top you see another wave and your realize, oh shit.

Things like this happen. When you’re getting tumbled around and you can’t see what’s going, you just let the water throw you around like a rag doll. The secret is that you don’t panic. I have a hard time not panicking because sometimes my emotions take over. Nowadays, doctors try to turn people’s emotions into phobias so they can give them pills.

8. Trials make you grow.

The thing I’m most grateful for is the trials in life. Because without the trials, I wouldn’t know how much God loves me. Without trials, you don’t know the great parts of life. When you’re going through a trial, it really sucks, but we are put through these trials for one reason: to grow. We can’t be better racers unless we can jump over the hurdles.

My Godfather gave me this book many years ago. It’s very tattered like me. That’s one of my inspirations. He was always telling me in his Jersey accent, “You gotta teach. You gotta teach art,” almost sounding like an offer I shouldn’t refuse. You’re really good. I’ve always wanted to be an art teacher, but I’ve never been conservative enough to deal with the schools.
9. I’m the captain of my own boat.

I was married twice, each time for two years. One of my wakeup moments was after my 2nd divorce. People are so controlling. They want to control everything. When you love something so much, you think you can squeeze it and it will turn into a diamond. But that doesn’t work. You have to let them go. It was all about a blame game. After the dust settled, everything changed for me.

10. Be aware all the time.

Pay attention. You know what you’re going through in life, but you never know what other people are going through right now. I think about things like this. I can lose my temper very easily in this town when I get behind a slow tourist. I’m automatically judging people all the time. But I know I need to pay attention. And I’m constantly asking for forgiveness.
11. It’s not my story.

Boogaloo walked to a closet and told us we were in for a treat. He pulled out a box that his mom had sent him recently. It was full of products, stickers, cards and toys . . . all with logos he designed.

This isn’t my story. It’s everyone’s story. Over the years, I’ve given all my stuff away. Here’s a Bad Boy watch, a Bad Boy key chain. I’ve always been a huge hot rod fan. We got together with Mattel, and we made a car. We made an Indy car. It was the best of all the racers. We made these Bad Boy watches.

We made Christmas cards and of course they were always late. He handed me one of the cards. “Here you can have this one,” he said to me. I love my work as an artist. Thank goodness I never had to go to war and kill people. I sit with a good conscious because God was gracious enough.

My spirituality is like my muscles. If I don’t work them out every day, they get weak and useless. It’s the same for your body and mind. Spirituality is a muscle. If you don’t work it out it goes limp and weak. Faith isn’t something you push by the wayside.
12. God is not understandable.

Never rely on your own understanding about God. Plant a seed and let it grow. Don’t keep messing with it. You plant it and let it go. Walk away from it and let it grow. Some land on the rocks, some land on fertile soil, but the main idea is to plant the seeds. Be the one bold enough to plant the seeds.

Now the No Fear logo is an antique. I can’t believe what some of these things go for on eBay.

Boogaloo gave me some of his famous stickers and sent me off reminding me of his main message as an artist: May God’s gift to me be my gift to you.
Mark “Boogaloo” Baagoe with his art at Binky’s Banyan Boutique in Lahaina, Maui.

Mark “Boogaloo” Baagoe is an artist living a Lahaina a few blocks away from where his art sells at Binky’s Banyan Boutique.
Mark “Boogaloo” Baagoe

Mark Boogaloo, aka “boogaloo,” was born in 1960 in New Jersey to a Catholic family that believed in hard work and enduring faith. This has been an important guide in his life, but from a young age he struggled with the emphasis on short hair, collared shirts and uniform behavior. He saw beauty beyond these boundaries and began to draw fantastic, creative images at an early age.

Boogaloo specializes in hand-drawn art. If you’re interested in a custom surf-board art, a logo or a commissioned piece, contact him at StillQuietSoul[at]yahoo.com.
How to turn volunteer work into paid experiences
Have you ever wished you could apply more time to a cause you believe in? Here’s some advice from a pro art director, designer and photographer who evolved his volunteer work into a more professional capacity.

“A lot of people donate their time and efforts to nonprofits in order to do some good and add more meaning to their lives. While volunteering is noble and altruistic, we all have a limited quantity of time to give to a cause. We all need to earn a living,” Heward says.

“Sometimes we can give more wholeheartedly of ourselves if we know our own needs are being met. One way to do this is to contribute your talents where there is grant funding set aside for a particular project. Corporations and wealthy individuals often sponsor humanitarian projects and need talented people to carry out the work,” Heward adds.

For over twenty years, Heward has worked for some of the country’s most creative ad agencies elevating countless brands.

“While working in advertising is a decent way to earn a living
and can be fun, it often feels shallow in the larger scope of things,” claims Heward. “I don’t always agree with consumerism, so doing work for nonprofits gives me a sense of redemption.”

Today, Heward gravitates toward working with corporations or organizations on their altruistic projects. He recently traveled to Kenya and Tanzania for Asante Africa, and to Vietnam for Roots of Peace. Here’s how:

How Heward was introduced to Asante Africa Foundation and the Getty Images Creative Grant

A Kenyan preschooler photographed by Heward Jue while working with Asante Africa Foundation

Because of his work and personal interest in different cultures and developing countries, Heward has traveled to various parts of the world.

“I went to South Africa for a commercial wine project. But what captivated me was the sea of shanty towns I saw. I
thought it would be interesting to visit the residents and take some portraits. The faces and spirits of the people I captured were absolutely wonderful, so I made large prints to hang in my office when I returned. One of my colleagues who knew the founder at Asante Africa Foundation saw the photos and introduced me to her. I started designing their annual reports and later became a Board Member,” Heward says.

“When I was at Asante Africa, I heard about the Getty Images Creative Grant. I decided to build a proposal and provided a portfolio to apply for this $20,000 grant. It was an international competition with 85 applicants from 23 different countries. We were one of the two awarded,” he states.

“Asante Africa Foundation helps to educate children in East Africa, where there are many obstacles besides poverty that hinder children from getting educated. For example, when girls start to menstruate, many stop attending school. Asante Africa Foundation helps by building girls’ toilets so that they have safe and private places to take care of the hygiene needs while at school,” Heward says.
One of the main purposes of this project was to promote awareness for Asante Africa and the work they do. Utilizing his creative advertising background, Heward wrote, co-directed and shot this video for the foundation. It demonstrates the drastic differences between life with and without education:

A striking print campaign, as represented by this ad below, was also created to round out the campaign.

How Heward got involved with Roots of Peace

“Back in 1999, I designed the Roots of Peace logo when their founder, Heidi Kuhn, was operating out of her living room. They’ve grown tremendously since then, and she recently contacted me to document their work in Vietnam,” Heward states.
Photographer Heward Jue shooting while a Vietnamese farmer shares his story for Roots of Peace.

The ACE Group, a global insurer and one of Roots of Peace’s sponsors, provided the funding for this project.

Photo by Tucker Kühn, Roots of Peace.
Roots of Peace’s mission is to restore economic vitality to war-torn regions by creating livelihood opportunities through agriculture. In Vietnam, where the war ended 40 years ago, there are still areas plagued with unexploded landmines, bombs and rocket-propelled grenades. Roots of Peace works with partners to remove these devices, turning what was once destructive land into productive, arable land.

A Vietnamese family empowered by the work of Roots of Peace. Photography by Heward Jue.

Can you turn your volunteer work into compensated opportunities?

Heward likes doing work for nonprofits that have noble causes. “Lots of people want to help nonprofits, but it doesn’t always have to be charity. There are funds out there, and you can do some research to find organizations that need your skill set. It’s just a matter of asking the right questions and finding the right avenues,” suggests Heward. If you’re interested in getting paid to use your skills to support a nonprofit, here are a four suggestions from Heward:
1. Research to find opportunities you’re passionate about.

“It needs to first come from the heart,” Heward says. If you like and believe in what you’re doing, it’s better for everyone involved. Although Heward’s work often requires him to travel to far-out places, there are countless ways you can make a difference within the borders of your own country, state or city. You don’t have to go far to find people in need.

Here are a few tools you can use to identify volunteer opportunities:

- Use VolunteerMatch to “find a cause that lights you up.”
- Search for “Volunteer Opportunities” on Yelp.
- Use Facebook to “like” and get involved with nonprofits you believe in.

“Begin by giving a little of yourself,” Heward says.

You don’t have to be an expert to lend a helping hand. And you don’t have to put in long hours if you don’t want to. That’s the nature of the work. One of the advantages of volunteering is that you have the right say yes or no. But when you decide to say yes, you’ll find that there are endless possibilities to serve through nonprofits in almost any community in the world.

2. Get experience to build your credibility.

Get involved in small projects near or far. You need some experience and credibility before an organization will consider paying you. If you have a particular expertise or passion, it can be helpful to focus your work in this area.
There’s a website or app for nearly everything these days. If you’re a photographer, for example, you can look for opportunities on PhotoPhilanthropy. By providing a means for photographers and nonprofit organizations to come together, they champion social change, one photo at a time.

*Take a big sip of water and speak up a little louder.*

“Once you get into the areas you’re interested in and become known, then opportunities start coming to you,” Heward says.

3. **Build your reputation.**

Whichever area of work you want to get into, start getting involved with people and projects in those areas. Document your experience along the way. Photos or videos can help, but they’re not always a necessity. Once you make connections and friends, they remember you and they can always be used as a reference.

Share your passion and volunteer experiences on social media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram or other social media tools. Then people start to get to know you.
4. Search for opportunities to get paid for your expertise.

Research the sponsors of these organizations. Some have the funds to carry out the projects and they often need people to do the work.

“Charitable projects are a good way for corporations to give back to the world to help elevate humanity, instead of just their bottom line,” Heward comments.

You can also apply for grants to fund your work, as Heward did with the Getty Images Creative Grant. Getting paid in volunteer organizations doesn’t come easily. It’s a bonus that you can work toward in the long-run.
Heward Jue sharing his work with a Tanzanian villager.

_How to make your vacation last a lifetime_

As an art director and designer, Heward has won numerous awards for creative excellence including: The One Show, Communication Arts, Clio, Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival, Graphis, The Art Directors Club, The Obies, The Effies, The ANDYS, and The ADDYS.

His photography has been recognized for excellence by PDN, Planet Magazine, Rangefinder Magazine, and the American Photographic Artists.

If you’re interested in having Heward shoot a project for your organization, contact him at HewardJue.com.
Heward Jue showing off his tan line after 10 days of shooting in Africa. Photo by Erna Grasz.

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