

# Interesting Times

#6 FEBRUARY 2011

SURVIVE AND THRIVE





# Writer's block +

Hell. This is what it must feel like to have writer's block. My mind is sullen and sour. Words have to be squeezed out with violence like the last drops of Kalles Kaviar<sup>[1]</sup> in the tube, my myelin<sup>[2]</sup> pathways feel like two thousand years of rust and fatigue. "This is fuckin' ghey" is all I can think to think.

I've always mocked those whose creative juices tended to dry up at times, leaving them clamoring at God from the anhedonic depths, cursing the Seven Muses, and screaming into their pillows. This affliction was a sign of mental weakness, the symptom of a shallow and closed mind failing to bravely SCAMPER<sup>[3]</sup> the ideaspaces hard enough, the just deserts of various mainstream phonies, PC-fellating sycophants, de facto Morlocks, and critically acclaimed dilettantes who, as I saw it, were stricken with it as punishment for not being true to truth and taste and for daring to express themselves in spite of obvious intelligence challenges. Surely I was beyond such things...

My mind had always been a gushing spigot of pure potential, a perma-lubed hoo-hah if you will, with no intentions of ever clamming shut because "I have a headache tonight, darling". I could rely on my mind like knights could their swords and strippers their poles. Ideas were delivered to me out of the aether like divine clockwork. I would rightly have dismissed with great mirth the notion that I could ever be lost for inspiration

"I think someone needs to smuggle some vitamin D and joie de vivre into socialist Sweden, 'cause if this goes on any longer I'm gonna start watching reality TV and voting for the Social Democrats and *who knows what else.*"

when it came to such a simple task as writing an editorial. But be that as it may, for now that particularly nasty predicament HAS in fact taken a chunk out of my derriere. That's right: I got nothing. And we're already in January and this was supposed to be done by Christmas ):<sup>[4]</sup> Frakkfrakkfrakkfrakkfrakk...

**I don't have any** vitriol to pour out this time 'round, nor any wit with which to dazzle. My Sprezzatura is running on fumes and my cynicism has seen better days. I think someone needs to smuggle some vitamin D and joie de vivre into socialist Sweden, 'cause if this goes on any longer I'm gonna start watching reality TV and voting for the Social Democrats and *who knows what else*. I think even the haters will agree that this would be a waste of potential.

Anyway, in lieu of the typical snarky editorial, I will tell you a little bit about our plans for 2011. Some stuff we want to do:

1. Put out more issues. This is THE big

task ahead, and also the hardest to resolve. You see, the current bottleneck for us is not getting content, but rather the creation of those über graphical layouts that you see in every issue. You can thank Ms Awesomeness aka Imoto for those, of course. Whereas my job as editor, ie contacting writers and penning occasional cranky editorials, is not THAT time-intensive, hers most definitely is. Putting out more issues would come down to three possibilities: 1. recruiting more graphic designers (hard; people don't usually have a great work ethic AND work for free) 2. paying Imoto enough cash to match a full time job (very hard; we have no income) 3. skipping the fancy layouts and going webzine (easy, but sucks). This brings us to...

2. Put out some actual print copies. The reason for having the fancy PDF design, as opposed to just straight-up web content, has always been a burning desire to become a "real" magazine at some point. Technically, we already are:

# plans for 2011

I have in my possession 1 print copy of issue 1<sup>[5]</sup>. The problems here are mainly technical in nature: we cannot get the darn Magcloud.com site to work<sup>[6]</sup>. We have done a LOT of dicking around with Quark and gotten nowhere. The optimal solution for us, IMHO, would be a "real" printing house, which would include a distribution network (not just print-on-demand as with Magcloud). This would of course entail all kinds of legal issues (mainly to do with stock photos) and such, but I think they could be resolved. Contact us if you're interested.

3. **Make more theme issues.** The Tim Ferriss theme issue we did last time really gave me a taste of the fun that can be had with this concept. This is one of those advantages that magazines have over blogs, and so we should use it more. Some theme issues that are currently under consideration:

- **My home is my castle:** hacking physical space (hackerspaces, augmented reality, construction, architecture, etc)
- **The 4 Hour Mind** (mindhacking, skill acquisition, education reform, nootropics, psychic powers, etc)
- **Experimental Science Edition** (in which we explore the kind of cutting-edge self-bootstrapped experiments that we read about in Tim Ferriss' latest book)
- **Cyberpunk Scandinavia**
- **Becoming Badass:** a 12-step program
- **A mook**<sup>[7]</sup> edition of ITM

4. **Create some spin-offs.** One idea I bounced with British pick-up artist Ste-

viePUA was a show called "Eustressed"<sup>[8]</sup> with SteviePUA". It would be a show about lifestyle design, and the camera crew and such would be crowdsourced to True Fans in each country that the host visits. Very neat idea in my opinion. I have another MAJOR spin-off planned, but that's a bit further into the future.

5. **Make some cash.** I have kind of resigned myself to this never happening, but I guess it would be nice.

6. **Build up our tribe of True Fans organically.** I used to believe in "being discovered"<sup>[9]</sup> and having game-changing breakthroughs where you go from zero to hero in no time. I don't anymore. Case in point: issue 5. This was a devious social engineering ploy to get the attention of Mr Timothy Ferriss. Once he became a True Fan everything would click into place: we would get massive traffic and instant recognition. Money and groupies would follow in tow. This plan proved to be a dismal failure. We've let go of this type of thinking and are instead pursuing a more Kaizen approach: recruiting True Fans one simian at a time, and leveraging them into eventual success. I guess issue 5 wasn't a complete disaster either: it's the first issue which has created a steady trickle of fan mail. This magazine was originally created as a social networking honeypot and now it's more and more working as intended.

I guess these goals are quite worthy,

although not that sexy. 2011 will be a year of solidification for me and Interesting Times. Not a lot of sexyness, but sometimes you need to build a stable foundation to stand on. If you want to help us pour the concrete then give us a call at [info@interestingtimesmagazine.com](mailto:info@interestingtimesmagazine.com)

## Happy New Year!

<sup>[1]</sup> A Swedish delicacy:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalles\\_kaviar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalles_kaviar)

<sup>[2]</sup> A material that forms insulating

sheaths around the neurons. Thought to be critical to the development of intelligence.

<sup>[3]</sup> A creativity mnemonic:

<http://www.brainstorming.co.uk/tutorials/scampertutorial.html>

<sup>[4]</sup> Reverse smiley. The "90-talister"

(people born in the 90s) have many vile habits, and this one has rubbed off on me.

<sup>[5]</sup> No, I am not selling it. I might rent it to you though, payment *in natura*.

<sup>[6]</sup> As for issue 1: yes, we did manage to upload that one, and so we could theoretically offer it in print. The issue there, however, was that a few of the images were too low-res to look good in print, and we cannot change them because Imoto upgraded her copy of Quark Xpress or something like that.

<sup>[7]</sup> "Magazine book". Very popular in Japan, apparently.

<sup>[8]</sup> Eustress = positive stress.

<sup>[9]</sup> Read this: [http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths\\_blog/2010/06/hope-and-the-magic-lottery.html](http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2010/06/hope-and-the-magic-lottery.html)





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# A Technique for Producing Ideas

The importance of being able to "come up with ideas"

text ADAM B

In his book "The 4-Hour Work Week" Tim Ferriss describes entrepreneurial endeavors as "muses". Entrepreneurship, and indeed the whole goal of living "outside the box", is, at its core, an act of creativity. So developing creativity and problem solving skills in this "cyber-space" age should be one of our highest priorities, perhaps the highest.

James Webb Young was an "advertising man" during the first part of the twentieth century, a successful copywriter who helped to set up the J Walter Thompson agency's international network, as well as taking time out to teach at the University of Chicago business school. In 1965 he published "A Technique for Getting Ideas" – a short, but extremely practical guide to the all-important subject of "coming up with new ideas."

## The Five Steps

Young thought that the coming up with new ideas is "as definite a process as the production of Fords" and considered that "a new idea is nothing more nor less than a new combination of old elements." In other words, we can all be creative if we want to be. He outlines five very simple, yet profound steps for creativity:

### 1. Gather the "Raw Materials"

This "raw material" is classified into two categories – the specific and the general. The specific raw material is obvious- learn everything you can about the problem you want to solve or the product you want to sell (and its customers). Very few people actually bother to do this. The general raw materials are just as important – be curious about and

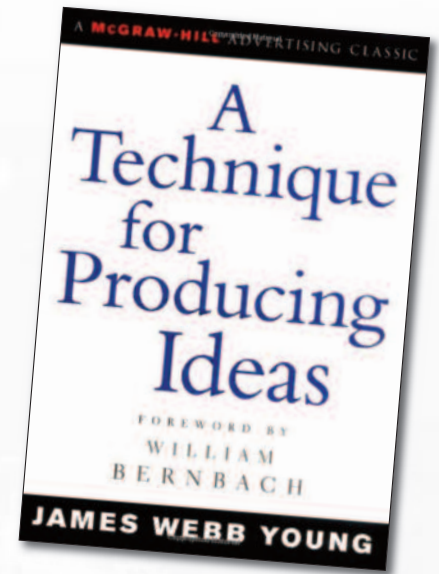
interested in everything – from Modern Art to Egyptian burial customs. Remember Young's axiom that I've quoted above; "a new idea is nothing more nor less than a new combination of old elements." Get as much of these "old elements" together before embarking on the process of creating.

### 2. Digest these "Raw Materials"

Young describes this process as "masticating these materials as you would food that you are preparing for digestion... What you do is to take the different bits of material which you have gathered and feel them, as it were, with the tentacles of the minds. You take one fact, and turn it this way and that, look at it in different lights, and feel for the meaning of it. You bring two facts together and see how they fit." You are looking for unexpected connections and relationships between the "elements". Write everything you perceive down, regardless of how foolish or impractical your observations may seem.

### 3. Forget about it (!)

This might be the strangest piece of advice in the whole process, but I can assure you from my own experience it's true. Put everything related to the problem you are trying to solve or the product you are trying to sell out of your head. Relax, listen to some music, see a movie or even sleep on it. Young reminds us that Sherlock Holmes would suddenly drag Watson to a concert when he was right in the middle of solving a mystery. Like Holmes, what you are really doing is handing the whole process of idea creation over to your subconscious.



### 4. The Flash of Insight

If you faithfully follow the first three steps Young promises that "out of nowhere the Idea will appear. It will come to you when you are least expecting it – while shaving, or bathing or most often when you are half awake, in the morning." Recall Archimedes running through the streets naked, dripping wet and shouting "Eureka" when he had figured out how to calculate the volume of an irregular object.

### 5. Release it to the world

Coming up with ideas is one thing, implementing them is another. Don't be shy about sharing your new idea; submit it to the criticism of those you respect. Adapt and change it if necessary.

### My final thoughts

I've read dozens of books on this subject and in my opinion this is one of the best. It should only take an hour or so to read, and it is well worth your time. You can buy a paper copy at Amazon, or you can read it online at <http://tech.moosaico.com/docs/getting-ideas/>



# WANTED

## GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

### We are looking for someone who is:

- 1) Highly skilled at creating magazine layouts. QuarkXpress is what we currently use, but other tools are OK.
- 2) Endowed with an insane work ethic and/or ample spare time.
- 3) Willing to work for free.

### The pay-off:

- 1) We will be able to put out issues at a MUCH faster rate, as our supply of content is currently vastly greater than our supply of graphic design man-hours.
- 2) You will be able to put a real, successful project on your resumé.
- 3) You will be able to use Interesting Times Magazine as your springboard to network with high value people.
- 4) There MIGHT be profits in the future.

### The modus operandi:

- 1) You will be given responsibility for 1 future issue, to work on at your own pace.
- 2) You will be sent articles periodically, and expected to show work in progress screenshots.
- 3) You will be expected to do what it takes to get your PDF to upload successfully to Magcloud.com
- 4) You will be granted a great degree of artistic freedom. You will not be micro-managed.

Contact us at [info@interestingtimesmagazine.com](mailto:info@interestingtimesmagazine.com) if you are masochistic enough for this.

## WEALTHY BENEFACTOR

Are you filthy rich? Would you like to see us continue to do what we do, without having to sell out to sleazy affiliate schemes? Would you like to help keep us in Ramen and broadband? Are you just bored with the huge mountain of gold coins that clutters up your garage?

If so, we might have an opportunity in store for you. Namely, the opportunity of throwing a bunch of money at us and seeing what happens.

Now if you're gonna give us money, you should make it recurring and sizeable. Otherwise, it's just going to be swallowed up by the nonsense of daily life and not amount to much.

In crass numerics, this comes out to about **\$3000** per month. For some of our readers, this surely represents but a fraction of their monthly allowance spent on hookers, cocaine and beluga. So why not upgrade the marginal utility of those frivolous cash outlays by throwing a few bucks our way instead?

Contact us at [info@interestingtimesmagazine.com](mailto:info@interestingtimesmagazine.com) if you want the satisfaction of being a 16th century-style patron of the arts. You know you want to.

## SOMEONE WHO CAN PORT ISSUES 1-6 TO MAGCLOUD.COM

Are you experienced with QuarkXpress and Magcloud.com? Then you might be able to help us fix the current lack of print issues.

The task: all of the issues will be sent to you in .qxp format. The first issues were created in version 8.1, and later ones in 8.2. Some of the issues do not have a page count that is evenly divisible by 4, so you will need to insert blank pages in those cases. You will also be expected to evaluate the quality of images in the magazine: if the resolution is too low, they may need to be replaced. Finally, you will make sure the issues are uploaded to Magcloud.com and that test issues are sent out.

If you are successful, you will have helped us complete a long-standing quest: to make Interesting Times into a "real" (ie print) magazine. So contact us at [info@interestingtimesmagazine.com](mailto:info@interestingtimesmagazine.com) if you are feeling heroic.

# Self Development

text ROBERT PANE

# NINJA

**Picture a scene from** medieval Japan. A gentle breeze is jostling the reeds of the small lake that surrounds a local warlord's castle. A shadowy figure is wading stealthily across the lake, his movements hardly perceptible in the moonless night and the ever so soft lapping of water against the embattlements. His target is a talented General who would otherwise be leading the morrow's battle. He is confident, his years of training will guarantee success tonight. His mind is at ease and focussed. Most of all he is assured that the very presence of a ninja tonight will strike fear in the hearts' of his adversaries thus providing that advantage needed to execute his task.

**So what is a ninja?** They have been both romanticised and demonised through time. Every adult male must have seen at least one ninja movie in his life and of course dreamed of having their awesome fighting skills, if only momentarily. Perhaps even you still have that throwing star you made as a kid, the one that never quite flew straight. But is Ninjutsu

more than just a fighting art? Are there underlying principles that we can adapt for self development? I believe so and let's face it, supreme warrior skills and clandestine capability may not get you that promotion in sales you desperately want. The black suit and hood is probably not helping either.

**Applying the core of Ninjutsu** to your own personal development is quite a journey. However there are no specific drills to recommend, mantras to chant or secret ninjery rituals to perform; it is purely a change in mindset. Let's start with some basics:

**1. Ninjutsu is not fighting.** Really it's not, it's all about winning. You consume your target, achieve your objective and move on. In fact the art is more about preserving life in that you only do what is necessary and in a way with the least collateral damage.

While a showdown with the "Big Boss" makes great climatic cinema, it's just not practical to keep that intensity up all day

and everyday or even for any length of time. The reality of any fight is that if you can't dispatch your opponent within the first few strikes the odds of sustaining injury increase significantly. Even if you do prevail in a slug out, if you expend all your energy you're ill prepared to meet the next challenge in life (or his mate who's waiting in the wings with the hay maker). The principle here then is to conserve your energy. Be precise in your actions and be able to quickly and efficiently perform your task. You will be rewarded with more free time and the awe of others as you perform effortlessly and gracefully.

**Summary:** Remember that winning is why we train and the underlying purpose of continual self development.

**2. Situational Awareness ("SA").** On your way to work today did you notice that guy loitering on a suburban street with no real purpose of being there? You may have read later about the robbery that occurred just moments after you drove by. Or how about your employer setting



# STYLE

up a new business venture in an area of great interest to you. It's what you have worked towards all your life – if only you knew they were looking for someone just like you to lead it. Opportunity gone. Situational awareness is core to Ninjutsu. It is what allows you to defend against multiple attackers or survive a mêlée with all your body parts and a good story (embellished of course!). It's about being relaxed but always ready to respond (this is why conserving energy is paramount). This is where a ninja gains his reaction speed as it removes the "what is happening to me" step in processing the events unfurling before you. Effectively it allows you to see trouble in its early formation and provides crucial seconds to decide whether to fight or flight. An example of good SA in a social sense is that guy who always has the snappy comeback. By being keyed into the situation he can anticipate the flow of conversation. Therefore SA is simply paying attention to what's happening around you. It becomes all too easy to fall into a routine and miss out on a greater part of life. Heads up, look

around and get in touch with the prevailing social mood and you'll move away from being in the wrong place at the wrong time to that guy that always has the good luck.

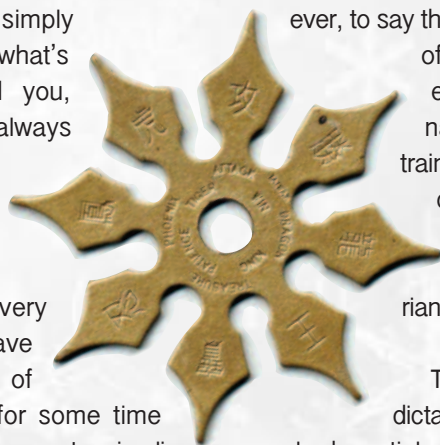
**Summary:** SA is simply paying attention to what's happening around you, being relaxed but always ready to respond.

### 3. Gathering Techniques.

Yes this one is very important. If you have been on the path of self development for some time you'll probably have an extensive library covering various philosophies, biographies and how to manuals, some of it bordering on the esoteric. There is a considerable body of knowledge surrounding modern day Ninjutsu. The art is based upon the teachings of 9 traditions (or schools). Each tradition has a set of techniques and then there are the henka, or variations to the techniques.

The permutations can therefore be endless. In fact you can essentially spend your life in the study of just one school or theoretically one technique. This is what gives ninjas the edge; you just can't anticipate what they will do next. However, to say that you can perform each of the techniques from each school, recite its name and perform it in training is a failure to appreciate the true essence of the art. I recommend you become a historian or librarian instead.

The world is truly unpredictable. You may be a world ranked martial artists but be floored by that king hit you never saw coming (where was your SA?). In a fight you do not have time to prepare your response – if he throws a right head level punch, then I will do this, this and this... You need to be able to respond quickly and instinctively in offloading your arsenal or be prepared to spend some serious palliative care time. If you can truly



"Ninjutsu is not fighting. Really it's not, it's all about winning. You consume your target, achieve your objective and move on."

understand the core feeling of each Ninjutsu tradition, then you will perform it precisely each time, correctly for the situation at hand and without, "telegraphing" what your intentions are or will be.

In Ninjutsu, the first technique of every school is the underlying principle. This is all you need to understand. All the other techniques are expressions of this first principle or aides in its interpretation. If you can't master the first technique, don't bother with the rest.

This is also evident in pursuing self development. If you fail to grasp the underlying principle or message of the "school" you're studying, then you are just collecting unactionable information. If the "school" can't deliver this message in a few words or steps, then they themselves have just assembled a body of observations; again with no actionable content.

**Summary:** Pare back, strive for simplicity and internalise the core feeling. This is all you need.

**4. Little Steps.** This is related to balance and in Ninjutsu you will dominate balance or very quickly you will descend into fighting. The application of the art is very close and personal, much closer than you think. The key is correct positioning to maintain both your balance and to, "cock" the body ready for the next move (always one step ahead). Taking smaller but quicker steps helps keep the body in balance and together, that is, there are no parts left behind when moving. And believe me when fighting with weapons you do not want to leave a body bit lagging.

But there is more to this, smaller steps allows greater power to be generated from the body very quickly by using shifts in body weight. Otherwise you

need to drag your body into position and then find your balance before you can respond. Apart from the energy this expends, it becomes very clear what your intentions are. It also slows you down, so much so it gives time for your opponent to grab a coffee and send a few tweets while you are setting up your attack.

So how does this relate to self development? Well firstly every venture can be broken into smaller steps. Breaking down a project into intermediate steps reduces the enormity of what you are attempting to achieve and successive completion of tasks provides positive reinforcement along the way. But there's more – it allows adaptability. At no point is a ninja fully committed to a certain approach. When the steps are smaller, alternations can be implemented instantly if conditions suddenly change. In self development it becomes a travesty





when you didn't provide yourself flexibility or exit points and you find yourself committed for the long haul on a less than ideal path.

Finally, once you take your opponents' balance, moving with small quick steps ensures they can never get it back. In business or in life this is similar to you making your rivals forever play catch up. Small steps free you up to choose your own path and let others expend all their energy trying to get to a place where the

ninja has long since mastered and left.

**Summary:** Little steps scale back the enormity of the task at hand. They allow you room to reconsider your direction and can force rivals into a reactive rather than proactive state. Your decision to take "little steps" creates the opportunity.

The philosophy of Ninjutsu runs much deeper than what I have outlined here. It is multifaceted, intriguing and truly a study of man – how he moves, how he

thinks and how he reacts and then mastering control over each of these aspects. When applied correctly its simplicity is beautiful and its power is awesome to behold. But most of all it embodies the notion of continual development of oneself, to learning, to perseverance and having the confidence to back yourself. These are the basic tenants of Ninjutsu and likewise, should also be the core of an individual's path to self development.

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harrynemo@hotmail.com*

# OVERCOMING PERCEPTION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

text ADVOCATUS DIABOLI

The following article is about perceptual and cultural problems that stop humans from having large manned and unmanned space programs. If you think that sending a few puny space probes to some planets and landing on the moon is the best we can ever do, read on.

I will try to challenge your beliefs and expose you to some concepts that you might have felt before, but could never quite put a name on.



The twin concepts of "man should not do what he was not intended to do" and "keep on doing what he always did" is as old as human culture itself. They also form one of the basic tenets of religions from the traditional ones (Christianity, Islam) to the secular religions (Environmentalism, Capitalism, Socialism). These concepts are usually preached by cynical old men who have gained respectability through fraud (Priests), and have no intent of doing anything than try to relive their past glory.

Consider the history of developments in aerospace technology. While humans

can run and swim, they cannot fly like birds. The human body as it is built would require considerable genetic reengineering to be capable of self-sustained flight, yet many of us routinely fly across continents and countries with the same ease as we drive to other cities. Yet

famous scientist in fields related to mechanics, thermodynamics or chemistry dismissed the possibility of powered controlled heavier-than-air machines just over a hundred years ago. So why do we have airplanes, which can transport people as cheaply as cars over long distances?

The simple answer is: predicting the future based on current knowledge is an exercise in delusion, yet many self-appointed "priests" continue to do it. However the real tragedy is that many people believe such "priests" and stop trying. The more complex answer forms the rest of this article.

The first question many ask themselves, especially regarding space exploration, is whether a particular technology is worth pursuing. While this might seem to

the most rational question, it is infact the most irrational. Even a brief reading of human history suggests that people, even the so called "experts" are not capable of predicting the future. The internet is littered with sites that collect the referenced quotes of famous "scientists" who were absolutely incapable of seeing the future in their own fields.

Innovations such as electronic computers, programming languages, computer networks, integrated circuits, airplanes, liquid fuelled rockets, jet engines, nuclear reactors, nuclear weapons, antibiotics were once dismissed as fantasies by "experts" in that field. I would gladly provide a list of such quotations on demand, with proper references. The take home message of this paragraph is: Scientists and experts, often credited with great discoveries, are incompetent in predicting the future and hence should not be relied upon for such predictions. Reading the entrails of sacrificed animals is a better idea for predicting the future, because the animal can be used to make a delicious dinner after the ritual is over.

The next category of futurists that need to be debunked are businessmen, espe-



# CONCEPTUAL BARRIERS TO SPACE EXPLORATION

cially those that call themselves "savvy". Steve Jobs demonstrated the original Apple computer to about 100 "tech savvy" businessmen before he got one backer. Think about it, almost 99% of savvy businessmen in 1970 Silicon Valley thought that personal computers were a dead end. Ever wonder why the IBM PC had open source hardware? Because they wanted a cheap product, as the whole personal PC concept was supposed to be a passing fad. How did it work out? Ironically the decision to open source hardware led to the ascendancy of Intel and Microsoft. The iPhone was also dismissed as a fad by Microsoft and many other companies, but who is laughing now?

Are you aware that almost every innovative class of drugs came about from accidents, chance observations, speculations and sheer dumb luck? I can give you examples in other areas, but that is not the focus of this article. The message here is: Businessmen are also not good at predicting the future, to put it mildly.

**Since there is no way** to predict future trends and developments, there is no point in trying to restrict activity in any area as long as the basic needs of a

"I should note that every technology we have developed has exceeded the wildest dreams of its pioneers. We give bankers trillions of dollars to make up for their bad decisions and stupidity. What benefits have their financial innovation provided us?"

population are met. We can quibble about how much funding is desirable, but as long as an idea is reasonable and testable it needs to be funded. I should note that every technology we have developed has exceeded the wildest dreams of its pioneers. We give bankers trillions of dollars to make up for their bad decisions and stupidity. What benefits have their financial innovation provided us?

The next question about developing aerospace technology concerns the manner in which it is funded. The conventional funding model until now has been based on government programs with a few large private subcontractors. It is this model of funding that has damaged space exploration more than any other single factor. Let me explain.

Earlier in this article I talked about the development of airplanes into a technically viable and commercially usable technology. The history of airplane development offers many lessons for space exploration. They are:

1. **Government funded** established experts cannot build innovative technology. Many much better funded groups lost the airplane race to the Wright brothers; because they believed that they, "understood the problem". You see, the Wright brothers succeeded because they accepted that they had no clue about how to build an airplane. Once they accepted this fact, it was much easier to revisit all the previous assumptions and make corrections and develop what was not available.

"Scientists and experts, often credited with great discoveries, are incompetent in predicting the future and hence should not be relied upon for such predictions. Reading the entrails of sacrificed animals is a better idea for predicting the future, because the animal can be used to make a delicious dinner after the ritual is over."

**2. Small groups** can build innovative technology much better than large bureaucratically controlled groups. Whether it was airplanes, integrated circuits, operating systems, CPUs, new drugs, nuclear fission or new chemical processes, the story is the same. They were all discovered or created by small groups of people, usually less than 40, who worked without bureaucratic oversight and threats of job loss. Innovation does not scale, and big institutes are more about social climbing and false advertising than innovation.

Once an innovation has been created, it can be improved by larger groups. But innovation, per se, requires small groups without oversight and threats of job loss. They can be part of big companies or institutes, but autonomy is a must. MBAs and Corporate lawyers have done more damage to this system than even the worst bureaucrat could. The Russian space program could not exist under MBAs and Lawyers, even though it could survive communism.

**3. There is no way to predict** which designs will work or lend themselves to development, unless they are built and tested. The field of aerospace design provides many examples of designs that looked good on paper, or were initially seen as the future only to be superseded by designs that were much poorer to start with.

**4. Commercialization** and private interest is necessary to make any new technology popular. While I prefer the bureaucrats to run power grids and sewage systems (established and essential technology), they are totally out of their element when dealing with true innovations. If anything, displaying motivation and innovation is the surest way to be black-listed by bureaucrats.

Public money funded programs are also sensitive to political considerations, petty behavior and popular sentiment. Since most human beings do not like change and are afraid of new things, funding innovation with public money in a transparent manner is a very bad idea. It is however possible to fund innovation through non-transparent programs as long as it is given to small autonomous groups with minimal oversight. US military funded programs funded in that manner have given the world many innovations in fields as diverse as electronics and new antibiotics.

**5. Shit happens.** All technologies have teething problems: commercial airplanes are very safe today because previous accidents allowed us to build better planes. If we had stopped at the beginning of airplane development because of high accident rates, we would never have developed better planes. It is about evolution but many people, especially women, do not get it. If these nutters

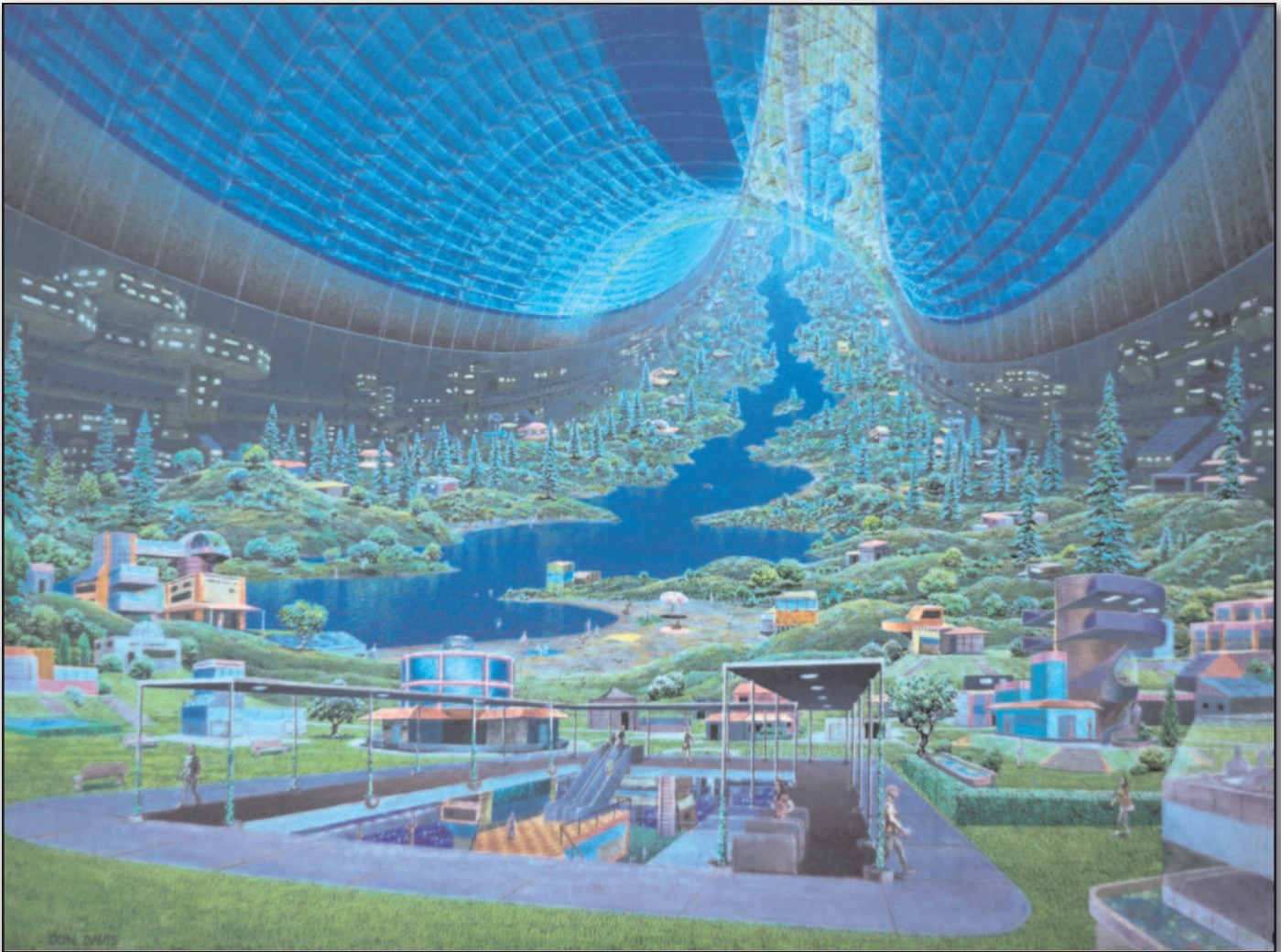
had been powerful in previous eras, we would never have created vaccines, drugs, engineering projects, electrical grids, cars, trains, airplanes – you know, pretty much anything and everything.

The increase in environmentalism and socially conscious activism, combined with the precautionary principle, are major new hurdles to any space program for the simple reason that chemical rockets have physical limitations. The next generation of space technology will have to be powered by rockets and power sources that are not chemical in nature. Either that or we develop warp engines that run on Earth-worship.

**Having said that,** there are three technologies that need to be perfected for any large scale human or unmanned space program.

**A] Low Cost, Dependable Launchers:** This is the area in which the private sector has the most immediate and important role. Spaceflight is expensive because there is a lot of corruption, overcharging and patronage in government run space programs. Far too often, the emphasis is on cool technology rather than reliability and cost. Compare the Soyuz or Proton rocket launchers with the Delta-2 or Japanese launchers. The Russian launchers are just far more cheaper, reliable and rugged inspite of being based on much older technology.





Donald Davis

*The author is a young scientist in the area of drug discovery, but has many other interests in areas like astronomy, space exploration, technology in general and human behavior. He plays the devil's advocate on many controversial issues at his blog (<http://dissention.wordpress.com/>).*

We require even cheaper and more reliable dumb disposable launchers.

**B] Space Based Nuclear Reactors:** Once again the technology has been around since the 1970's, but has not been developed beyond a few dozen Russian satellites. We could certainly build much better and powerful reactors than the last generation. If we have to power ion engines or any significant electronics beyond the orbit of Mars, nuclear energy is

almost unavoidable, but try telling that to environmentalists.

**C] Better Engines:** We require two kinds of new engines, namely: very high specific thrust (over 10 000 isp) and low power (up to 5 000 N), and high specific thrust (over 2 000 isp) but very high power (over a million N). The first technology exists as VASIMIR, but requires much more work and testing. The second type of engines have never been made, but could

be developed. You must have guessed that the second type of engines involve some form of a gas core nuclear reactor, and are politically problematic.

In any case, what I am suggesting in this article is fairly conservative and easily doable. I have read and studied the viability of many more ideas that are feasible but require development. I do not believe that such development is possible in the current system with its popular attitudes.

on the

# awesome meaninglessness

By COLIN WRIGHT

of life

## The Big Picture

Your country is a big place. Outside of that, your continent, your hemisphere and your planet are huge. There are so many people milling around on Earth that trying to shake hands with them all would take over 40 years (if you have a quick handshake, don't count the people born in between now and then and don't sleep, eat or do anything but shake hands during that time) and trying to connect with then on any level, much less understand their point of view or personal conflicts, regrets and accomplishments is completely out of the picture.

But inter-human relationships really don't matter in the grand scheme of things, because Earth is just a tiny planet in a great big solar system.

Beyond OUR solar system, there are untold others, and beyond that, outside of our galaxy, are a perhaps infinite number of other galaxies with an equal or greater number of solar systems and stars and asteroid belts and maybe even people whose lives are just as meaningless as ours.

'What we do in our lifetime doesn't matter. As soon as we're gone, so is our meaning to anything beyond our own minds, and even the best of us only leave a legacy that lasts – at most – a few thousand years (and by then the message can be hopelessly muddled beyond recognition).

Our minds, our hopes, our dreams, they're all the result of electricity and chemicals pulsing through the biological computer of our brains. There is no greater purpose, just animalistic drive that manifests as the need to reproduce and pass on our genetic code and philosophical memes.

## Why This Is Awesome

This is all great news. Really.

Our purposelessness, the property that makes us NOT special in the Universe is the very thing that sets us free!

Accepting your own purposelessness – that you don't have a destiny or a role to play in the grander-scheme of things – allows you to potentially do just that. If

you walk the line and do as you're told, nothing more will come of it because EVERYONE is walking the line and doing as they're told. If change was going to happen, it would have. There isn't room in the annals of history for everyone.

Instead, we should all wake up each morning and say "Today I'm going to kick some ass; not because I'm told I should, not because it will get me into heaven or make me more patriotic or because it's the right thing to do, but because I CAN, and doing so will allow me to lead a better life while I have one, and that's an excellent goal."

Coming to terms with your lack of purpose can help you realize your REAL purpose: to live a good life according to your own standards and, if you enjoy it and there's energy left over, to help others do the same.

*Colin blogs about his meaningless life at [exilelifestyle.com](http://exilelifestyle.com)*



So you want my lifestyle:

# Libertarian babe in Sweden

By HANNA WAGENIUS

A recent poll showed that 6 in 10 Swedes considered themselves liberals. This could probably be explained by the fact that 50 % of them couldn't give an answer when asked what liberalism was, as the author and debater Johan Norberg put it. The average Swede stares at you as if you've just said you enjoy kittens for Sunday breakfast if you simply happen to admit that you don't think anyone has the right to use force against another human being. Isn't it amazing? Sometimes life truly is like a George Orwell novel. Force is freedom, as we all know.

I myself have, by a social democratic youth magazine, been chosen as this year's political hack – just because I've been suggesting that the ban on buying sex might not be the best of ideas, that people themselves should have the full right to decide why they are having sex. It is not just an incorrect use of the term, it should just as well not be that a controversial statement. (Even though I still have not even convinced my own party on that second note.)

However, it has proved to be so. In this country, the State's power to regulate almost every aspect of the citizens' lives is taken for granted. Libertarianism is not even a known term, and "liberal" is just as washed out here as it is in America. It is served as a main course at every political event, preferably with "social" put right in front of it. While the liberals in

the US seem to at least have some respect for social freedom – even though the division is impossible – the Swedish social liberals have abandoned all principles for a grotesque wish of doing "good" for everyone and saving them from themselves. I was once at a seminar where the manager of Sweden's biggest liberal editorial page himself first stated that one either was liberal or not, and thereafter explained that the difference between him – a self proclaimed liberal – and a socialist was 10 percent units in taxes.

Another example of sheer stupidity is a statement made by a leftwing youth association leader – she, Ida Gabrielsson, claims it to be too easy to become rich in Sweden. At the same time, she thinks that many small companies in a country is a sign of poverty, and that big companies is the future. Quite interesting opinions from someone engaged in a party that only in 1991 stopped calling themselves communists.

I'm sorry, but as a libertarian I have no real interest in making it easier for companies – I just happen to think that no one should be given neither advantages nor disadvantages by the State. Right now everyone, especially the companies, are given disadvantages, and it so happens to put the whole country in a disadvantageous position in the globalized world.

It is amazing, however, to see how easily fooled most voters must be. Promises of new jobs and great investments are made by all leading politicians and no one seems to even reflect over the fact that none of them even has been close to having a career in the financial business.

Our socialistic green party even proclaimed that the State should buy a car factory that had not been profitable more than two years out of twenty – and, mind you, these years were not 2007 and 2008 – as it would be a good investment. As they also wish to limit the citizens' driving, I'm sure it would be. Of course, it could also not be a result of political populism, but simply what follows if you allow socialists to regulate the school system.

The Swedish people are not even allowed to decide which way to save up for their pension, as I experienced a few years ago. I called up the authorities and explained that I'd like to invest the money they'd been claiming of my salary in a single company. "But that's your pension money!" exclaimed the person on the other end of the line.

Well, exactly. People who do not make it as investors should not limit my right to do as I wish with it.

Hanna blogs at

<http://missbesserwisser.blogspot.com/>

# How to Live

text BENERSON LITTLE

**At some point** in most of our lives, usually early and most often through book, film, or advertising, we become acquainted with the pirate. Not the real one, of course, at least not usually, although a fair number of mariners today have unfortunately made piratical acquaintance in the Indian Ocean, Indonesian waters, or the Gulf of Guinea. Rather, it's the pirate's image we've met, especially that of the "Golden Age" salt water thief who roamed the Americas and beyond in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries — an amalgam of truth, fiction, and even fantasy that borders on caricature, if indeed the image has not completely crossed the line.

And the image is an alluring one, and why shouldn't it be? Pirates lived as princes, even if only in a small way, upon the sea. They were their own masters, they chose how to live and who would lead them, and spurned the mundane world. They had their own manner of colorful speech and their dress was often just as colorful. Many lived simply for the moment, refusing to be caught up in work they equated as little more than drudgery or even slavery. They deliberately, consciously chose to live marginal lives, hoping to seize a single moment that might set them up for life, providing, of course, they didn't squander their newfound wealth soon after in taverns, brothels, and gaming houses,

which most did. For many, the lifestyle was probably as alluring as the possibility of the great wealth — often just out of grasp - that might be had from it. In sum, pirates had panache.



And what sort of persons were these men, and sometimes women as well, who took to the sea to prey upon ships and towns, who refused to live as most did, honestly or otherwise? Foremost, they were those who by temperament or circumstance were unsuited to the lubber's life. As has been noted for millennia, some were needy, some greedy, some simply in need of adventure. In most cases they took up their trade voluntarily, more or less as rebels. Only in the early eighteenth century, with the rise of pirates like Blackbeard, Bartholomew Roberts, and Edward Low, did we see pirates sometimes force free men to serve with them.

Pirates were not political rebels, however, no matter how much a few of them re-

portedly boasted about their political leanings. To take to the sea is in itself an act of rebellion. Indeed, one must be somewhat crazed, if only just a bit, to go to sea for any reason other than recreation. The sea is deadly, and was even more so in the age of the pirate under sail. And not only could the sea kill the adventurers who rode its billows from crest to trough and back again, but so could many of those others who sailed upon it. Death was always near. Living conditions were little better, and could also kill, albeit more slowly. Quarters were cramped, cleanliness was seldom to be had, the food was bad as soon as all of the fresh provisions had been eaten, and boredom was relieved only by storm or battle. Doubtless only rum and the lure of plunder kept pirates at their dangerous trade.

**But bad food** and death's nearness are mere quibbles. Arguably, bad food makes good food taste even better, and, quite factually, death is always lurking near, whether we want to admit this or not. In sum, it seems the pirate's life was all in all not a bad one, and some might call it a great one, composed as it was of independence, stoic suffering leavened with gallows humor, and the possibility of great riches, providing one were willing to risk his or her skin intelligently. But there were negatives to the pirate's life, more than the mere deadly hazards of the sea.



# Like a Pirate

## — Without the Murder and Mayhem

### *Reality Intrudes: the Downsides of Piracy*

But before we look at what the pirate can teach us about living in today's world, we need to quickly examine the pirate's life in its entirety, going beyond the mere image promoted by popular novelists, Hollywood, and rum advertisers. The fact is, pirates were thieves, whatever their motivation and excuse. And sea thieves were usually hanged — or otherwise deprived of their lives — when captured. Large scale theft has a way of galvanizing people against thieves, and pirates were no exception. Unless allied in some way with a government, even a local one, pirates usually didn't last long. They needed places to sell their goods, repair their vessels, and recreate, often via substantial debauchery. Lacking this, all too often the phrase "A merry life and a short one!" was not just mere boasting, but reality.

Some commentators have referred to pirates as parasites, in that they created nothing and lived instead off the fruits of others' labor. And indeed, in many ways this is true, although it can also be argued that they were often service providers of a sort, working either directly for competing governments, or at their behest, hindering foreign trade and redistributing wealth. Pirates were also deep into the slave trade, trafficking in humans because it

"Ultimately, in choosing the path of the pirate, you are choosing the path of rebellion, a path most people are too frightened to take. But in doing so, you will free yourself of the social constraints that confine ideas, that turn men and women into sheep, that ultimately prevent success."

was profitable. As bad or worse, many were cruel to excess, torturing captives not only for information about riches or defenses, but also out of sheer enjoyment.

But you don't have to be a thief, parasite, slaver, or sociopath to live like a pirate, notwithstanding that the pirate's principal purpose was theft on or near the sea by force of arms. You need only adopt the pirate virtues, and there were in fact many of them. We can learn something from these piratical positives, just as we can from the negatives. At their finest, pirates had much to admire.

### *The Pirate Virtues*

Do not make the mistake of thinking that pirates were communal per se, or that they all lived in harmony in utopian sea roving communities. They were not and

did not. They were people just like many of us, who chose to live on the margins of common society and beyond, and banded together for a common purpose. Democracy was their form of government, for, although it has drawbacks at times, it was and is the best form of government among those who consider themselves as equals, as pirates did. Each crewmember had an equal vote in all significant decisions, including the choice of leader and articles, or rules. Occasionally, and perhaps even routinely, captains had two votes out of respect for their position. Yet these same captains could be deposed by a vote of their crew at any time. Captains knew that success was the key to remaining in office.

Pirates also took care of their own, for this was the best way to ensure that

people would work together and support each other. In the pirate's hazardous free-ranging world, the guarantee of health care and disability compensation was a necessary inducement. Doctors were signed aboard pirate vessels whenever possible. Their medicine chest was paid for out of the common fund, before any distribution of plunder among the crew, and the doctor's services were free. Similarly, disability compensation was deducted first from the plunder, before any other division was made. A man who lost a leg might be paid five hundred pieces-of-eight, for example. If the plunder was insufficient to cover the disability compensation owed, the pirates would continue their voyage until the plunder was sufficient.

Pirates balanced their democracy and social sense with a degree of equality in regard to the distribution of plunder. Each pirate had an equal share in the profits. The captain had two shares, occasionally more, and the quartermaster one and half, although this too sometimes varied. Plunder was not kept communally, other than that required to pay for the medicine chest, disability compensation, and vessel maintenance and stores. Plunder was distributed as soon as possible, and each pirate did as he or she pleased with his or her share. Many gambled excessively, and some profited well by this. Some even invested their money and retired wealthy, blending into conventional society. Most, though, played as hard as they worked and fought, and were soon at sea again, having little more than the shirts on their backs and the arms they bore.

**Pirates were also** fiercely independent, yet had a strong ability to subordinate their egos to support the greater cause – which in turn supported them.

"To emulate the pirate, you must not be timid. Indeed, you must be able to go beyond mere rational risk taking: you must be able to seize the moment, to act boldly, even courageously, for this is often the key to victory. Nothing is guaranteed, especially success, but success more often favors the bold. So be bold – but not stupid!"

They understood that working together in an organized manner made piracy easier. A pirate chose to be a pirate, just as he could choose to walk away whenever he pleased. Kept in check, this almost paradoxical balance of extremes – of independence and teamwork – served the pirate well. Men who knew the pirates well often commented that these men considered themselves all as leaders or princes of a sort.

**However,** it was the virtues they displayed in crisis that may be their best and most useful legacy. Foremost, before a battle or other crisis was at hand, pirates were prepared. They planned thoroughly, although they knew that plans often had to be adapted. In other words, they were flexible. Further, they were experts at gathering intelligence. They knew everything possible not only about their prey, but about their environment. They knew where good water was to be had, and likewise provisions and places to careen and repair. In line with this, they were economical. They found ways to make their limited resources work for them. If all a pirate

captain had was a canoe and a dozen or two men, he looked for the best way to use what little he had, for example by attacking a ship at anchor at night while its crew slept.

**In a similar** economic fashion, they avoided undertaking unprofitable ventures. Better to run away and fight another day, although when cornered they generally fought well and courageously. But pirates didn't succeed by being rash, except under extraordinary circumstances – in other words, when there was no other option. Nonetheless, they knew that their business was risk-taking, even while doing everything they could to minimize risks, including by having an escape route. Venturing to sea was risky, as was chasing any vessel at sea, for all but the smallest might turn out to be a man-of-war, and even the smallest might put up a fight. The intelligence collection, the black flag, the warning shot, and fierce reputation were all means of reducing the chances of something going awry, but piracy was never a sure thing. But then, neither is life in general.



Last, pirates understood the value of "irrational audacity", as an Athenian admiral termed it twenty-five hundred years ago. They knew that it was vital to do the unexpected, and just as vital to expect the unexpected. Ultimately, they combined cunning with a dash of reckless courage.

### *Making Pirate Virtues Work for You*

Foremost, you must understand the cardinal rule: *take risks, but don't be stupid*. As this rule has two interdependent parts, we should examine each in turn. First is the recognition that you must take risks, and accept all that goes with this, including failure. Pirates did not set out to fail, nor should you. Nonetheless, like them, you will fail at times. In the pirate's mind, failure was obviously to be avoided, yet a single great success could make up for a dozen defeats. Second, while recognizing that risk taking and its often attendant failure are a necessary part of living like a pirate, there's no reason to take unnecessary risks. You should do all you can to minimize hazards, for this lets you focus your attention on the remaining risks, not to mention on the goal ahead. Remember, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

**Not to be forgotten** is the pinnacle of risk taking: daring. To emulate the pirate, you must not be timid. Indeed, you must be able to go beyond mere rational risk taking: you must be able to seize the moment, to act boldly, even courageously, for this is often the key to victory. Nothing is guaranteed, especially success, but success more often favors the bold. So be bold – but not stupid!

Similarly, like the pirate you must not fear to venture into unknown territory,

nor into abandoned or hazardous territory. Again, it's not only about risk taking, but also about maximizing your opportunity. Piracy had two sides to it, one planned, the other opportunistic, and they worked well together. A planned venture often led to unplanned opportunities, just as unplanned opportunities often led to planned ventures, especially in the case of intelligence gained from vessels captured.

Learn all you can about your venture, plan as best you can, always be ready to adapt, do your best to provoke new opportunities, and if necessary, be prepared to run away from an unprofitable venture, or better yet, find a way to turn the tables and make it work for you in the end.



At the level of foundation, you should establish a base of operations out of the mainstream, yet one that is still connected to it. In other words, don't launch yourself entirely "off the grid", cutting all ties with the "establishment", for here is where you can sell your wares most profitably, so to speak. Further, if you go

too far afield, how will you gather information? Physical contact with people is just as vital to success as is digging through the Internet. Pirates who set up their own largely independent bases were soon attacked and destroyed, or their bases collapsed due to their isolation. Some pirates did live for many years in small independent communities on the far margins of the Spanish Main and beyond, but only occasionally did they venture into actual piracy. One need not sever all ties with the common herd in order to achieve independence.

**Last, be willing to work** with others, but never surrender your independent spirit. More than anything else, this independence will be your greatest virtue, and is what will set you apart from the mainstream, just as it did the pirate. When we think of pirates we may see their plundering, swaggering, and debauching in our mind's eye, but if we look closely we'll recognize that it is their independence that appeals to us most. They threw off the shackles that hobble much of society, and accepted the consequences, good and bad, that went with this bold act. Ultimately, in choosing the path of the pirate, you are choosing the path of rebellion, a path most people are too frightened to take. But in doing so, you will free yourself of the social constraints that confine ideas, that turn men and women into sheep, that ultimately prevent success. As buccaneer-surgeon Alexandre Exquemelin pointed out, it won't be as easy as picking pears from a tree. But the reward – if nothing more than independence – is worth the effort.

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# The Myth of Your Balancing Work,

By KURT WIEGEL

**We owe a lot to Bill Shatner.** After all — he was Kirk and who can forget the dramatic **masterpiece** that was T.J. Hooker. For me, most of his emotional body of work can be summarized with the charming 1987 SNL sketch "Get a Life" when he uttered the immortal words, "move out of your mother's basement." These sequences have been quoted to me more than any other television quip — always derisively and often after I just out-facted a friend on some obscure piece of Star Trek or Star Wars lore that they thought they knew. (\*ring ring\* Hello? Oh it's the Pot for you — he says you're black?) The stereotype, however, stands. Those of us existing on the supposed fringes of "normality," preferring Babylon 5 or Krod Mandoon (may God help us) to The Apprentice or Homicide: Life on the Street or Law and Order: Criminal Intent face mockery at worst, and odd looks and condescension at best. Not 'till the advent of the PS2 and X-Box with Madden, MLB and Halo did computer/console gaming become mainstream and "cool." Those of us role-players are still waiting for the acceptance nod for our hobby — although Wil Wheaton and Vin Diesel are trying by God. Thanks, Wesley and Riddick! And always it hangs there — Shatner's time-tested jab about moving out of your mother's basement.

"Yes, Mighty Cthulhu — you are still my favorite"

I've been a victim of "game shame" for most of my life. I've kept the roleplaying hobby secret — afraid of the scorn ("Oh, I used to play, now I've grown out of it") or awkward explanations ("Roleplaying? Like escaped convict/warden's daughter stuff?"). It's only recently that I've been (inter)nationally outed as a gamer. It's taken a while to get used to but it's been a wild, wonderful ride. "Hi. I'm Kurt, and I'm a Gamer..."

**But now,** a lot of us are older. We're married, have kids and "real jobs." Gaming is harder as we age. Not enough time for the design of long and elaborate dungeons, deathtraps and despots to overthrow. The time we used to spend calculating the best you could get out of "Treasure Type H" is now dedicated to tax returns and piano recitals. But still we stay with it, attached to this activity painfully yet inextricably.

I am a blessed man. I have a great career, a wonderful family and an incredibly supportive and generous wife. I've Forrest Gumped my way into Game Geeks (I review Role Playing games — first on Public Access and now on YouTube), and I also am honored to have had some of the best games group I've ever encountered in the past six years. I've somehow managed to get all of these things in a state of careful, precarious balance in my life. So, let's talk about how this has worked, and we'll pay close attention to gaming in particular. Otherwise this would be an article on parenting or career building, and that's not what the title says.

And what an odd hobby gaming is — we sit around in a room, pretending to be someone else with a small crowd of other people also pretending to be someone else. Paper, pencils and the funny-shaped dice are a must. There are often chips of some kind involved (my favorites are kettle cooked chips or Funyons) and soda (Mountain Dew is a popular choice.)

**I'm an aging gamer now** — 38 years old ("The Gamer in Winter?"), and while I still sit in a room (in MY basement, by golly) pretending etc. etc, the chips have been replaced with carrots and grapes and the soda is a diet root beer. Caffeine



# Mother's Basement: Family and Gaming

after about 8pm means I'm up all night, which is hard on the next day of work. Ah for the days of college when we could play 'till midnight or later (different-gender visitation ended then – for more information on this, see the next article "The myth of the woman gamer") and blow off the 8am sociology class the next day. But no, sadly, now I'm teaching the 8 am class (organic chemistry, not sociology) and a lot of people frown on faculty missing class because Terchil the Necromancer so desperately needed stomped the night before.

So no – very late gaming doesn't work on the job front. Nor does it work well for family some nights. My kids' bedrooms are directly over my gaming room, and after one particularly rousing evening of horror gaming, my poor children's dreams were filled with images of eldritch, unnamable horrors and animate corpses filleted with panes of sharp glass. It made for a very awkward discussion with their day care provider the next morning.

Approaching my 40s with a mild mix of trepidation and excitement, there a lot of balls to keep in the air. Family, work, the

hobby, and may Odin's Mighty Ravens help you if another interest (such as theater) crops up. As the kids get older it does get easier – you can spend a few extra minutes reading the core rulebook once they've learned to use the potty, but before you know it here comes dance, soccer, and school programs to eat up your evenings.

So how do we do it? How do we keep an active gaming group, a healthy, sane family and a fulfilling career without resorting to illegal stimulants or advanced cloning technology? Well, it's not easy. But it is doable, with care, work and a lot of support.

**I started gaming** 31 years ago. I was in second grade, and had seen some of the older kids playing this weird board game that wasn't a board game for a few weeks at indoor recess. I finally managed to get a seat at the table and

was handed a "First Level Thief." Whatever that was. For those of you playing along at home, it was one of the original D&D games, "The Keep on the Borderlands." The Dungeon Master (which to my seven-year old ears sounded naughty, but I went with it) skipped over all of the stuff at the keep itself and put us directly into the action at the dreaded Caves of Chaos (Dunh Dunh DUNH!!) My poor lonely thief (he never earned a name, a description or anything notable other than a fellow player saying "Dude – 2 hit points – that sucks" went in first (like I knew any better) and naturally encountered a pit trap and fell to his doom.

Literally – I fell and died in the pit. Not understanding it really, I was upset. The other characters bravely soldiered on without me – after taking my dagger, iron rations, rope and the 10 foot pole. Nameless the Thief was mourned by no one but me, and the game marched on.

I kept thinking about the game. What did *Keep* and *Chaos* mean? How did I fall in a pit? What the hell was a pit, anyway? Other



than the thing at the center of a peach? Was I a good thief? I mean, moral as opposed to good at my job (remember the pit? Clearly being good at his job wasn't in the cards.) How did one become a thief, anyway? I mean professionally? I once took a candy bar from the grocery store. Did that make *me* a thief? Granted, my mother found it in the parking lot and made me take it back in. I cried the whole time so I imagine I was a bad thief. Not unlike Nameless. I guess I'm a method roleplayer.

I also clearly remembered the phrase "Magic Missile." This was the late 1970s and the Cold War was in full swing, so "missile" had a markedly different connotation. Visions of enchanted MXs danced through my head. I begged and begged my parents for the game for Christmas that year like it was an Elmo. Mind you, this incident predated Elmo by about seven years. My parents, being the generous souls they are got me the boxed set, along with the funny blue dice. I still have most of those dice. I was off and running. I pleaded with my parents to play with me. To their credit, they did once. It flopped. Epically. This showed me that (1) being a Dungeon Master (tee hee) was hard work and (2) my parents REALLY didn't like playing. I did remember to throw a pit trap at them, and my father cast magic missile once.

"So how do we do it? How do we keep an active gaming group, a healthy, sane family and a fulfilling career without resorting to illegal stimulants or advanced cloning technology? Well, it's not easy. But it is doable, with care, work and a lot of support."

Other D&D gifts followed, along with Star Frontiers and Top Secret. Blink Dogs and Displacer beasts on the school bus. The Rose Estes Endless Quest Dungeons and Dragons Books filled in the gap when my dependable players in indoor recess turned to football and the Steelers over wood elves and sleep spells. I had nearly fallen out of it when I discovered quite by accident *The Soulforge* – a more advanced choose your own adventure novel. I was thus introduced to Raistlin, Dragonlance and I was back again.

College was a prime time for me, and while I didn't understand what Greyhawk or the Forgotten Realms were (I was a Krynn man, by Paladine), I met Call of Cthulhu my sophomore year and started

a dark, torrid affair that continues to this day. College turned from one self-destructive dysfunctional group to another, and graduate school approached. During grad school, marriage. After, my first teaching job and kids. At almost every one of these milestones, I swore I was going to quit. I was getting too old and had too much "real life" to worry about and not enough time to run a game. Each of these lasted about three to four months and I was right back in. Early on in my gaming days, not long after the unnamed thief and the pit trap, my dad told me that D&D gets into your mind and it won't let go. Like most things, I never really realized how right he was.

When I was in college, a group I was a part of had us do a "where do you want



to be in ten years.” I thought about it for a few minutes, and I wrote I wanted to be married, have some kids and a dog, be a college professor somewhere in the Midwest and still be gaming. The last one garnered me some odd looks to be sure. I found that paper a few years ago, and I realized that I am lucky enough to have achieved everything I wanted in my life. That thought alone gives me pause, and leads me to the central idea: how has this worked, and how DO we keep all of this going?

I can tell you how I’ve done it. This may not be a sure-fire panacea of role-playing Nirvana in the modern world but it worked for me. Perhaps my life and choices can be used as an example to others (for good or bad).

**Rule 1:** Communicate with your spouse. I cannot emphasize this one enough. Four out of five psychologists and councilors will tell you that the key to any relationship is talking to and being honest with each other. If you’re a life-long gamer and married/seriously committed, then that person should understand that gaming is a part of you. Hopefully they won’t try to change you or divert you out of that path. Be willing and able to compromise with your spouse on game night(s). Maybe they can have a night out with their friends (movie, dinner/drinks, spa day) while you’re slaying the dragon. If you happen

to have a spouse who is also a gamer, then you two crazy kids can play nice together without killing each other. I have known a few couples that have had some troubles when one spouse chafes at the GM stylings of the other. If this is a problem let someone else run or try to work past it. Admittedly this becomes more difficult when kids enter your life. Then you might need to take turns gaming, or wait until the baby is a few months old before breaking out the dice bag again and be willing to work with your spouse for nights up with the baby, feedings and changings.



**Rule 2:** Prioritize. Seems simple enough, but it’s one I still have trouble wrestling with. My life’s priorities go like this: Family, Career, Gaming. **In that order.** In the Firefly episode “The Train Job,” Mal Reynolds bluntly states that “we work before we play.” It’s that way

in life too. As a spouse and potentially a parent, you need to put your family and their well being first. No real jokes here – it’s a responsibility. Be willing to reschedule game night around overtime, anniversaries, birthdays etc.

OK, I need to admit to not drinking my own Kool-Aide on this one. Game Night for me is nearly sacrosanct. Several of my kid’s birthdays have been celebrated with three or four other guys around the table singing while they blew out the candles. Interesting side note – several of my players have been EXCELLENT singers. So not only did my daughters get four part harmonies, but they felt a bit like rock stars, having the stars of the local theater shows over for their birthdays.

**Rule 3:** Chose your group carefully. I have met some of the most interesting, exciting and fun people while gaming. I’ve also met some very antisocial, ill-mannered and, yes, dangerous people. Since we play at my house, I am very, very picky about who I let in. A player once accused me of being difficult and wanting to “audition” new players. I replied that it was more of a background check than an audition (although an occasional monologue is required). I don’t want to introduce a dangerous element into my house, around my family. Depending on recommendations or personal experience is crucial to me.

Keeping the hobby safer has caused less stress on my family as a whole. Don't get me started about the guy who came to game once, answering a posting at a game store, wearing throwing knives because it "completed the look."

Along with the safety issue, there's also a compatibility factor. Personally I tend towards rules light, narrative focused games with lots of role-playing (see #4 below for the whys). If someone wants a completely simulationist experience, then we're not a good fit. The chance that either of us has the time to adapt or shoehorn to each other's demands are slim. Rather than waste time and frustrate each other, I'm more likely to point him to another group I know that would more likely fit his needs.

Interestingly, Age plays a lesser role in this than I would have thought ten years ago. My current group has a range of 19 to 38 years. I've never considered the youngest member of the group to be problematic – it's all about fit and needs. The group also needs to understand when some of the topics we discussed in #2 occur. If you have a group who gets annoyed at occasional cancellations or reschedules, then maybe it's time to have a frank discussion or amicably split and look for other players.

**Rule 4:** Choose your game carefully. This is one that's taken me a long time to get to. I played A LOT of D&D 2nd Edition in college. It wasn't a particularly rules-light game, but then I had several hours to sit and fiddle with a character. If I was running, flip through the Monster Manual and dream up what critters to

throw at them. "Rakshasa? Cool. Couatl? Awesome. Amethyst (!) dragon? Rockin'!" Any semblance of plot, sanity or cohesion? Screw it, hand me another Dew!

I'm mainly a GM – it's how I've been able to keep gaming over the years since it's a task for which few other gamers I've encountered have been willing to spend their time in the barrel. Control issues you say? Maybe, but it's kept my d20 rolling for three decades. Right now, I like/want/FRICKIN' NEED games that are very low drag, easy to prep and execute, and have less bookkeeping than Bernie Madoff's tax returns. This is why I've fallen in love with Savage Worlds – it does all of these things and has mass and naval combat built in and one of the best communities for ideas, support and help out there. I'm also a

big fan of CORTEX, Basic Role Playing (yes, Mighty Cthulhu – you are still my favorite), FATE and Unisystem.

I'm a **very, very** lucky man. I've managed, with the help, understanding and encouragement of my wonderful wife, to keep all of this going for quite a while. Growing up, I always assumed my interests in the fantastic and unusual made me... different from everyone else somehow. The first scene with Christopher Mintz-Plasse's character Augie in *Role Models*, acting out a fantasy battle and romance on the roof of a building hit a little close to home. I had always assumed, subconsciously, that if I ever had kids, they would grow up to be, well, *normal*. They'd like sports, date in high school and so on. It was quite a surprise to me when my four year old daughter came home very upset because her





"My kids' bedrooms are directly over my gaming room, and after one particularly rousing evening of horror gaming, my poor children's dreams were filled with images of eldritch, unnamable horrors and animate corpses filleted with panes of sharp glass. It made for a very awkward discussion with their day care provider the next morning."

friends wouldn't play Doctor Who with her. She had even offered to be the Dalek. My son is a superhero fiend (I've had to play Mr. Freezer to his Batman more times than I can count) and Doctor Who has become a regular family event in my house (except for the ones with those Weeping Angels. Those are just *wrong*...) We've had more lightsaber fights in my yard than I can count. I've come to realize that this is the legacy that I'm leaving my children – that creativity, imagination and loving the storytelling process are as important as keeping score with the Packers. It's humbling and scary to realize what we leave our children.

**This article was written** in three sections. As I began it one rainy evening, I was sitting on the couch in my living room. My wife was very kindly keeping the puppy off of me so I could write, and my

children were intermittently playing, fighting and repeating the whole process in our basement.

Phase two was written during a lull at work: I was typing madly while my research students were working in the lab around me, occasionally asking questions and peering over my shoulder, wondering what I was up to.

The final part, this epilogue, was written in my back yard on a warm July day in Wisconsin under a shade tree while watching my kids romp in the pool. I won't lie – there was a lot of delay in getting this piece done. Things kept popping up: family vacations, paper writing for work and, simply life kept getting in the way. The very act of writing this, however, has made me revisit my own past and the choices that have led me to this point – sort of like a nerdier *How I Met Your*

*Mother*. Fifteen years ago, when I graduated college, I would have never imagined that I'd STILL be playing, still be gaming, let alone passing it on to my children. And yet here I am. I have an obligation to show them that this isn't something shameful, something to be embarrassed about. It's who I am, and hopefully it's who they'll be. And maybe, someday soon, we can bury the specter of "Get a life" and they'll be playing in their mother's – and father's – basement, and be proud of it.

*Kurt Wiegel is a Professor of Chemistry pretending to be a roleplayer. Or is he a roleplayer pretending to be a Professor of Chemistry? He lives in the Northern Midwest with his wonderfully patient wife, three beautiful children and one slightly insane dog. He's the Host and Creative Director of Game Geeks on YouTube, on the web at <http://gamegeeksrpg.com/>, and the show even has a FaceBook Fan page. He can be reached at [knwiegel@yahoo.com](mailto:knwiegel@yahoo.com).*

# Toward a real life G.E.C.K.: **openecology.org**

text OPENECOLOGY.ORG

**We are Open Ecology:** a network of farmers, engineers, and supporters that are bootstrapping the next evolution — an evolution to radically local production, an evolution to high-quality living, and an evolution to freedom. You might ask how we expect to accomplish these lofty goals — specifically what is our strategy? Our ace in the hole? How do we embrace the Cyberpunk ethos of 'surthrival' analogous to the Open Ecology attribute of 'subsillience'? Hold on tight, here we go.

We are developing the Global Village Construction Set (GVCS) — a set of 40 industrial machines necessary to create an abundant civilization with modern day comforts. This is a bit similar to the G.E.C.K. device if you have played the *Fallout* series of games. The GVCS is like a life-size Lego set, in which motors, parts, and power units interchange freely, providing the building blocks necessary to create resilient communities. Why resilient communities you say? Let's see...

**Most people are** on the verge of understanding what sustainable implies: maintain the current state of affairs by not compromising the future. Simple enough. Regenerative takes it the next step, and this is where people get lost.

”And openness is more than just a process for us, we believe in openness as an ideology of transformation. Imagine the knowledge necessary for advanced civilization available to everyone, not just a limited few; we could then truly evolve to freedom.”

Regenerative is to be sustainable to the point where we are repairing the world — healing the damage, giving back, revitalizing our ecology. It's like sustainability + 1. Interestingly enough, what we are talking about is even further down the road: resiliency. Resiliency is inclusive of the regenerative concept, but includes a level of adaptability. That is, adaptability and certainty in the face of an uncertain world. When we apply these concepts to community, wonderful things happen.

**Our method is** open source. We see open source as a combination of process and ideas, where everything is shared freely in the public domain. Anyone has access. Anyone can change the plans to suit their personal locale and interests. And everyone is encouraged to participate, build, critique, and share.

Thus by open sourcing the entire production life-cycle — from designs and assembly to putting the machine together — we are able to quickly develop solutions. And openness is more than just a process for us, we believe in openness as an ideology of transformation. Imagine the knowledge necessary for advanced civilization available to everyone, not just a limited few; we could then truly evolve to freedom.

Of course, we operate under the understanding that nature provides an abundance: abundance of energy, abundance of resources, and abundance of possibilities to live prosperously. We need not make sacrifices in quality of life to move beyond our destructive industrial systems, nor is it our agenda to perpetuate the prevailing scarcity driven system. Instead we strive to become



producers of our own destiny rather than consumers of its ghostly shell.

The alchemical equation for all this is simple: **Autonomous Communities + Open Source Technology = Ecological Regeneration, Resilience and Freedom.**

**So let's get into** more of the details. The GVCS provides people with technology to do more with less – to live a high-quality life in ways that do not disrupt vital ecological support systems. By utilizing local resources via the use of open source technology we render our current destructive ways obsolete. Additionally, we needn't recreate the wheel; the GVCS is not about generating new technologies, it is about refining and open sourcing existing machines to meet the needs of people and our shared ecology.

As we have said, the key to this is the integration of open source methods – the methods of open, collaborative development that has already been demonstrated with open source software. We are extending this development model to hardware and demonstrating roughly an 8-fold cost reduction of resulting products. A global community of developers helps to produce designs, plans, and prototypes, until high-quality products, with improved performance compared to their industrial counterparts are created at a fraction of the cost.

We are at the initial stages of our experiment. We have 8 prototypes, 1 full product release, and 32 more machines to develop. However, we have already demonstrated that parts, motors, and

even power units may be interchanged between different machines – like a Lego set for real construction – thereby producing an unprecedented level of ecological integration. Plug-and-play modularity and interoperability are paramount leading to all of our products being built to last (lifetime design), easy to service (design-for-disassembly), as well as simplicity by design. Once completed, the GVCS can replicate itself entirely: imagine Lego sets that can build more Lego sets! – no doubt a dream of mine as a child! In this limit, we aim to show that we can even produce aluminum (or other metals) from clay, or silicon from sand on a local level – a matter of Knowledge and Power. Knowledge refers to the open information necessary to conceive the end product, while Power is simply the energy needed to get it done.



Again a proven equation: **Open Knowledge + Abundant Power = Results.**

Anyone could see this to be true. We see it as fact. And we approach this understanding from the point that if we can get the cost of production down by a factor of 8, we can support the processes required for an abundant civilization. The end result is that people are in full control of their productive technology base, truly bringing about the possibility to transcend material scarcity – a foundation for evolving to higher pursuits.

**Our goal is nothing** short of paradigm-shattering. And together we can make it a reality at the cost of scrap metal and proper use of ubiquitous, local resources. The GVCS is applicable anywhere soil, sunshine, and water are found, which is just about everywhere. Unfortunately, we cannot do this alone – nor would we want to. It will take global knowledge and cooperation. We challenge you to join us at Open Ecology – see our results for yourself and share it with others; get involved and critique away, then add to the momentum; if you like what you see then give support by becoming a True Fan. Now that we have shared our vision with you – assuming it resonates within you – it is your obligation to do something – anything. What's truly stopping you? Perhaps nothing at all. We believe the only limit is our imagination and we won't stop until we've empowered the masses. Whatever your beliefs, ideas or talents; we are ready for you. With all our hands and all our brains, we can create a more regenerative and resilient world for all. Let's show the rest of the world what it really means to evolve to freedom!

# What it Means to be

text JIM TAYLOR, PH.D  
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**Disclaimer:** I apologize in advance for using the word badass. I realize that it might offend some people. Unfortunately, I simply couldn't find another word that was equally descriptive of what message I want to communicate. If you find the word objectionable, please focus on the message I am trying to convey rather than the, for some, inappropriateness of the word.

I was recently contacted by a web site based in Sweden that was interested in exploring the meaning of being a badass in modern culture. Not surprisingly, the editor, who described himself as a "fresh faced early 20s-something quasi-curmudgeon," had images on the site of heavily muscled men slaying gigantic and terrifying beasts, you know, your usual iconic badasses these days. Because of my Ph.D. in Psychology and my work with elite athletes (many of whom would be classified as badasses by most people), he asked me if I would like to write a post about what being a badass means to me and, intrigued, I accepted.

I thought a good place to start was to see how badass is typically defined. Not

surprisingly, mainstream and pop-cultural on-line dictionaries viewed the term quite differently. Thefreedictionary.com defined badass as a "mean-tempered or belligerent person." In contrast, wiktionary.com defined it as "A person whose extreme attitudes, behavior or appearance are admirable." I will be relying on the latter, slang use of the word for the purpose of this post.

**I began my musings** by considering how a badass is viewed most commonly in our popular culture and some typical exemplars of badasses these days. A badass seems to be a guy with 'tude, disdain for others, who sees himself as cooler than cool and tougher than tough. He is usually heavily muscled, probably has tattoos, and is likely a big fan of MMA and WWE (because they have big muscles, tats, and are good at beating people to a pulp).

Yes, girls can be badasses too (I use the word girls deliberately because I don't think women can or want to be badasses). A badass girl these days is beautiful (or thinks she is), has big breasts (likely augmented), is tanned

(even in winter) wears stilettos, and is the grown-up version of the mean girls from high school.

When I think about badasses held up for adoration by pop culture, words that come to mind include narcissistic, arrogant, selfish, shallow, condescending, and entitled.

The guys and girls on Jersey Shore, particularly The Situation and JWoww, appear to embody badassness by today's standards. Other widely proclaimed badasses these days include any MMA fighter, 50 Cent (and what just about every rapper aspires to be), many characters portrayed by Angelina Jolie (e.g., Laura Croft: Tomb Raider, Wanted, Mr. & Mrs. Smith; ironically, in real life, AJ seems to fit my criteria for being a real badass; see below), TO, and Ocho Cinco, and Barry Bonds (when he was still playing). What so-called badasses can you come up with?

Like most American males wrapped in the usual masculine insecurities and exposed to role models of badassedness, such as Rambo, the Terminator, and



# A BADASS

John McClane, I too was inspired to badasshood. As a youth, I competed internationally as an alpine ski racer, hurtling down mountains at high speeds. Later in life, I became a second-degree black belt and tournament fighter in karate. Still later in life, perhaps realizing that I couldn't fight my way out of everything, I became a marathon runner and Ironman triathlete, which gave me the option to either fight or flee. But none of these accomplishments made me feel like a badass because, I later figured out, how most of America seem to think about badasses isn't even close to what defines a real badass. It wasn't until I became a father that I finally realized that everything we are told about what it means to be a badass is completely misguided and wrong and I finally understood what it means to be a true badass.

**Badassness isn't about** all of the macho and macha things that are commonly associated with being a badass. It isn't about anything that pop culture says it is because following that crowd (any crowd) goes against everything that real badassness stands for.

A real badass is driven by values such as responsibility, justice, honor, courage, compassion, humility, kindness, integrity, and selflessness, which pretty much disqualifies most every self-proclaimed badass out there.

A badass is someone who does the dirty jobs, the jobs that other people don't want to do, for example, our troops and inner-city teachers. A badass is someone who chooses the difficult road because it is usually the best road. A badass is someone who goes against the grain and bucks the system.

A badass is someone who does what is right not what is easiest or what everyone else is doing. A badass is someone who stands up for the weak and oppressed, speaks the truth, and calls out those who lie, cheat, and steal.

A badass is someone who takes a "hit for the team," meaning puts others' needs ahead of their own, whether a soldier in his platoon, a parent working two jobs to give her children a better life, or a CEO who cares more about his employees than his P & L statement during an economic crisis.

Batman is a badass, not because he is rich, suave, handsome, and has a lot of cool gear, but because he suffered in his life and devoted his life to justice. Iron Man is not a badass because, though he has a lot of the same cool stuff as Batman (and is portrayed by Robert Downey Jr.), he grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth (though he did have father issues) and is a narcissistic show boater who does what he does for his own self-aggrandizement (because he had father issues). Oh, and Clint Eastwood? Total badass on screen and behind the camera.

The guy standing in front of the tanks at Tiananmen Square in 1989 was a badass. Whistleblowers are badasses. My mother who, while dying of cancer, found a way to attend my wedding and died shortly after, was a badass. Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, the most recent recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, was a badass.

Now that we really understand what a badass is, who are some real badasses that you can think of?

# Business mentor chats:

# Derek Sivers

(founder of CDBaby.com)

text A.H.A.

During the summer and early fall of 2010, I was on something of a business/entrepreneurship trip and so did a lot of research in that area. This led me to seek out (and sometimes acquire) the mentorship of Interesting Dudes in that domain, hoping to trade my naïveté and enthusiasm for their sage greybeard experience and such. Derek Sivers struck me as a good candidate, as he was both a) filthy rich and b) highly personally developed, fulfilling two of my life's core ambitions at that particular time.

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**At one point you had \$20 million dollars in the bank account. What did this feel like? Is it true what they say about hedonic adaptation? Do you quickly go back to baseline happiness, even after such an event.**

**You chose to give away most of your money. Do you feel it is important to have limitations in life so that one doesn't feel like one is playing a video game on God Mode?**

The numbers in my bank account haven't felt like money since about 2002, when my bank account passed \$200,000. Since I had paid off all my debts, I didn't even know how to spend

it all, (and didn't try), so it's all just been meaningless numbers after that.

There was an extra sense of security after about \$500,000 when I realized that I could stop working and never earn another dollar as of that minute, and I'd still be fine for a good 10-15 years from that point. That's a wonderful feeling.

But yeah — \$20 million is just ridiculous. That's why I set it up in the charitable trust. Since keeping it for myself would not make any improvement in my life.

To answer your question directly: it's not even that I adapted to it. It really didn't make a single ounce of difference in my life at all.

I already had everything I wanted, and I don't believe in having more than you want.

So — yes — it's important to have limitations in life. Understand what's best for you, and design your life accordingly. Just like too much food is bad for you, so is too much money, too much stuff, too many distractions, etc.

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**What is your opinion of the following**

**people: Tim Ferriss, Steve Pavlina, Eben Pagan, Tony Robbins, Morten Lund.**

Tim Ferriss: I admire his self-experimentation and unconventional approach to consciously designing a life.

Steve Pavlina: I admire his rationality and discipline. He's ingested all the self-help knowledge possible, and come up with a very rational holistic philosophy of how to approach life.

Tony Robbins: Probably my biggest influence. Reading his books since I was 19 really taught me that you can change the way you feel, think, act, or are. There's no such thing as, "I can't help the way I am!" Of course you can. You can change your core beliefs, your emotional responses to things, and anything else.

I don't know anything about Eben Pagan or Morten Lund.

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**How can a band maximize their groupie-harvest potential? Do I would imagine that become world famous is the 100/100 way of maximizing sex appeal by social proof, but what is the 80/20 way?**

For a band to maximize groupie-harvest potential, there's no one answer. The only real answer is to keep trying many



interesting things until something resonates.

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**What are some ways to generate catchy vocal melodies? (Something I am working on figuring out myself at the moment).**

Catchy vocal melodies are shapes you can draw. Don't be a squiggly line. Have a point. Reach for the unexpected note. The mind ignores what's expected.

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**What is your opinion of Scandinavia? Ever thought of moving here?**

I'm half Swedish, so maybe that's why Scandinavia feels like home. Even Iceland. But home can lull you into getting comfortable or even conforming, instead of adventuring and challenging. So for now, I'll seek the opposite.

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**What is your opinion of Linux and hacker culture in general?**

I love Linux/hacker culture the most. We're driven by curiosity and creativity

for its own sake. "Let's see what happens if..." We love the process, not just the goal.

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**Are you familiar with the PUA community?**

Familiar with PUA, yeah. It's meta-considerate. The first level of consideration is giving people what they want. The next (PUA) level is giving them what they didn't even realize they wanted. Fascinating psychology.

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**The 10 best personal development/lifestyle design books?**

10 best \_\_ books: no such thing. Different for each person and at different times in their life. My recent picks are at <http://sivers.org/book> with my 1-10 ratings for each.

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**Would you agree that we live in interesting times? If so, why?**

All times are interesting times to an interested mind.

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**Right now I am in my early 20s. My goal for when I am 30 is that I want to never have to work a day in my life, unless I choose to do so. What is the best method to get me to my goal?**

Find work you love and you'll never work another day in your life. It's all just play. See <http://sivers.org/laboratory>

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**You have said that business is at its core about testing the way the universe works and getting rewarded with money. What an empowering view! Why do you think many have an anti-business sentiment?**

Business gets a bad rep because many are only in it for the money. They've chosen work they hate, have no respect for it, and only use it for a dumb reward. Anyone who's ever encountered these people and these businesses can grow disgusted at the whole world of business. But setting up your own business is like making a world. You can set the rules. You can refuse to deal with these disgusting ones, and finally see business for how fun it can be.

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**Tips for people (ie me & friends) who are just now starting up companies and are totally freshfaced and without lots of capital, experience, connections?**

For starting up companies, my best advice is to be ready to quit quickly. Prepare to try many ideas without getting too attached to any one. If you've been trying one for a while and people aren't psyched about your business, let it go, shut it down, and do something completely different. Even better: don't even start a business unless people are psyched about the idea. If it solves a problem for them, and can be profitable doing it, then give it a try. Until then, keep testing ideas without spending too much time or money on them.

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**What are you working on right now?**

Currently I'm learning Chinese, setting up a new life, and answering your questions.

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**What does a typical day look like for Derek Sivers?**

Wake, study & practice Mandarin, write, read, learn, communicate a bit, exercise a bit, talk with my wife a lot, read more, write more, sleep a bit.

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**My main obsession in life is self improvement and trying to level up my "player character" every day. If I had lots of cash I would no doubt try to speed up this process by hiring the best coaches in the world in all the areas in which I want to excel. Is this something you are taking advantage of?**

Yes, absolutely! We think alike, then. When I started making a lot of money and was questioning what was worth spending it on, about the only answer that really stuck was training/coaching/improvement.

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**You spent 11 years obsessing over how to sell music online. Do you think it is necessary to be a bit OCD to success in business?**

No need to call it OCD. That's a manufactured term to sell drugs. Instead, think

of it as just fascinated with a subject. Whether writing Chinese, flying model airplanes, investing, or learning Haskell, if something fascinates you, then it's the most wonderful use of your time and mind.

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**How does one delegate effectively and manage teams of people?**

Read <http://sivers.org/book/Ultimate-SalesMachine>

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**I instinctively felt a lot of goodwill toward you, from the first time I visited to your website. And this just got reinforced when I listened to interviews. Is this likeability something you have cultivated meticulously (a la Sprezzatura) or do you just have a natural aura of goodwill or something?**

I've spent 24 years working hard on being useful to others. It's a good measure of success, as long as you're making yourself happy first. So when I do or say anything publicly, I try to make sure that's useful to people, too.



Do musicians get laid more?

No.

.....

Best 80s metal band?

Yngwie Malmsteen's first album. :-)

.....

**The net was a lot more underexploited back in the 90s. Is it still possible to succeed at "obvious" ideas like "sell CDs online" today? Or does one need to be extremely clever? What are some areas today where a new CDBaby type site could arise?**

Obvious ideas only seem obvious in hindsight. (Twitter, Mint, webmail, etc.) Many times it's just that most people didn't realize that enough people would want a service to exist. I couldn't believe nobody would sell my CD in 1997. The internet was already the subject of everyone's attention then, so the only reason nobody was doing it before me is because they didn't think there was a market for unknown artists selling just a few CDs. There is definitely a market

now for something that you never expected enough people would be willing to pay for. (Say, for example, paying someone to be you online.)

.....

**A lot of entrepreneurs parrot the meme that "ideas are nothing, execution is everything". I, growing up in the hacker culture, have a more egalitarian view where it is ideas AND execution that matter. What is your take on this? Good reading tip btw: <http://www.iwillteachyoutoberich.com/blog/getting-started-is-bad-advice/>**

I really admire Cal Newport. What he's saying in that link is similar to what I was saying about starting new businesses, above. When taking two years to come

up with one idea, in his example, you can either do that in a private conversation between you and your publisher (in his case), or just by being somewhat public in the world and putting ideas and efforts out there (in my case), to see which people seem to like.

.....

**What is your opinion on transhumanism?**

No opinion.

.....

**Do you think the US is likely to collapse?**

Yes. Expecting death makes you appreciate the present.



# How to get a girlfriend

text Evan Marlowe, MD  
Dean and Founder  
of Man School  
Manschool.cc

**DISCLAIMER:** Why do you want a girlfriend? Do you feel lacking inside, and hope a woman will complete you? Are you lonely and lost, and seek companionship and direction? Do you believe it's the thing to do because all your friends are doing it?

Well, I'm about to spew my thoughts on how you can get yourself a fine woman, but I need to first provide a caveat. The function of a girl is not to complete you, *the man*. It is not her job to give you direction or alleviate your loneliness. And you are not obligated to have a girlfriend simply because it's the "in" thing.

Ultimately, you must be a finished product who is clear about his identity, his mission in life and his purpose; women will then gravitate to you. Take responsibility for all this stuff, and never place any of it in her hands. She doesn't want it. And lastly, realize you have options: multiple girlfriends, monogamy, fuck buddies, friends with benefits, marriage. It's not a simple choice between being

alone and having a single exclusive girlfriend that inevitably ends in marriage (although the popular media and most women may have convinced you that these are your only two options).

Got it? Ok. Time to expand your reality.

## The Relationship Arc

There are 5 stages of a relationship, and each stage requires its own unique skill set.

### Stage 1: Meeting the girl

You might find her while out and about, or online, or while trolling for tail at the bar. The ability to consistently pick up women through cold approach can take months to years to acquire. It requires a combination of transforming yourself into an attractive potential mate (both inside and out), understanding social dynamics and knowing how to effectively spit game.

### Stage 2: Midgame

Once you learn how to get phone num-

bers, actually converting those into dates can be an epic struggle. Places like my hometown of Los Angeles are notoriously flakey, and it's any wonder how people ever hook up. Midgame is the phase that occurs between getting her contact info and closing the deal. It includes text game and conducting yourself on the date so as to get her sexually aroused and emotionally invested.

### Stage 3: Endgame

While the seduction may begin on day one, it ends when you are inside her. Endgame has its own set of hurdles to overcome.

### Stage 4: Converting to a relationship

If you want repeat customers, then you need to satisfy them. Often, girls have several other options, so for them to want to continue seeing you means you need to fulfill their sexual and emotional needs and desires. You must be clear from the start what your intentions are with her, and seem capable of following through.



## Stage 5: Maintaining the relationship

Though you may think you have the girl, your work is never over. She may be tempted to seek out other men, or may be preoccupied with other life matters, or simply become disinterested in dating you. It's your job to keep the relationship fresh and stimulating.

### Where are All the Women At?

A 2009 survey conducted by Match.com of couples revealed the following stats about how people met each other:

36% at work and school

26% were set up by friends and family

17% met online

11% met at bars/club/events

Personally, I never date girls I work with, because if things go wrong, life becomes awkward to unbearable. But then, I have the ability to walk into the real world and bring into my life the women I desire. Most guys have neither the ability nor confidence to consistently pick up girls in social settings, and might likewise have difficulty with online game. Which leaves being set up on blind dates. Nothing wrong with that, but then you've placed yourself at the mercy of others.

So let's accept that the majority of relationships are born out of blind dates and work/school. If you can find girls through these resources, good for you. Otherwise, I recommend you cultivate your online and cold approach skills. There is a flourishing world-wide community of

pick-up artists that teaches guys exactly these skills, and despite the stigma, this community is actually a self-help brotherhood; speaking from experience, I know it's truly effective if you put in the work. I belong to Casanova Crew, and I encourage you to join and find yourself some wings.

### Cold Approach Pick-Up (CAPU)

When I got into the pick-up community at the age of 37, I had done not a single cold approach. All my girlfriends came from being set up, or them hitting on me. But I wanted more and better options, and so I spent the next 3 years working my ass off to understand and gain competency at CAPU.

It seems easy enough. Go to a bar, talk to a hot girl, get her number, take her out, make her your girlfriend. Truth is, this sounds a lot easier than it is, for a variety of reasons. You have four main ways to fuck it up. Here they are in what I consider order of importance:

1. **Inner game.** This phrase, coined by the community, encompasses everything inside you that makes you attractive to women. It is pervasive in all you do, from your body language to texting to how you react to her tests. Confidence, assertiveness, detachment from outcome, being present, sexual energy, power and clarity... To name a few aspects. If any of these factors are lacking, girls are likely to move on to a man who has his shit together. Think of it as you out there selling a product. Do you fully embrace your product? Do you consider yourself

a man worthy of the hottest, highest quality women on the planet, and are you willing to do what it takes to get them? Or have you erected hurdles between you and your success with women?

2. **Physical attractiveness.** Women like tall men with certain masculine features like a wide jaw and strong physique. Obesity, bad skin and balding are turn-offs. You may look too old or too young. You may not dress well. You may smell. Any of these things can send your results down the tubes. While you need to accept those parts of you that will never change, you must also do what you can to upgrade those areas that are correctable.

3. **Logistics.** If she lives an hour away or you have no car, then odds of dating her drop. You should always try to stack logistics in your favor such that dating becomes low investment for both of you. But sometimes there are factors beyond your control and you lose the girl.

4. **Outer game.** This term encompasses everything on the outside that makes you attractive to women. Technically, I would place physical attractiveness here, but aside from that, this would include charm, lines, ability to banter and vibe, and smoothness of physical escalation.

To gain competency at CAPU, you will need to invest no less than two nights a week, every week to begin with. You will need to hit the bars and clubs hard, fig-

uring out why you're not hooking the interactions or moving them forward. You will have to drop your ego and take careful notes of the limiting beliefs and excuses running around in your head. You must push yourself past any approach or social anxiety, to become a person who is comfortable and relaxed walking up to and chatting with any random hot girl in any situation.

There are many ways to approach a girl, but let's focus on my favorite, the playful direct approach. Using this, you show your intent in a fun way, and almost always if you practice it enough times, it will hit. Here are a few examples:

**The Elbow Opener.** Approach a girl and say with a smile, "Wow you have really cute elbows." Typically she will laugh and look at her elbow. Follow this up with, "you probably get that all the time." She will generally deny this, in which case you call her a liar and then tell her your name, ask for her name, and shake hands.

**Dangerous Shoes.** If she's wearing dress shoes or boots, look at her feet and tell her, "Those shoes are dangerous. Pure evil." Say it in a playful, flirty way, then move on to the name exchange.

**Wrong altitude.** If she's a lot taller or shorter than you, say, "You're cute, but you're totally the wrong altitude for me." Again, shake her hand and exchange names.

Once you've approached, you can either

vibe (meaning, have casual conversation), or run a series of routines, or a little of both. For those who don't know how to vibe or who run out of things to say, routines are extremely helpful. Head over to my other site, [puafielddguide.com](http://puafielddguide.com), and download the free ebook that contains a chapter full of routines. Try out dozens of them until you find the ones that work for your personality.

Vibing could take up an entire article by itself, but I'll summarize it by saying being good with women means being charming and seductive. It doesn't mean making friendly chit-chat that leads nowhere.

## You, the Product

Back to the concept of selling yourself as a product. I look at each guy as a pyramid. There are three layers:

**1. The base: you.** This is who you are. The car you drive, what you look like, your job, your social circle, your wrist watch. Growing up as a doctor, I always assumed I could hand my resume over to women and they'd be impressed. Girls don't work that way. You could have all your ducks in a row in life, and still be unattractive. Yes, improve your base, but realize this is simply the foundation.

**2. The middle: congruence.** If you're an asshole, own it. If you're shy, don't pretend you're not. If you want multiple girlfriends, stop talking like you want exclusivity. Don't let it affect you if you're short. Congruence is part authenticity,

part integrity, part ownership of who you are. Women have an outstanding ability to sense incongruence, and they'll call you out about it at best, stop talking to you at worst.

**3. The tip: game.** It's not enough to have a great lifestyle and a rich identity, nor is it enough to act congruently. You must then sell the product effectively, learn how to pitch yourself in a way that makes you attractive. As with any skill, this takes time, persistence, hard work and experimentation.

Realize that dating is to a large extent a numbers game. Yes, as your flow improves and you appear physically more attractive and seem more confident, you will find yourself with a greater selection of women to choose from. But finding that one unique girl who clicks with you and vice versa may take thousands of approaches and dozens of dates.

## Charm

There really is no more potent a tool at your disposal than being a charming mother fucker. Some dudes are just naturally charming, some radiate charm simply by the way they look.

For the rest of us, charm is a thing we must learn in order to get good with girls. I have actually studied it, practiced it, and watched how incredibly effective it is. I'll break down this process of becoming charming, as I see it:

1. Observe and study charming people.



With youtube, you can look up interviews and performances and rewatch segments until you discover trends. Some examples include young Marlon Brando, Colin Ferrell, Paul McCartney, Brad Pitt and Will Smith. Pay close attention to their eye contact, facial expression, tonality, body language, use of humor and smile.

2. Study yourself in the mirror, on video and in audio recordings. Try to recreate those charming qualities in your face, your energy and your voice. Then when you've got it, go out and practice it with women.

3. Be present and fully enjoy the moment. Time and again, one feature I notice among charmers is they seem to be engrossed in the moment, totally *there*, acting like the other person is the best thing since sliced bread. To be a charmer, you're gonna need to learn how to be in your body and in the present moment, not stuck in your head or worrying about the past or future. The classic book *The Power of Now* by Tolle is a great place to start.

4. Glow with sexuality. There is a difference between force and power. Forcing your sexuality sometimes works, but it isn't charming. Radiating your sexual energy with confidence and power is inherent to charm. To get to this point, you need to fully embrace your right and responsibility as a man to hit on women, to own your sexuality in spite of crap others may have put in your head all your life.

Girls may sense this power in the way you talk about women, or in how you gaze at her lips and eyes as you speak to her, or the ease with which you touch her sensually. Most of this falls under inner game, though it is possible to act seductively in spite of a faulty belief system.



## Text Game

Those who understand texting realize it can be a way to establish intimacy, comfort and sexuality in a relationship. The end goal of text game is to cultivate a woman's emotional investment in the interaction, such that she will look forward to meeting up with you.

Every woman has a baseline, and you can establish this through factors including: the time between your text and her reply, the length of her responses, the fun she's having replying to you, and her use of punctuation and grammar. For instance, if she repeatedly takes hours to reply to you, her grammar is sloppy and her replies are brief, she's not that invested. But if she replies immediately every time, constructs elaborate responses that demonstrate a willingness to share her feelings, and is

trying to establish rapport, then she is more invested.

I have devised a five-point system which I call the Emotional Investment Scale (EIS) of text game. There are many ways to move a girl up the scale to higher levels, and when she's at a 4 or 5, flaking will become less of an issue.

**Level 1.** Dead air. She doesn't respond at all to you. Sometimes this means you creeped her out, sometimes she has a new boyfriend, sometimes she's depressed. It's pretty hard if not impossible to move up out of this level, so I tend to cut these numbers loose.

**Level 2.** Almost no investment. She replies with things like "lol" and "haha" after a couple hours have passed. She is putting nearly zero effort into the exchange, but isn't quite dead air.

**Level 3.** Minimal investment. She does give longer replies, takes less time getting back to you, seems to be enjoying the exchange a little. Still, a high risk of flaking exists.

**Level 4.** Moderate investment. Her responses are lengthy and immediate, she qualifies herself to you as a potential mate/girlfriend, she complies with suggestions such as sending you a photo of herself. She seems very interested in meeting up.

**Level 5.** High investment. She reinitiates the exchange, she asks you out, she replies immediately to all your texts and fully complies.

Your goal with texting is to determine

where she is at any moment on this scale, and to remain at or below that level, while using tools that get her into a state of greater investment. Once she is invested, then you invite her out.

Timing is very meaningful with texting. I usually suggest replying immediately to any text a girl sends you, because it encourages her to reply quickly. But it's also important not to text her daily if you're in the early phase of midgame. She should get the sense that you are busy with other shit and other women, and that you'll reinitiate contact with her because **a)** you miss her, and **b)** you have carved out some time for her.

There is a raging debate about calling versus texting. Because I use my text exchanges to build intimacy and comfort, I rarely have a need to speak on the phone. Every guy and girl, however, has their own preferences.

For a full explanation of text game, visit [puafielddguide.com](http://puafielddguide.com) and download my free ebook, *Text Game Primer*.

## The Date

Every guy has his favorite date. I encourage you to experiment with different kinds, including coffee, movie, dinner and bar dates. Typically though, a date should be considered successful when the two of you are making out and/or becoming physically intimate, and either planning the second date or leaving for sex.



As such, I now *only* go on bar dates. Liquor loosens girls up and allows easier physical escalation. It is rare for me to go on a date during which I am not making out by the end.

This date begins at 9pm at a bar. Keep it low-investment for her, meaning don't try to get her to drive an hour to come to your place when she could drive 15 minutes to a bar near her home. The bar should be intimate and not too loud, full of people but not packed, with positive energy. You want her to feel happy and sexual, without being distracted.

Ideally you should pick her up, though some girls are not comfortable with this and would prefer meeting you at the bar. Meet her, buy drinks, and find a dark booth in a corner to get cozy. You can keep physical contact to a minimum for

the first half hour, but fairly soon you should be cuddling up with her, holding hands, resting your hand on her thigh and possibly kissing her. Stay in that one spot, or move her around the bar, but don't bounce to another bar or restaurant if you can help it. If you create a bubble of intimacy in a dark corner, chances are unlikely her mood will be misdirected.

You may want a second round of drinks, but certainly by that point you should be intimate with her. If not, the date will probably fizzle out and she won't be contacting you again. When you're first getting your feet wet going on dates, I recommend you err on the side of being too aggressive. You will lose some girls as a result. That's ok. With time, escalation on the date will become second nature and you can then ease off the



aggressiveness and let it unfold more naturally. Adopt the mindset that she is there on the date to get laid.

You must break down any wall between you two, and there are a few ways to go about doing this:

1. **People-watching.** Ask her if she likes to watch people (she will say yes, since she's a woman), then pull her next to you and start whispering in her ear teases about everyone else in the venue. Make up stories with her about who's on a first date, and who works together and at what job, et cetera.

2. **Palmistry.** I use a simple routine in every interaction, and it involves placing her forearm in my lap as I read her palm. I have the full routine in my free ebook, *Introductory Pick-Up*, at [puafieldguide.com](http://puafieldguide.com).

3. **Be blunt.** Saying simply, "come here, you're sitting too far away," and pulling her in is often enough to break that barrier.

4. **It goes without saying** that if you two are looking at each other across a dinner table, then you will have an enormous barrier to get past. This is the worst scenario. If a girl expects you to take her out to dinner on a first date, let her know that's *maybe* a second date thing, and insist on the bar date instead.

## Romance and Sexuality

Essentially, these two balance one another. If you are overly romantic without being sexual, you can seem needy. If

you act sexually without romance, then she'll think you're just after her booty. The key then is to find a harmony of romance and sexuality, such that she is turned on in her heart, her mind and her lady parts.

Sexuality can be conveyed in many ways, including charm, physical escalation and dirty talk. One thing I should point out is girls need a lot more nuance than guys do when it comes to talking naughty. Making suggestions about what you would do to her, and then letting her use her imagination, is far superior to spelling it out in explicit detail. As a guy, you may think that being explicit is a turn-on, but generally that only works when she's already wet.

Romance is a complex art, and must be carried out just right if it's gonna work. Here are a few of the many defining features of romance:

1. **Be attentive to details.** Remember and notice things that are important to her. Listen closely to her.

2. **Gestures.** Often if you simply state to a woman what your intention or desire is, that gesture suffices as romantic. For example, opening a door is an effortless task, but that gesture symbolizes your desire to serve her.

3. **Us against the world.** You and she form a union, and no matter what the world may throw at you, that bond is unbreakable. Along these lines is the concept of conspiracy: scheming up a plan where

you two are doing some playful misbehavior as a pair. A great way to implement this is by people-watching with her.

4. **The bubble.** This is the sense that when you are with her, everything else in the world melts away. There is nothing more important than you and her in that moment.

5. **The element of surprise.** This one is huge. Give her gifts unexpectedly. They don't need to be expensive, just thoughtful. Likewise, random texts showing you're thinking about her will work.

6. **Security.** She knows you will be there to take care of her, to hold her and protect her. Even if you can't be there, she needs to have the feeling that this is your desire and intent.

7. **Compromise and sacrifice.** Girls appreciate when you sacrifice your time and energy for them. Seeing some awful chick flick that she's dying to watch – that is a romantic gesture. Be there for her, do nice things for her, but don't overdo it. Don't be a guy who will drop everything at a moment's notice, or inconvenience himself tremendously, for her every whim.

8. **Chivalry.** A subset of sacrifice is chivalry, being of service to women. Examples include offering your seat to a girl on a bus, pulling her chair out at the dinner table, and rescuing her (such as when you show up at her work and kidnap her for the day).

9. **The awwwww factor.** Things that make a girl say, "awwww." Leaving rose petals on her pillow, teddy bears, fluffy puppy dogs. Many of the things that make men vomit.

10. Just because. Do things for her "just because." You appreciate her; that's the reason why you're doing it. Let her know you're glad she's in your life, which is itself enough of a motivator for you. You expect nothing in return.

## Endgame

Seduction begins at hello. Sure, you can try being friends first and this will sometimes work. But the surest way to ultimately seduce a girl is to lay the foundation of seduction from the start.

Being seductive encompasses how you move, act and speak. Gestures are typically slow, tonality is deep and volume is low. Think "bedroom voice." Eye contact is confident.

Sex happens not typically out of the blue for women, but as a result of hours of being turned on emotionally. Unlike men, who get aroused in a linear fashion, women require ups and downs. Giving attention, then withholding it. Making her guess about your intentions, teasing her, amping things up sexually and then letting her chase.

Girls who are attracted to you will test your resolve. These may be subtle like trying to cast you as a player, or they may be clear like not responding to your texts for a few days. Though it can be frustrating to deal with, *this is a good thing*. She likes you, so plow on. When it comes time to close the deal, you may get the greatest amount of resistance. Guys have little to lose from sleeping around, from an

evolutionary standpoint; they are programmed to spread their seed. Women, however, are programmed to be highly selective since they risk not only nine months of pregnancy, but then raising the child. On top of this, girls are always concerned about picking up diseases, or losing the guys who just want to hit it and quit it, or attracting dudes who get super-clingy after sex, or the stigma of being considered loose.

Naturally then, girls will screen out guys who are high-risk, clingers, losers and betas. Expect tests and resistance, and react to it with persistence but emotional indifference. Do not become logical, do not argue about why she won't put out, do not give up at the slightest obstacle. Girls love assertiveness and dominance, especially when it's emotionally and socially intelligent.

A huge issue that undermines female liberation is the fear of being seen as a slut. Men may not realize how powerful this fear is, but it is ever-present among women. Never make any comments that cast yourself as judgmental, on sex or any other issue. Always take full responsibility for sex; you are the one doing the pursuing, she is free from blame if sex happens, and in the end one thing lead to another. If she says, "we're not having sex tonight," then you probably are having sex, but she doesn't want you to think she's a slut.

Most times, you will need to work out the logistics such that the two of you can be

alone. You don't need a bedroom, but have some plan that includes a car, a hotel room or even a park. Every girl is different when it comes to level of comfort having sex in strange and awkward places. Some love it, some don't. When in doubt, find a way to bring her to your or her place when nobody else will be around.

The escalation to sex includes getting her aroused from kissing, playing with her and touching other erogenous zones. Be aware that each girl requires her own speed and manner of escalation. Some won't kiss but will have sex. Some will resist until you find that one sweet spot (could be the neck, the knee, the breast), and then the flood gates open for you. Many girls require verbal stimulation. Some won't get undressed until they see a condom, though they won't openly admit this.

Have a rubber at hand at all times, in your car and wallet, and stashed somewhere you can get to immediately. Sometimes spending as much as 30 seconds looking for a rubber is enough to break her mood and cause her to back out of the seduction.

Many men, surprisingly, do not have an adequate knowledge of female anatomy or orgasm. There are two main areas you need to be aware of: the clitoris and the G spot. Both are easy to find, although many men have trouble. Read up about them in books or online. My *PUA Field Guide* has a chapter devoted to sex.



## Getting and Keeping a Relationship

Though men are conditioned to believe their only choice is monogamy that culminates in marriage, this is not the reality. You have many options of relationships, and if you set the terms, you can ultimately find girls who will accept them. If you lack willingness or capability in maintaining a monogamous relationship, then don't market yourself as such. Have integrity and be clear about what you expect from women. They will respect you for this.

For our purposes, however, let's assume you want a single exclusive relationship. You have dated dozens or even hundreds of women, and finally after much searching, The One has come along. It's time to get out of the game and invest all your resources in this girl.

Keeping that girl means satisfying her. You need to be there for her emotionally and please her sexually. You must be a source of both tranquility and excitement. She needs to be able to relax as a woman, trusting you will be there for her as a man.

One of the most quoted books on the subject is David Deida's *The Way of the Superior Man*. Get it, read it, practice it. Aside from understanding male-female relationship dynamics, broaden your understanding of female sexuality. There are tons of books on the market on this subject, and I recommend those by Lou Paget.



Some of the things that will keep girls coming back for more:

1. **Authenticity.** You say what you mean and your actions are in alignment with your beliefs.
2. **Clarity.** When you speak, it is apparent you know what you want and expect.
3. **Romance.** You remain inventive, spontaneous and passionate.
4. **Her friends and family.** You get along with those who are important to her.
5. **Jealousy.** You trust she'll remain loyal, and don't make an issue out of her having platonic men in her life.
6. **Openness.** You express your feelings and don't stifle them or sugar-coat them.
7. **Relationship goals.** The two of you are on the same page as far as where things are heading, and are open to discussing the terms if needed.
8. **Sexual fulfillment.** She has lots of great orgasms, and you keep her in a state of arousal when you're around.

## Conclusion

I never said getting a girlfriend would be easy or simple. For some, it is. And certainly, you may have found yourself stumbling from one relationship to another though without having actual choice, the victim of who's in your class, at your job, or on the blind date.

You may have also found that when you don't have your shit figured out, great women may give you a chance, but don't tend to stick around long. The dating market is fierce for guys, and women are often bombarded with propositions weekly, if not daily.

To get that one special girl who really pushes all your buttons, you need to give her every reason to date you. The resources are out there to learn how.

Now go get her.

# The Brave New World

text KERRY FINCH

**Gone are the days** when the words 'internet marketing' conjured up images of porn sites and geekie techno talk. While such sites still exist, internet marketers now operate in millions of niches, from poetry to health care. The surprising thing though, is just who these marketers are.

## When 1994 Seems Like Ancient History

While almost every home in developed countries has a least one computer connected to the internet, most have several if you include 'smart' phones. (I know I have 3 computers and one iPhone – and every time a guest arrives, they are usually packing their own smart phone.)

It is difficult to grasp that it was as recent as 1994 that the internet was released from the shackles of governments, academia and industry private networks – and put it within reach of millions of people all around the world. It did not take long before the internet became the most powerful platform ever

on which to do business, and to communicate. The 'Global Community' described by communications visionary Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) in the 1970s had indeed become a reality.

## A New Type of Entrepreneur Was Born

The internet has changed the way we do business and has created a global market for whatever product or service we sell. Internet marketing, 'the use of the internet to advertise and sell goods and services' was born, and its growth has been mind-boggling.

By today's standards, those sales websites of the 1990s were immature – simple and text-based – but as with any new technology it rapidly adapted. As faster connection speeds became available, they acquired the capacity to cope with images, audio and video.

Sophisticated strategies, techniques and tools have been developed and adopted by internet marketers who rely on proven experts [<http://tinyurl.com/ye7qdkh>] to

keep them up to date with new trends and tools.

Any person (and nowadays even their pets) can have a website, where they can record their thoughts, create an interactive family tree, or sell physical or digital products. And they can do this for the cost of a domain name (less than USD9) and hosting can be as little as USD10/month for one site, or unlimited sites for USD25/month from Hostgator [<http://tinyurl.com/ybjtemd>].

The internet has made it possible for any small business person, who had previously relied on local customers, to have a website – and sell to the world.

## Who Are These "Internet Marketers"?

I'm sure many people will be surprised at just who internet marketers are. Consider the:

- 10 year old who creates and sells 'virtual horses' in a Forum filled with avid plays of a particular online game.



# Of Internet Marketing

- Stay at home mom who conducts research for website owners (selling their services online).
- Physically disabled graphic artist who can easily sell his designs for logos, website headers, ebook covers (and lots more) from the comfort of his or her home, to internet marketers who don't have such skills.
- Retired executive who consults to online businesses from his business niche, or writes website copy and ebooks for them
- Person who knows how to bring offline businesses online, and provides this service.
- Writer/public relations professional who creates high level website copy and online press releases for both offline and online businesses (that would be me!)
- People who can quickly identify trends and new business models and monetize them (these are the ones making the millions we often hear about).



And then, sadly, there are the scammers who are selling the impossible dream of 'how to make a million dollars in a month' snake-oil products.

## Profit Models Emerge Daily

The exciting thing about internet marketing is that the opportunities are there for the taking. Regardless of how many competitors there are in a niche, there is room for more, the prize (profits!) will

usually go to the marketers who work smarter and who draw on all the resources available to get their websites the 'Holy Grail' – Page One ranking in the search engines like Google, Yahoo! and Bing.

## Domaining

The internet marketing creates profit models within itself – one of the most recent, and lucrative, being 'Domaining' [<http://tinyurl.com/2487fwh>] – buying, building up and then selling domains (www's). The world has realized that there is a limited number of key terms available for use in domains, and these high value or 'dynamite' domains can fetch hundreds of thousands of dollars.

## Offline Consulting

Can you imagine the number of offline 'bricks and mortar' businesses that exist that do not have a website? There are millions. And the reason that they do not have them is because creating one is either out of their skillset, or they simply do not understand how having an online presence can dramatically increase their business.

"When I took office, only high energy physicists had ever heard of what is called the World Wide Web... Now even my cat has its own page."

- Bill Clinton

Enter the offline business consultant [<http://tinyurl.com/29Z49kn>] – a person who has learned the strategies needed to bring them online and knows either how to do this themselves, or has the resources on tap to be able to outsource each component, from site creation to ongoing traffic generation.

## Service Provision

Successful internet marketers realized long ago that doing it all themselves was a poor use of their time, so now they outsource the tasks that are time consuming – tasks that prevent them from growing their business portfolio and leveraging what they already have.

This has created some great business models for service providers, including:

- Website builders
- Graphic designers
- Article and blog writers
- Search engine optimization (SEO) experts
- Transcribers and translators
- Public relations consultants

And this list grows all the time.

People with these skills have what it takes to build their own online empire – and when the workload gets too much, they recruit outsourcers to do the work for them: they just manage the process.

## Information Products

Most people are an expert at something, whether it is baking cookies to mending shoes to fixing cars. And there are potentially thousands of people interested in these things, some passionately so, who will happily part with \$10, \$50 or even \$200 to learn more about it.

You may have a particular system for generating traffic to websites, or a way to make scones lighter and fluffier. Whatever you are good at there is an instructional ebook or video waiting to be created and sold.

I believe that particularly older people are missing out on profits by sharing the knowledge that has taken them their whole lives to acquire.

## Affiliate Marketing

These days you don't even need a product of your own to sell online to be successful. Some top internet marketers have cut their teeth on selling other people's products as 'affiliates' – virtual commission agents.

Affiliates can earn between 10% and 90% commission on products (if there is a really high commission it is usually because the merchant is attempting to grow his client list in order to offer them something of higher value down the track). Affiliate management systems

[<http://www.nanacaste.com>] are yet another booming internet marketing business.

If you see multiple websites selling the same product, sometimes offering a bonus to buy from them, then they are almost certainly affiliate marketers.

## Trainers/coaches/mentors

Those who have a firm grasp of internet marketing techniques and are excellent communicators often fill the growing need to coach newcomers to this dynamic industry.

A word of caution here though, always check the credentials of the person offering to coach you. They should be able to demonstrate their own success – and if they cannot, stay away from them, no matter how successful they SAY they are!

## Learning the Language

As with most industries, the internet comes with its own language, and this can be confusing at first.

I certainly found this to be the case, and assembled over time a Glossary of internet marketing terminology, entitled "What the @%!\* Does THAT Mean?" which I offer free of charge to people visiting my website [<http://www.KerryFinchWriting.com>]. It's amazing how such terminology runs off my tongue



now – and how nice it is to be able to speak with others who 'get' what I do!

## The Future Of Internet Marketing

Because I write for so many internet marketers, I am constantly amazed at the micro-niches that are being targeted by them.

Whereas when I started in this business over 4 years ago, IMers would ask me to write about "Skincare". Now I write about "African American women with acne". Such is the competition for what is called "keywords" – the words that consumers enter into the search box when they ask Google to provide information.

Keyword and competitor research has become the lynchpin of internet marketing, and superior keyword research tools [<http://tinyurl.com/33djahk>] have evolved to provide niche marketers with the information they need to capture their target market.

## Secure Payment Processing

Security concerns have, in the past, been an obstacle to people buying online. However, secure payment processors have gone a long way to preventing fraudulent activities. In fact it is said to be more likely to have your credit card details stolen when shopping in person, than by shopping online.

With the variety of business models available, and the freedom that working from home allows, it seems certain that the future for internet marketing is assured.

I've recently become acquainted with a young man, Dave, who decided just 6 months ago to learn about making money online. He signed up to attend a high level internet marketing workshop. This was a really brave thing for him to do: he was not well educated and knew little else about the internet than how to send an email.

He had an engineering trade, and was passionate about rally cars. With his trade background he was often able to make special parts for these cars – parts that were not commercially available.

So, immediately after the workshop, Dave went away and focused on learning about internet marketing from the ground up, taking no shortcuts, and following the advice of his chosen mentor. He has always been a hard worker, and he worked hard at this as well.

While he acknowledges that he still has much to learn, Dave earns between \$200-\$300 every single day from his website.

"It used to be that if you wanted sophisticated marketing tools, you had to be rich. That's not the case on the Internet. Anyone can compete, just at different levels."

- Chris Baggott, Compendium Blogware

*Kerry Finch provides writing services for internet marketers, including the creation of SEO articles and online media releases. She is an active member of a high level internet marketing forum [<http://www.evenfasterresults>]. She can be contacted via her website [<http://www.kerryfinchwriting.com>]*

text TOM CHITTUM aka Sgt Skull

# WAITING FOR ARMAGEDDON

**Are you tired** of waiting for the post-Armageddon world?

Not to Worry, my brothers. There is a place for us.

Not to worry, I've got a damn good preview of what will replace the rotting carcass of the American Empire. Many areas of our Glorious Empire have been spiraling down to Mad Max status for years but they are mostly concrete Bantustans and barrios so let's take a tour of the only area where the white boys have the bragging rights for thoroughly fucking up everything and where we can unsap and purify our natural mental fluids.

I am speaking of the so-called Emerald Triangle in Northern California. Most of the nihilist libertine readers of Interesting Times are doubtless familiar with its only significant product, Marijuana. For any newbies the Emerald Triangle is the following three counties in Northern California — Humboldt, Mendocino and Trinity.

## THE EMERALD TRIANGLE

First of all, understand that this place sucks from the conventional perspective. If it weren't for the unwelcome but moderating influence of the outside world it would instantly become America's Afghanistan — and that's exactly what it will become when America is depopulated by the unstoppable economic collapse currently being foisted upon us

by the New World Order shepherds of London and Wall Street.

My point is that because this place already sucks in every imaginable way it is nicely pre-adapted to the looming chaos and violence by existing chaos and violence.

**Before we focus** on the specifics of the Emerald Triangle Armageddon let's take a short historical tour of this unique area. It was originally settled by people who hiked over from Asia by way of Alaska. Some assert that they displaced proto-Caucasoids who were already living there but that is a matter of dispute. In any case by the time of the American (first) Civil War the native Americans had been massacred or driven to remote and undesirable areas. Today, Indians make up maybe five percent of the total population. Most know nothing of the low-tech skills of their noble ancestors and thus will have no edge over their non-Indian neighbors in the coming turbulence.

The Triangle was pretty much a shoot-'em-up cowboy and lumberjack frontier culture until the post WWII prosperity brought wide-spread use of automobiles and then the Seventies saw the mass immigration of counter culture pot growers. The point I want to emphasize here is that the Triangle only experienced about thirty years of "normality" from about 1945 to 1975. It went from Dodge City six shooter anarchy to Potosylvania

pot farmer AR-15 anarchy with barely a semi-civilized pause in between. Moreover, it is the ONLY geographic region in America where a blatantly illegal activity accounts for a clear majority of economic activity. It's maybe 150 by 100 miles and it's plainly the closest thing America has to an Afghanistan.

## THE REDWOOD RUN: ANNUAL OUTLAW BIKER WOODSTOCK

Swarms of outlaw bikers frequent the Triangle. The scenic, winding roads are great for weekend runs and there are plenty of remote spots for outdoor partying without being hassled by John Law. Also, the Triangle is a great place to score wholesale quantities of weed and meth. There's even an annual outlaw biker festival in June where the various one percenter gangs put aside their blood feuds for the sake of a multi-day party.

<http://www.redwoodrun.net/>

## PLENTY OF FREE HOUSING AVAILABLE FOR AK47 REPO FROM PACIFIST TREE HUGGERS

And then there are the assorted Earth Firsters and tree huggers. They gravitate to the Triangle because of the Redwoods. Some chain themselves in the top of trees to prevent logging. A lot of them are into "off the grid" living and they build self-sufficient houses in the boonies including tree houses, log cabins and every sort of off-the-wall shelter their considerable imagination and tal-



# IN THE EMERALD TRIANGLE

ents can conjure up. Because they tend towards pacifism most are unarmed and their often excellent housing will be easy to appropriate when things tip and domesticated poodles have to become feral wolves once again.

## OPEN SEASON ALL YEAR FOR "CULLING THE HERD"

Even the towns are fast slipping into something resembling Mad Max sets. Bears and mountain lions roam in and out at will. Pit bulls and rottweilers attack people on a regular basis. These animals escape from the grow houses where they are kept as guard dogs and many are simply abandoned by their owners. Homeless transients congregate on street corners. Syringes, human waste, wine bottles and used condoms are common sidewalk decorations. Abandoned busses and recreational vehicles decorated with hippy dippy paint themes are scattered here and there. The Triangle is a sort of refuge for self-selected rejects and renegades that have been driven out of civilized areas all across America.

The locals refer to unemployed outsiders as "travelers" — even the ones who squat more or less permanently in the area. These vagrants camp out on the edges of the towns and in the public forests. Their illegal camp sites become mini garbage dumps and they often die of drug overdoses or exposure. The lazier ones panhandle on street corners

while the more energetic break into cars and homes, shoplift in the local stores or assault people in broad daylight on public streets. To be frank, many are simply hunted down and murdered by locals as a form of recreation. There are bodies beyond counting buried in the Redwood forests. And there is no better rag to keep you up to date on the fun and games in the Triangle than the Arcata Eye. Click on the link below and then click on "police log" for the funniest guy in America not currently confined to a mental institution.

<http://www.arcataeye.com/>

**And now we** come to the professional weed farmers. These guys are armed against thieves who try to rip them off and if they so much as suspect you have evil intentions they will fill you full of .223 caliber holes and your carcass will disappear down a hole in the boonies and the local underfunded police couldn't care less. Before you upstake and head for the Triangle to grow weed read the following link carefully (Life in Pot Growing Country) even if you don't intend to grow any.

[http://www.3ammagazine.com/politica/2002\\_jun/pot\\_county.html](http://www.3ammagazine.com/politica/2002_jun/pot_county.html)

I'm not the least bit interested in encouraging or discouraging pot farming in the Triangle. One aspect of my interest is

as a refuge from the coming collapse. Basically, the place has already collapsed so when the larger economy collapses around it there will be scant local effect. Your chances of survival in Potsylvania will be better than in any urban area but neither is your pointless survival the real purpose of this rant.

**My brothers,** life is not about creature comforts. We are wolves who have been born and raised in pens. We have been told that there is nothing in life beyond that which can be found within the physical and mental pen of our existence, so-called civilization. It was all a colossal lie and now even the rewards for conformity and groveling submission are about to be snatched from us. I invite you to observe those around you who are deprived of their Dog Yummies and Beggin Strips. Most will wither away to nothing and die begging and whining for their accustomed rewards. Going the wolf route will never even occur to them and most will recoil in utter horror if you mention it to them.

Myself, I intend to move to the Triangle before The Collapse — not to grow pot but simply to be rid of all the whining of all the sniveling, begging urban curs while they starve to death.

*Yet another uplifting article from Sgt Skull to bring us that cheerful Christmas spirit. The author can be contacted at tomchittum@gmail.com.*

# Becoming THE CONFIDENT MAN

text BLACKDRAGON

It doesn't matter if you're talking about dating women, closing a business deal, or jumping out of an airplane. *Confidence*, and its fraternal twin brother, *outcome independence*, are critical to your success and long-term happiness as a man. The good news is these two qualities are so lacking in men in the modern era, just being a little better than average will garner you huge advantages over your competition. Be amazing at them, and the world is your oyster.

## Confidence and Outcome Independence

Lets define what we're talking about. Confidence means you can sit across from a Hollywood-level gorgeous woman on a date or CEO of a Fortune 500 company during a business meeting and be totally relaxed and unafraid. Confidence is demonstrated by things like talking slowly and deeply, slow movements, solid eye contact, a relaxed, kicked-back demeanor, laughter, and a big smile. Confidence is not "acting cool" or "acting tough". No, a truly confident man does-

n't have to do either of these things. Confidence is being (and acting) relaxed and at ease.

Outcome independence means you literally don't give shit. On that date with Ms. Hollywood, you don't care if you ever see this woman ever again. You don't care what she thinks about you. If she rips off her clothes and throws herself at you, or she ends up calling you an asshole and storms off, never seeing you again... it's all the same to you. You just don't care. There are plenty of other gorgeous women out there for you (and plenty of other CEO's).

Confidence and outcome independence are very, very attractive qualities to women and men alike. As a matter of fact, the more attractive and desirable a woman is, the more attracted she will be to men who demonstrate these two qualities. Confidence and outcome independence, when combined, are literally a love potion that works almost every time.

## The Problem

The challenge is these two qualities are ones men tend to skip over. Men usually try to focus on technique and competence, rather than confidence. If you are very technically skilled, but are inwardly insecure, your technical skill will only do so much for you. As a business consultant and professional speaker, there are men who I compete with in the business world who are more competent at the technical specifics than I am, sometimes extremely so. Yet I make more money and work less hours than they do, because my confidence and outcome independence operate at higher levels. Of course there's nothing wrong with being technically competent; you need that too. But you see my point. (Plus, you can always subcontract out *competence*... but you can never delegate *confidence*, and confidence pays more. A lot more.) Similarly, the dating industry/seduction community is full of young, excited guys who have all the techniques, all the moves. Far more than I ever did. I'm sometimes amazed at these guys' en-



"Confidence and outcome independence, when combined, are literally a love potion that works almost every time."

cyclopedic knowledge of pickup. But they rarely get laid. Why? Because they feel nervous or unworthy (not confident) and really, really want to "get this girl" (not outcome independent). So while they're focusing on learning new techniques, I'm having sex with three or four different women a week.

### **Why You Need Both**

You might be wondering why I focus on both confidence *and* outcome independence. Isn't confidence enough? Confidence alone is great, but it's not ideal. A guy who is confident but not outcome independent is able to walk up to a gorgeous woman, start talking to her, and attract her. But if she later doesn't return one of his phone calls, he's furious. Online, you've probably heard recordings of ranting voice mails angry men leave on women's voice mail boxes, and this is what I'm talking about. These kinds of guys feel angry, almost attacked, if people don't do what they want. They can close business deals, but the ones that have problems they go

insane over. This is the kind of guy who started screaming at the teacher when he got an A on his report card instead of an A+.

The man who is confident *and* outcome independent, rather than just confident, not only gets results, but gets them easily, smoothly, without a lot of work or problems. He gains more, works less, and is happier. That's how you want to live!

### **How To Do It**

You may already be a confident, outcome independent guy. That's great, keep it up, and keep improving. But what if you're not? How do you develop confidence and outcome independence if you don't have it? You can't just tell someone "be confident" or "just don't care what she says!" Clearly that won't work. So you have to *act* confident and outcome independent and *practice* exuding those qualities. Keep acting this way, and you will eventually feel this way. Here's how:

### **1. Learn exactly what confidence and outcome independence look like.**

For confidence, study any James Bond movie, any old Arnold Schwarzenegger action movie, and study men in movies like Morgan Freeman, Ed Harris, and Sean Connery (there are many other good examples of confident men in movies and on TV... choose as you like). Another fantastic example, and one of the templates I've used myself, is the character of Christian Troy on the TV show "Nip / Tuck".

For outcome independence, study guys in movies like Jim Carrey, Kevin Kline, and especially James Woods, the absolute king of outcome independence. The two best movies to study James Woods, to learn what true outcome independence looks like: The 1988 film "Cop", and the 1994 film "The Specialist". "Cop" is insane, dark, and beautiful. James Woods is doing things like murdering suspects, telling his boss to go fuck himself, having S&M sex with witnesses, and whatever he damn well

pleases (it also has one of the best endings in Hollywood history, by the way).

In "The Specialist", the movie itself isn't that great, but it's fascinating to watch the contrast between confidence and outcome independence. If you watch it, notice the clear difference between the confident-type villain (played by Eric Roberts) and "don't give a shit" villain, played by Woods. It's great.

There is one guy that even beats James Woods if you want to do a little digging. The BBC science fiction television series "Dr. Who", back in the 1970's, had the main character played by a guy named Tom Baker. If you want to see outcome independence in action, this guy was amazing. Rent or buy some DVD's (they are still being published), try to ignore the terrible 1970's BBC special effects, and *watch this guy*. This guy did not give a shit. He was a genius. If James Woods is the outcome independence king, Tom Baker was the outcome independence god.

## **2. Walk around your house, in front of the mirror, and in front of friends, emulating how these men move, walk, and talk.**

Literally practice this. Do it over and over again. Years ago when I got started in the seduction game, when I felt myself drifting, I would sometimes channel



James Bond, Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Woods, or Tom Baker when I was communicating with a woman. Nowadays it's embedded in who I am so it's automatic, but I had to practice.

## **3. Control your body language.**

Whenever you walk, imagine a string attached to the top of your head, pulling you upward like a puppet. This will force you to walk very differently. When sitting,

lean back, and completely relax. Don't slouch (that's actually leaning forward). Lean *back*. Don't lean forward like you're interested, and don't sit up ramrod straight like you've spent 10 years in the marines. Lean back. Chill. Act like you're the owner of wherever you are... the bar, club, restaurant, office building, wherever (I always do).

## **4. Go out of your way to place yourself**



in situations where you can (or must) practice confidence.

Ask a lot of girls out. Go on lots of first dates. Schedule meetings or lunches with rich guys, or business leaders, or politicians in your area. Tell your dad, who you've been scared of your whole life, to go screw himself. No, we're not talking about going bungee jumping or becoming a full contact MMA fighter. We're not talking about overcoming fear here, we're talking about creating confidence.

*Push yourself* to get into confidence-growing situations. I started with nothing at age 18 and was making six figures by my mid-twenties, and this was one of the key reasons why. I pushed myself even when it didn't feel good, even when I wasn't in the mood.

#### **5. Go on a fake date.**

If you really want to make this work, and still don't think you're quite there, once you think you've got these mannerisms down, pick out your ugliest female friend and take her out on a fake date. If you want, explain what you're trying to do. Do not try to have sex with her! You want outcome independence! You don't care what happens! (Remember?) On the "date" pick out your favorite example for confidence and your favorite example for outcome independence, and while you're with her, act like him all

night. I don't care if you are nervous as hell inside. Act the part. Your objective is to practice acting confident and outcome independent. (And hey, if you end up having sex with her, have at it. I won't tell.)

#### **6. From now on, when you communicate with attractive women or potential business contacts, practice confidence and outcome independence at all times.**

For example, when sending an email, actually re-read it and ask yourself "Am I demonstrating confidence or nervousness? Am I demonstrating outcome independence or neediness?" Soon, it will start to become automatic.

You don't need any one particular customer or client to make you rich. You don't need any one particular woman to make you very happy for a long time.

"Plus, you can always subcontract out competence ...but you can never delegate confidence, and confidence pays more. A lot more."

There are always other women, there are always other prospects, there are always other adventures out there waiting for you. Have an abundance mentality! (But that's another topic.)

Do these things on a regular basis, and the damndest thing will start to happen. You'll actually start to feel confident and less worried about "what's going to happen" or "getting it right".

And your results in all areas of life will soar.

*Blackdragon is a business consultant and professional speaker by day, seduction guru by night, focusing on online dating, open relationships, and older men dating younger women. His web site is [www.blackdragonsystem.com](http://www.blackdragonsystem.com) where there are many free ebooks for download.*



# 3 ways to increase your intelligence

We live in fast fiberoptic times among a landscape made of information and of the processing of information. Whether computed in silicon or in neurons, the sole currency of these sciencefiction times is the byte. How wealthy are you in this currency? How much of this resource can you stake your personal claim to? How much information can you hold in your mind? Can you build a mental simulacrum vibrant enough and complex enough to contain five chess moves and counter-moves? Or do you say, "Fuck that, it's hard. What's on TV?"

The ability to build information-rich cognitive models is called Intelligence. One of the tactics of evolution is Intelligence Increase. And the whole history of our evolution, both biological and technological, can be seen as the increase of the complexity of our cognitive models. Our species has accumulated increasing information and complexity in chip and in neuron, and this has enabled the whole menagerie of the cyberpunk technologies.

Often this intelligence is distributed among large groups of hairless primates, as when a car is being designed or Linux is being updated. But wonderful though

**"Though intelligence is not the be-all and end-all, it is one of the meta-skills needed to survive and thrive in the cyberpunk future of today."**

group action is, there is still a place for individual genius. Different brains can rarely communicate as harmoniously as can different parts of the same brain, and an individual genius like a Tesla or a Buddha can still transform the world.

Though intelligence is not the be-all and end-all, it is one of the meta-skills needed to survive and thrive in the cyberpunk future of today. The species that thrives is always the one best adapted to its environment. Complex, information-rich people thrive in complex information-rich times. This article will disclose to you, gentle reader, several spells, rituals and neurohacks designed to expand the horizon of the mind and increase the complexity of your cognitive simulations of reality. There are hundreds out there, but these are three of the best.

(Before we start, a thought: the Singularity at the end of human history starts with the birth of the first entity of super-human intelligence. In all likelihood, that entity will evolve from a human being living today. Why shouldn't it be you?)

**Hack number one** is called hypercapnia. Within evolutionary theory, there is a school of thought, now enjoying a resurgence, which holds that men evolved from aquatic apes (not to be confused with sea monkeys). The interesting thing about this theory is how this evolution is supposed to have happened. You see, all mammals have a common diving reflex, a reflex that expands the carotid arteries and floods the brain with blood whenever breathing is suspended. This is a prudent way to prevent brain-damage when oxygen is restricted. But the reflex is not actually triggered by oxygen deficiency. Rather the trigger is a buildup of carbon dioxide. In nature, a carbon dioxide excess nearly always goes hand-in-hand with an oxygen shortage, but as hackers we can exploit this loophole to trick the body opening the carotid arteries by just breathing some extra CO<sub>2</sub>.

If you're interested, get some baking



# HACKING

text CONOR O'HIGGINS

soda (also known as bread soda, but never known as baking powder) and a bottle of vinegar. Put a few teaspoons of baking soda at the bottom of a 2 liter milk carton or something similar. Now pour in 100ml or so of vinegar. It should fizz excitingly then settle down, filling the bottle with carbon dioxide. Place your mouth over the neck of the bottle and take about three big breaths. Now breathe normally (to prevent hypoxic damage to the brain) and close your eyes. Be careful with this; the idea is not to cut off oxygen completely, just to mix the air you breathe with CO<sub>2</sub>.



When you do this, you will experience a feeling of consciousness expanding into obsidian space, like the night sky covered with brightly-colored fireworks. If this reflex can turn an aquatic ape into a human, why can't it turn a human into a spaceman?

Every physiology student knows that carbon dioxide expands the carotid arteries, but less well known is that when this reflex is triggered repeatedly, the expansion eventually becomes permanent. Perform this hack twice a day and within three months, your carotid arteries will permanently be supplying more blood to

your noggin. Your brain will have better blood-flow, enabling better thinking, and friends and family will compliment you on how big and handsome your carotid arteries are looking.

**Hack number two** is called image-streaming. The technique was first hit upon by a fellow called Win Wenger, who writes books on creativity and intelligence. Image-streaming is by far the best technique he has come up with. It is basically visual free-association and works by the first rule of psychology: you get more of what you reinforce. Reinforce a habit and you get more of that

habit, ignore it and it fades away. With image-streaming, you are gonna reinforce the complex, three-dimensional visual constructs of the imagination. The most complex kinds of thought (like playing chess, designing machines or developing the Theory of Relativity) are done by visualising complex diagrams and images. But there is a limit to how complex the image can be before collapsing to leave only the pornography that I assume forms the default background to everyone's mental imagery. Image-streaming can push this limit upwards, allowing you to visualise more complex images more vividly. It is not only an In-

# "The Singularity at the end of human evolution: the first entity of superhuman intelligence will evolve from a human being living

Intelligence Increase spell, it is an Imagination Increase one. If you do any sort of practice that involves visualisation (like kundalini yoga, magickal rituals, or just because the guy you're talking to is boring and it's more amusing if he appears to have a monkey on his head) then image-streaming will make these images better.

**It works like this:** lie back, close your eyes, get a tape recorder (though you're probably more likely to use your phone to digitally record your voice, you cyberpunk you) and start describing the images that float into your mind. Don't just say what each image is; describe details. Spend about a minute on each image, or a little more or less depending on what feels right to you. Breathe rhythmically and keep your body still as a corpse – this helps concentration. Practising twenty minutes a day works well; you'll see results within a week. As you get more advanced, you can build up the solidity of the images, making them three-dimensional and including all the senses. Three-dimensional constructs can hold a lot more complexity than two-dimensional ones, so they are especially useful for Intelligence Increase.

I don't believe in IQ, but a study found

that image-streaming can add 20 points to IQ scores. A more well-known technique could probably bag you another 20: nootropic drugs. These are molecular Intelligence Increase agents that usually act as catalysts encouraging the neurotransmitter-factories in your brain to work faster, or act as feedstock to increase the output of these factories, or quicken transport of the end product around the nervous system.

**Nootropics**, despite the hype, the confusion, and the obfuscation of marketers, are quite real. They have gone largely unnoticed by a culture with a strong taboo against psychoactive substances. Several times I have read mainstream bioethicists wondering about what we should do ten or twenty years in the future, when Intelligence Increase drugs become available. Meanwhile, for the past thirty years, a small vanguard has been silently swallowing little blue pills and orange powders that put them at the steering wheel of their own neurochemistry, allowing them to rev up their intelligence into higher speeds and more precise performance. And – unknown even to this vanguard – for thousands of years before that, yogis, herbologists and witches had been supplementing with chewy leaves and hairy roots that

can improve memory, concentration and performance in mental tasks.

**The standard terminology** calls the plants that make you sharper 'adaptogens' and the chemicals that do so 'nootropics'. This implication that they are two different things is misleading and ridiculous – but nobody consulted me when these terms were invented and, to my eternal outrage, I am forced to express myself through a language that I did not invent.

There are many good resources on nootropic drugs, including Ward Dean's two books on the subject and the forums at [imminst.org](http://imminst.org). The interested reader is referred to these for a more in-depth treatment; but I can give here a rough-and-ready formula for those who don't care about the science and just want results.

Idebenone, piracetam, aniracetam, and choline precursors are some of the more useful chemicals. Piracetam is the best known, most widely available and best tested nootropic. 1500mg three times a day will do the job. Aniracetam is its close cousin and works synergistically with it. 750mg twice a day works well. Idebenone is my personal favorite – an orange powder taken in six 45mg doses



# an history starts with the birth of the nce. In all likelihood, that entity will today. Why shouldn't it be you?"

a day (i.e. a finger-dab six times a day).

Acetylcholine precursors include choline, DMAE and centrophenoxine. Choline is cheap and easy to get. DMAE is annoyingly hard to get, too expensive and offers no special benefits. Centrophenoxine is the rarest, but does offer benefits beyond what simple choline can serve up.

Besides improving performance at mental tasks, acetylcholine precursors also give you unbelievable dreams. (Dreams are mostly acetylcholine signals propagating through the brain.) I suggest varying the doses randomly, to prevent the body from habituating. 100-500mg of choline a day, or 200-3000mg of centrophenoxine a day are quite suitable. No need to take both.

Companies that sell nutritional supplements charge outrageous mark-ups. They take sacks of raw chemicals and package them into tidy little capsules to make them look small and precious so they can charge you ten times what the actual chemical is worth.

Try to get a group of people together, perhaps on a discussion forum, and buy raw chemicals in bulk from wholesalers on Alibaba.

**There are many other** nootropics that are worth looking into, but these ones will give you a good taste of what Intelligence Increase can feel like. You will find colorful brilliant ideas jumping out of the void. When faced with a question, you will go into a deep states of concentration in which your emotions sit still and while your mind zips around the astral plane to the answer. You will have stronger, clearer mental images.

**One of the most** interesting effects I noticed from nootropics (a side-effect of faster, sharper thinking) was a huge improvement in wit and sense of humour. I have seen people jump through all kinds of strange hoops in vain attempts to deliberately strengthen their funny-bones, so it's very interesting to find that there is just a pill you can pop that makes you funnier.

Of the plants, *ocimum sanctum*, *bacopa monnieri*, *withania somnifera*, *gynostemma pentaphyllum*, *rhodiola rosea* and *eleutherococcus sentococus* have demonstrated their Intelligence Increase virtues in studies. What I advise is to buy these by the pound from somewhere like herbalcom.com and keep them in your kitchen beside the kettle. Most of them make decent herbal teas, and instead of

getting pepped up on caffeine, you can really energize your organism with these plants.

*Mucuna pruriens* is an excellent plant. The seeds contain hearty doses of levodopa, a precursor to dopamine, one of the most important neurotransmitters. Taking 4-6 seeds with each meal improves a lot of cognitive parameters and fills you with manly energy – far superior to the unsatisfactory stimulation of uppers or coffee.

These adaptogens and nootropics are a key strategy in taking navigational control of your own neurochemistry. After all, if you don't control this, the basic substrate of your mind, then *they* will control it for you! Seize control of your brain chemistry and everything in your life – and the lives of those around you – will benefit.

There you have it – three quick brain hacks that'll increase your intelligence more than mainstream psychology thinks possible. Of course, all these are dwarfed in power by the Intelligence Increase capacities of the mystical Qabalalah, but I've just run out of column space.

# Why you already live in a

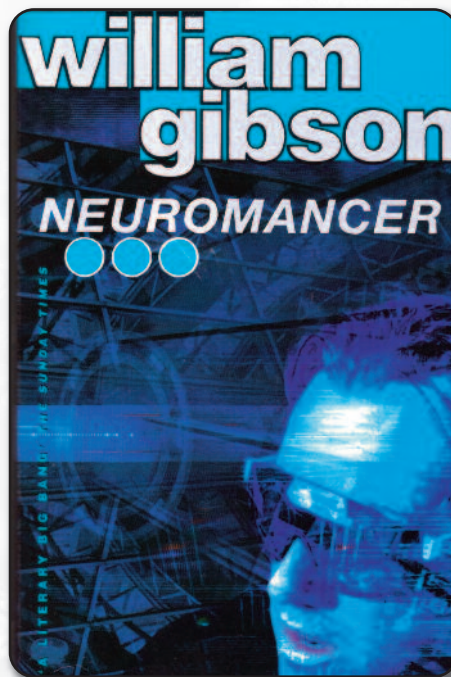
text MADHILL

Our perception of a cyberpunk future is shaped by the foresight of luminaries like William Gibson, Neal Stephenson and Bruce Sterling. Their vivid scenarios of ubiquitous computers, high tech weaponry, corporate tyranny and social disintegration have never been closer to reality than in the world of 2011.

Here's a few facts that will make you question the very fabric of our contemporary existence and learn to embrace the promise and perils of an increasingly cyberpunk reality. A reality filled with high technology run by low life.

## The preferable virtual reality

Much has happened since the term "cyberpunk" was coined by Bruce Bethke<sup>[1]</sup> in 1980. Since those early days of cyberpunk your life has slowly been transformed into a real cyberpunk world. The hallmark of a cyberpunk society is the iron fist of the information overlords. Their clenched metal fist controls the entire spectrum of media. Control of information is their key to the control of populations. Any sensitive documents you may have on companies or government entities will be stopped by court injunctions. The control of information lies



in the hands of global companies, military intelligence and the mafia.

Cyberpunk literature often portrays the future as bleak, dirty and sterile at the same time. The few freedom fighting individuals left escape the control grid with high tech gadgetry. The sophistication of your latest media gadget keeps you occupied while the unemployable nomad hordes riot outside your guarded community. The only thing keeping them from you is the lethality of your robotic security dog. There is a thin veil of digital eye candy between you and the

homeless people living in the tunnels beneath Las Vegas or the judicial outcasts hiding behind the walls of Kowloon City in Hong Kong.

You have the privilege of immersing yourself in the virtual world of a 3D home entertainment center while totalitarian states move closer to absolute control. The U.S. China, Iran and Israel deploy advanced systems for information control and enforce strict regimes of hidden censorship. This makes them vulnerable to sabotage.

The recent attacks on Iranian industrial control systems suggest that viruses like Stuxnet are only the beginning of cyber sabotage against industrial infrastructure. Outsourcing national cyberwar capabilities could potentially destabilize established international relations. Identifying the enemy becomes complicated when states hide behind proxy hackers. Obvious targets in a hostile cyberwar may not only be nuclear reactors, but also surveillance and communication satellites or the missile defense shield.

## The cognitive weapons race

All this is something you don't need to



# cyberpunk Future

occupy your already overloaded sensory system with unless you're enhancing your cognitive abilities with wakefulness drugs like Modafinil. Increasingly personalized medicine and cognitive drugs are heating up a mental weapons race. Cognitive neuropharma results in students relying on drugs for exams and an increasingly competitive job market.

In an atmosphere where every method is accepted it's no surprise that 80% of the US stock market is traded by high frequency trading robots. The cognitive limit of the human mind is stretched to its limits while the race for profit never ceases. The speed at which orders are made are now of such importance that the geographical location of servers are a competitive edge for investors.

The promise of the super intelligent home automation robot isn't widely implemented. Instead our lives are filled with digital gadgets and software applications that support us like prostheses. Your life is recorded and immortalized as an account on social media. Our minds are becoming artifacts for future generations to study on Facebook and Twitter.

"The hallmark of a cyberpunk society is the iron fist of the information overlords."

## The impending resource depletion

While your professional life and recreational activities increasingly resemble episodes of Star Trek, the resources they depend on are vanishing. The industrial world is based on cheap and accessible energy sources. Many energy analysts argue that we are past the global peak production of oil, gas and coal. This will eventually lead to the collapse of most energy intensive industries.

Adding to this looming systemic collapse come Chinese amassing of rare earth metals necessary for the production of microprocessors and electronics. China has export controls of these metals and is accused by the US of price manipulation. No precious metals means no high

tech industry and no cheap entertainment for the masses.

The collapse of the industrial world will go in tandem with the collapse of the natural world. The present financial crisis has led investors away from high risk stock trading to low risk commodities. This shift of financial focus has led to increased speculation in the agricultural commodities market and food prices across the world are reaching an all time high. Most wars are therefore motivated by geopolitical leverage and access to resources. Manifestations of the impending collapse are everywhere if you know how to decipher seemingly trivial news.

## Genetically tweaking our way out of the abyss

High end laboratories across the world are racing towards a cure for this pessimistic event horizon. Research in genetic engineering and synthetic biology is closing in on many of its goals. Bacteria are redesigned or built from scratch to produce new products that defy the limits of nature. Applications range from new biofuels and production of medicine

to bacteria engineered to live on Mars.

Genetic technologies are as common as computer technology. Almost 70 % of the U.S. "corn basket" contains genetically modified crops. Genetic diagnostics on unborn babies are becoming the norm. Sex selection and screening for inherited diseases resemble the eugenic society envisioned by Johan Galtung or the genetic class society in Brave New World. Slow and subtle change is hard to recognize.

### Striking the systempunk! <sup>[2]</sup>

Cyberpunk societies are the natural home of an underground resistance. Only a few dissidents are willing to oppose the corporate sponsored government big brothers like NSA, GCHQ and Echelon scanning through every communication you will ever have. Being unaware of the lies used to justify the shredding of civil liberties, the masses are willingly sacrificing freedom for security.

A few intelligent observers are exposing the ongoing transformation of society and assault on our liberties. Political hackers, investigative journalists, Wikileaks and Cryptome will not submit to establishment secrecy. Leaderless resistance, anonymous hacking networks and the facilitation of leaks are the tools

"You are left with two options. Ignore the warning signs, take acting classes and go make a fortune on the latest internet fad or start digging the ditches for the final war."

of the cyberpunk resistance. Based on the theories of fifth generational warfare these loose knit networks manage to neutralize the military might of standing armies.

You are left with two options. Ignore the warning signs, take acting classes and go make a fortune on the latest internet fad or start digging the ditches for the final war. Some practical means of resistance is still available; inverse surveillance and open source counter-surveillance will diminish the power of state surveillance. The access to surveillance technology and critical systems information will decide the end game of the free society.

Still unconvinced? Bullet points from a cyberpunk reality:

- Big US banks do a deal with their cronies in the USG and Fed Reserve to steal \$600 billion from the poor and middle class.
- Geoengineering (weather manipulation) is considered an option and will be deployed if the climate turns bad enough.
- Nerds become sexy. 'The Social Network' movie portrays the geeky founders of Facebook as studs hooking up with girls. Online relationships become as important as offline ones.
- Increasing popularity of MMORGs like World of Warcraft. You can now truly create another virtual self.



- Micro-outsourcing. Sites like [www.rentacoder.com](http://www.rentacoder.com) allow users to create an entire online business without any face to face contact.

- Computer hacker Julian Assange of Wikileaks, a character straight out of Stephenson's 'Cryptonomicon', takes on the US Government and wins (so far).

- Norwegian hackers face prison time for hacking a stock trading robot<sup>[3]</sup>.

- Automated trading computers are located in Siberia to beat the clock<sup>[4]</sup>.

- Torrent-trackers like [www.thepiratebay.org](http://www.thepiratebay.org) stay online in spite of continuing legal threats from the big media corps.

- Life extension, personalized medicine and designer drugs are popular culture.

- Military drones and robots are endemic on the battlefield.

- \* Anarchistic neighborhoods like the walled City of Kowloon<sup>[5]</sup> and the Las Vegas Tunnel Community<sup>[6]</sup>.

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/stories/cpunk.htm>



<sup>[2]</sup> [http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/12/the\\_system-punkt.html](http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/12/the_system-punkt.html)

<sup>[3]</sup> <http://www.zerohedge.com/article/two-norwegians-face-6-years-prison-time-doing-what-hft-algos-do-us-every-single-day>

<sup>[4]</sup> <http://www.newscientist.com/article/>

[mg20827855.500-automated-traders-eye-up-unlikely-locations.html](http://mg20827855.500-automated-traders-eye-up-unlikely-locations.html)

<sup>[5]</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lby9P3ms11w>

<sup>[6]</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1326187/Las-Vegas-tunnel-people-How-1-000-people-live-shimmering-strip.html>

text AARON THOMAS

# How to not fail at New Year's resolutions

The only certainties in life: death, taxes and... failing at your New Year's resolutions by February 1.

How many times have you heard someone set a New Year's resolution that sounds something like "This year I'm going to finally get in shape." Within two weeks, you watch in amazement as they wolf down an entire delivery pizza with a liter of soda. Where did things go wrong? Why do people have so much trouble sticking to their New Year's Resolutions?

The entire practice of New Year's resolutions has gotten a bad name, simply because of how badly people fail at them. It's gotten to the point where you have a better chance meeting a goal that you set in April or October, simply because New Year's resolutions are expected to fail. New Year's resolutions have become something to discuss over eggnog during a holiday party rather than a true period of reflection and determination of how this year is going to be better than the last. You make the resolution in January and then joke about how quickly you broke it in mid-February. In a recent study by the University of Minnesota, 80 percent of people give up on their resolutions within two months.

People's excuses for not meeting their New Year's resolutions on willpower, or not remembering, or some life occurrence that comes up that throws them off track. The truth is, most people have virtually no shot at keeping their New Year's resolutions on January 2nd, due to mistakes made before willpower ever even comes into play. The key lies not in willpower or motivation, although those things do play a role. Much of the challenge is in setting the goal itself.

Look at this list of the most popular New Year's resolutions for 2010.

- 1) Lose weight
- 2) Be happy
- 3) Fall in love
- 4) Get a job
- 5) Travel
- 6) Quit smoking
- 7) Love
- 8) Get married
- 9) Find love
- 10) Lose my virginity

Notice anything about these resolutions? Five of the ten resolutions involve falling in love, getting married, or having sex – things that require the actions of another person – they're not even under the control of the person making the resolution. Some of them, such as "be happy,"

are so undefined, how could you possibly know on February 1st whether you're keeping it or not? And the rest are so vague, there is no indication of what would constitute success. How much weight do you want to lose? How much travel do you need to do before you've "kept" your resolution? When, exactly, will you quit smoking, and how do you plan on doing it? With resolutions like this, it's no wonder the strong majority of people fail before March.

Put some thought into planning your goal. After all, if you're actually going to spend several months to a year achieving the goal, it warrants at least a couple days thinking about the goal to make sure it's the right one. Also, the less time you put into selecting your goal, the less invested you are in the goal, and the easier it is to cast to the side.

The first and most important step in setting a New Year's Resolution is setting a good goal. What is a good goal? First, you need to know exactly what it is you want to accomplish, and by when you want to accomplish it. It needs to be something that is completely under your control to accomplish, i.e., it does not require luck (I resolve to win the lottery!) or the actions of another person (I will



get married this summer although I'm not dating anyone currently!). And you need to be able to tell when you've accomplished it (am I "being happy" yet?).

### SETTING SMART GOALS

There is a great instrument to use when crafting a goal that gives you the greatest likelihood of success.

SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely. Let's look at each of these in the context of the most popular goal for 2010, losing weight.

**Specific** – Instead of simply saying "I want to lose weight," get specific with your goal. What exactly is it you want to do? Do you want to lose pounds, or body fat? Is it a goal weight you want to get to? Are you going to go to the gym and lift weights? Go jogging and join Weight Watchers? Nail down not just your goal but how you are going to achieve it. Instead of "I'm going to lose weight this year," your goal should be more like this:

1) I am working out once per week during January, to increase to twice per week in February, then 3 times per week from March through June.



2) I am reducing my caloric intake from more than 2500 calories per day by 100 calories each week until I am eating 1700 calories per day.

3) I am going from 204 pounds down to 180 pounds over a six month period, with my waist size going from 38 inches to 33 inches.

**Measurable** – Having your goal be measurable is closely tied to having it be specific. How do you know if you are meeting your goal? Using the example from above, you would be losing 24 pounds over 6 months, or roughly 1 pound per week. You can measure your progress that way. You can also keep track of the number of workouts you've

performed per week, and the average calories consumed per day. For some of the other goals – if you really want to get married or fall in love, you could say "I'm going to request one date per week," or "I will send out 3 emails per week on X dating site." The best goals are measurable in small increments so you can see within a week or two whether you're on pace.

**Attainable** – This goal seems self-explanatory – you obviously want to set a goal that you can attain. Again, you want it to be something that is under your control, like "I will request 2 dates per weekend," rather than "I will go on 2 dates per weekend." A specific weight

goal is more under your control, but it is always good to couple that goal with goals for the number of workouts you will perform and the amount of calories you will consume. This way, the steps to achieve your goal are clearly attainable, whether it takes an extra month to get to your desired weight or not.

**Realistic** – People tend to overestimate what they can accomplish in a short amount of time, like a week, and underestimate what they can accomplish in longer periods of time. It is perfectly fine to aim for high goals, as long as you believe you can attain the goal. Of all of the steps, setting a goal that may seem unreasonably high or unrealistic to others is the last thing I would be worried about in setting a SMART goal.

**Timely** – Set a time when you would like to reach your goal by. This is the most frequently forgotten step in setting a goal. Even those who say they want to lose ten pounds and have planned out an exercise and eating routine to follow will often fail to set a deadline. That leaves open the door for procrastination. Lock yourself in to a date by which you want to reach your goal. "Sometime during 2011" will fail. "By June 1st" is much better.

### **SET ONE GOAL**

Another problem in setting New Year's resolutions is people tend to want to change everything in their lives they are unhappy with, and all at once. The New Year is a good time for reflection; we look back on what we've accomplished over the past year, and think about our lives more holistically. Given adequate

"In a recent study by the University of Minnesota, 80 percent of people give up on their resolutions within two months."

time to reflect, we can all usually come up with several things we would like to change about our lives. The temptation is to try to change everything at once. This approach is almost certain to fail.

Nature encourages evolution. Slow evolution over long periods of time is what creates monumental change. You may have one large shift occur from time to time, but it is usually the result of a monumental event outside of your control, not the calendar turning over to January 1st.

Setting one goal also forces you to choose the one goal that is most important to you. If you can complete one goal in the first 3 months of the year, then you can focus all of your energy on a second goal at that time. Setting too many goals is like trying to try to catch 5 balls thrown at you at the same time: by trying to focus on all of them, you're more likely to drop all of them.

### **WHAT KINDS OF GOALS TO SET**

Not all goals are created equal. Some goals are things that you want to accomplish that by themselves will not have major effects in other areas of your life. Other goals will have profound effects on every other aspect of your life. These goals are called "leverage goals."

Two of the strongest leverage goals one can set are 1) improving your physical health, and 2) improving your financial health.

Not having your physical health or financial health in order makes achieving any other goals extremely difficult. Even if you're not aiming to run a marathon, physical health is of primary importance to achieving success in your life. Not being in decent shape can make you slow, lethargic, and without the energy to achieve even purely non-physical goals. If you're not avoiding overuse of alcohol and drugs, eating the right foods, and doing at least some exercise, you are cheating yourself of valuable and limited energy that can be used to accomplish other goals.

Not having your finances in order can also wreak havoc on your life beyond just your credit score. Financial trouble is one of the largest stresses in many people's lives, and a leading problem in couples' breakups. If you are worrying about your next meal or keeping your lights on, you're not likely to have a lot of mental focus left over to write that best-selling novel or apply to grad school.

In the same way that poor physical or financial health can detract from your



# 2011

other goals, excellent physical and financial health create leverage to help you to achieve other goals. Having several months' expenses saved up in an emergency fund gives you greater options — from not having to work a second job, to having the resources to take a lower paid position in a field you're more interested in, or even allowing you to quit your job and start your own business. If you are exercising and in great shape, you are likely sleeping better, feeling more confident about yourself, and able to have more productive hours during the day. People who are in great shape, physically or financially, likely see a boost in other areas of their lives.

If you have a passion to achieve something else, and your physical and financial health are both in decent shape, then by all means make a New Year's resolution in the area of your passion. If, however, you know that a deficiency in either your finances or physical health is causing you real stress on a day to day basis, you're better off tackling that large problem in front of you before starting on anything else.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability can be key in achieving a New Year's resolution. It can also be tricky.

Conventional wisdom would tell people to share their goals with their friends and family so that other people can help keep them accountable. Theoretically, those people can periodically call you and check up on the progress of your goals. Another idea is that if you tell other people your goals, there is an em-

barrassment factor to hold you accountable; if you don't make your goal, you've shamed yourself in front of everyone that you've told.

One problem with this approach is that the act of telling people your goals has been shown to actually decrease the likelihood that you will achieve your goal. How is this possible? It has been found that sharing your intentions with others gives your brain a "premature sense of completeness." Once you've shared your goal and other people have acknowledged it, it signals the brain that the goal is a "social reality," even if the goal hasn't been reached. A possible solution to this issue: don't share your goal with other people in a manner that will encourage congratulations. Instead of saying "I'm going to lose 10 pounds by March 1st," say "I'm 10 pounds overweight, so please check in on me every Sunday to see if I've gone jogging 3 times that week."

Another issue with telling your goals to other people is certain goals tend not to be supported by certain people. If your goal is "I'm going to get promoted at work," it's probably not something you want to share with co-workers who may feel as though you're trying to position yourselves above them. If your goal is "I'm going to lose 10 pounds," it may not be supported by your friend who has historically struggled with his weight. While

they may not explicitly discourage you, they may subconsciously fail to encourage you in a way that will push towards your goal.

Two other ways to keep yourself accountable without having to keep your goals secret:

- 1) Put money on the line. If your plan is to lose 10 pounds by March 1st, put \$100 (or whatever amount will be sufficiently motivating) in an envelope, give it to someone trusted, and tell them that they have to watch you step on a scale on March 1st, and if you are not 10 pounds lighter, the money is theirs to keep.
- 2) Select accountability partners who also share their goals with you. That way, you're not threatening someone who is perfectly fine with stagnating in life — you can both encourage the other to achieve your respective goals without making the other feel guilty.

Ultimately, you are in control of your ability to reach your New Year's resolutions. You don't have to simply rely on willpower to do what it is you're trying to do. Put these tactics to use in planning your New Year's resolution, and set yourself up to not have to set the same resolution in 2012.

*Aaron Thomas blogs at [themastermind-project.com](http://themastermind-project.com)*

# Bodybuilding psychology

text AKUMA01

I'm wincing now, as the sweat proceeds to trickle down, droplets pooling beneath me. The air feels hotter than it did a moment ago. My lips are drawn wide, mouth agape. Gravity seems to be increasing by the moment. "Get up," echoes through my head, as I feel my body start to collapse. "GET up," comes again, as my body begins to stabilize. "GET UP," I scream at myself, digging to the very depths of my being. The weight rumbles, and the Rack loudly clangs. I lean back, my 500lb squat in full scope. I smile, and drop to the ground. "I just need a moment," a short sentence that took nearly a minute itself to say. But there's joy in that pain, ecstasy through that anguish, growth through enduring. And with that thought, we throw another plate onto the bar...

So what drives us? What puts this splinter of a crazy thought – to wreck yourself day in and day out at the gym, and to weigh, measure, and calculate everything you eat – deep into our mind? Are we crazy? Do we have inferiority complexes? Are we simply obsessed as some would claim? Or is Obsession truly just a term the weak and inferior use to describe the dedicated?

The Drive... nothing else can be so haunting, while still feeling so great simultaneously. It's what gets us up 2

hours early to make and eat a breakfast rivaling the daily intake of most. It's what makes us spend tireless hours in a gym, constantly pushing limits and lifting collectively more in one session than some would lift through a decade. The Drive is easily one of the most important aspects of making any sort of headway in a gym. It's what separates those who look different month to month and those who have not changed a visual notch through the year's worth of personal training. Without the drive, there is absolutely no way one could last in this sport. I repeat, absolutely NO WAY. There is far too much dieting, weighing, planning, figuring, lifting, dedication, and time (OH the time) required for someone to make a decent amount of progress.

**This is why we can always** look to those who paved the way for us, those who explored the wilds, and lived through the treacherous trek up the mountain, to stand at its pinnacle and hold the glorious title, Olympia. We look to them for guidance, whether it be scientific, or emotional. Arnold has said, in "Bodybuilding... To be successful, you must dedicate yourself 100% to your training, diet and mental approach." Anything short of Absolute will produce failure. And that's why we push, that's why we hit those walls called limits and plow through them. And no, it's not always

easy. We often teeter, stumble, collapse... but "Strength does not come from [simply never losing]. Your struggles develop your strength. When you overcome hardships, that is strength." The bodybuilders of old are always inspirational, but it's up to YOU to be walking...

**There are two main paths** in life, regardless of your actual goals or desires – There is the Pre-blazed, tremendously beaten path, the one that drifts alongside a fence, with a constant horizon in view, that seemingly goes on for an eternity. And then there is the other – a dark, forever shadowed forest, containing a path that had never been formed. A forest that blocked all sunlight, had no form of directional guidance, and only preceded a mountain that seemed to scrape the sky. Are YOU one that dares stray from the beaten path?

For that's what bodybuilding is, straying from the beaten path. You put yourself through a proverbial hell. Beginners waste time, wandering through the dark forest, looking for some kind of sign. There are no lanterns, there is no path. There is simply darkness and solitude. You're alone here. None but others like you understand your goals, your passions, or your constant scrutiny of yourself. We've all been there, we've all treaded this prison of vegetation, look-



# @spirituality

ing, searching for some form of guidance, something saying we are headed the right way: "How do I train?" "What do I eat?" "How do I do this?"; whilst the more advanced hang from the mountain, forever climbing straight up, forever going for more, unsatisfied with themselves and their results, aiming for nothing short of the heavens.

A bodybuilder's Psychological processes... What goes on in the heads of bodybuilders? Well I'd like to take a moment right now to dispel any and all previously thought ideas such as "Bodybuilders are muscle-bound meatheads that are on the verge of retardation." Building muscle is an art form, one that takes decades; Size, symmetry, proportioning, all things that some miss. Dieting is a science; Gaining muscle, losing fat, rationing cardio, judging weight loss, water/sodium manipulation.

Bodybuilders are probably the closest thing to present day Renaissance Men there is. Efficiency is the plan, fitting workouts to your body's style of growth. Muscle hypertrophy is the goal, using said workouts to construct the best possible physique that your body allows. But as I said, no one walks into the gym, starts a program, and says "Alright, 4x8s and this split is the best thing for me to build muscle with." Things take time, experiments are conducted, body compo-

sitions are tested, visual aspects come into play, essentially diagramming and mapping one's own body.

**This is why the** bodybuilder's mentality HAS to be of a "Never quit, Never surrender" form. As the body changes, it adapts. Movements, weights, sets, reps, form, partials, etc are all areas in which we must test. And it's not as if testing a certain stimuli can be directly recorded immediately. Time is key here, and that's why so many are deterred so early. That's why this drive constitutes a "Billion Dollar Bullshit Industry." Everyone is looking for the quick method, the fast acting magical pill, or some new ridiculous machine that "Makes you feel like you're burning hundreds of calories while not moving at all!" This weakness of shortcuts finds its way into nutrition, arguably the most important aspect of muscle gain/fat loss, where you see certain brands boasting products with a whopping 20 calories less than competitor products. Or you see special, weight loss water products. The ridiculous, ironical truth of it all is that a majority of these people would lose weight if they ate more!

It is only when we stop putting our trust behind nonsense, and start pushing ourselves that we truly grow. If you want to make some kind of headway in terms of



physical appearance, strength, or muscle size, then you have to accept the necessary burden of it all. Research; investigate foods, the affect of different nutrients and the reasoning behind certain things. Don't find one theory and accept it as Golden Law. To grow, we must learn. To learn, we must search. To search, we must take that first step. So I say to you, if nothing else is to be taken from this, 'Keep Pushing.' You will constantly encounter forks in the path, walls, or dead ends. Strength comes in willing yourself around and continuing the journey.

**That's probably the hardest** part about all this, the fact that there is no scapegoat. There is no other to place blame on. You have yourself, and that's it.

DO you have what it takes?

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