



Scott

Try Caring

And Other Priceless Advice My Clients Gave Me

By Scott Ginsberg

Ten years ago, I hired myself.

And it's been the greatest experience I could ask for.

As a writer, publisher, performer and consultant, to say that I got what I came for would be the understatement of the century. I feel like I put a nickel into the slot machine and got a million dollar payout.

I attribute this to the cool, smart people I've had the privilege of working with. Unbeknownst to them, I've probably learned from them more than they have from me.

This book is a fifty-day devotional of priceless advice I've gleaned from my experience.

For those who have stood by my side, you are the story I tell.

1. **Actually start with the customer.** Make tangible efforts to be relevant within their lifestyle. Help people with what they're already doing instead of artificially squeezing yourself into their overcrowded lives. Then, when you call them on the phone, you'll prove that you care enough to understand their world. Then, be a stand for their greatness. Put their name up in lights. Give people a front row seat to their brilliance. Instead of sending prospects an article of interest, write a blog post that turns their company into the article of interest itself, then dedicate to them. Then, when you send them an email, the subject line will edify their genius. Focus on that, and the sale will make itself.

2. **Apple users don't need instructions.** In a pinch, they can always hop online to find product information sheets, troubleshooting pages, installation handbooks, online tutorials, user guides and owners manuals. But why search for instructions when you already have permission? Steve Jobs democratized technology. He created products that don't require anything but curiosity. You just open the box, press the button and let your imagination carry you away. Meanwhile, his competitors at Blackberry, whose 329-page instruction manual could pass for a university textbook, are seeing an eighty percent decline in stock price. Simplicity is isn't just elegance – it's eloquence. Make it beyond easy for customers to use your products. Invest the majority of your time, money and energy creating beautiful things that don't require a degree to operate. And people won't think twice about taking a bite out of your apple.

3. **Be a better customer.** Considering how much time, money and effort companies spend on customer service training; we're never really taught to become better customers ourselves. Because in most of the day's transactions, we're the customers – not the servers. And if we truly want to have a joyful, remarkable experience, we can't just sit back and wait for people to read our minds and make us happy. We have to help them help us. As guests, patients, viewers, clients, patrons, members, visitors, users, callers, listeners and customers, we have to make ourselves more servable. Otherwise we're equally at fault for not getting what we want, the way we want it. It starts with expectational clarity. Sharing what's important to us. Letting people in on our preferences. And delivering a vision of what happiness looks like. Take a massage studio. If we don't want the therapist yapping our ear off during the entire session, we need to speak up and let her know that silence is essential to our relaxation. Otherwise we end up getting mad at her for being chatty and ruining the experience, when all we had to do was take two seconds to say, "Oh, and I prefer to keep quiet most of the time."

4. **Caring isn't a technique.** True service isn't about labor and time, it's about intention and attention. It's not about bastardizing caring into a technique, it's about broadcasting the willingness to and the consistency with which you do care. When the restaurant has an hour wait, takes down my cell phone number on their iPad, encourages me to walk around the neighborhood and promises to send me a text message five minutes before my table is ready, consider me served. When the financial advisor calls me the day the stock market crashes, spends a half hour briefing me on the state of the economy, then sets up a meeting to sit down and talk about the future of my investments, consider me served. When the hotel concierge checks me in and wheels out a stack of every bible from every major religion, including a book on atheism, then asks me which book I would like to keep in my dresser drawer, consider me served. These companies bothered to bothered. They dared to care. They took a minute to make a moment, showed up when it mattered, and did something tangible that made a difference.

5. **Choose your currency wisely.** During a heated discussion on reward and recognition, my friend Julie, who works for a charitable art foundation, said something that captured my curiosity. *“I would rather get a holiday party than a holiday bonus.”* Her theory was, a check for a thousand bucks could buy a lot of cool stuff. But a night of celebration could deepen intimacy, create memories and build friendships that last forever. And to Julie, that was worth a lot more. Of course, that’s just one person’s opinion. She values belonging and connection over money, but I imagine all of her coworkers wouldn’t automatically agree with her. And they shouldn’t, either. They’re human beings. Each person speaks a different love language. And if we want them to stick around, people ought to be paid in their preferred currency. Me, I would have taken the holiday party.

6. **Coin a new word, create a new world.** I come from a long line of merchandisers. Every generation of my family, going back to The Great Depression, was in the business of promoting and selling their wares. Shoes, hardlines, cookware, apparel, gifts, closeouts, discount goods, problem inventories, they've peddled it all. So when I started own company ten years ago, I followed suit. The only difference was, my product was intangible. As a writer, publisher, performer and consultant, instead of selling shoes, I sold ideas. I carried my truth to market, every day. And that meant I had an obligation to ask one question, over and over: "*What's that called?*" And any time I witness something, I name it. I give it a phrase, a brand, a title, a label, a handle, a designation, a moniker or a signature. I do this for a few reasons. Partly because it's in my blood. When you come from a family of merchandisers, that's what you do. You name things. Also, I want to do justice to the things I notice. When I see something that's a beautiful reminder of what could be, I want to make it easy to share with people. But the big reason I name things is, when you name it, you create the category. When you create the category, you set the standard. When you set the standard, you own the mindshare. When you own the mindshare, you become the superior voice. And when you become the superior voice, anyone who follows will be compared to you.

7. **Confusion is expensive.** If people don't know what to expect when they come to your door, the organization will burn piles of money trying to reeducate, reassure and reaffirm people who they are. Smart companies start early. They build expectational clarity to buttress the transaction. That way, they create greater anticipation in the customer's mind, capturing their imagination for what's come. Icontact is a perfect digital example. The moment you subscribe to any publication on their platform, you're prompted with questions: What are you going to get? How can you ensure our email gets to you? Is my information secure? Then, each of the answers is custom written by the publishers themselves. And all of this happens before you receive your first issue. Weiner Circle is the perfect analog example. Customers rarely show up to wait in line without first hearing crazy stories from friends, viewing fun pictures online or learning instructions on how, specifically to order. A word to the wise, a chocolate shake isn't what you think. Whatever business you're in, ambiguity is the enemy of profitability. But learn to telegraph reliability, eliminate guesswork and deliver a series of predictable promises, and you'll save a bundle.

8. **Consistency is the best marketing.** When we tell our story the same way, all the time, everywhere, people don't just buy from us once, they join with us forever. Stay at any Ritz Carlton around the globe, and the employees offer the same warm welcome, deliver the same anticipatory service and embody the same attitude. Take a class at any Bikram Yoga Studio around the world, and the instructors will use the same language, teach the same postures and practice the same philosophy. Fly Virgin Air to any city around the world, and the flight crew will have the same casual demeanor, the same friendly nuance and the same attractive design. Same, same, same. It's the four-letter word people expect from us in the future.

9. **Create a holy shit moment.** An interaction so soaked in wow, that people can't help but tell the world. Try making an intentional point of overdelivery. When customers ask you for an arm and a leg, hand them a hacksaw. Try responding promptly, not just when you can. When customers send you a message, get back to them instantly and watch what happens. Try stalking just enough to learn what they love. When customers show up, give them a personalized gift you couldn't possibly have known about. Try invoking something obscure. When customers come back, mention something from their last visit they barely remember. Try memorializing their brand. When customers get your email, demonstrate a valid reason for your persistence with a value forward attachment. The more holy shit moments we create, the more money we make.

10. **Delivery is not enough.** When someone pays you money to perform a service for them, doing great work is the bare minimum. The big win is when you make clients look like heroes to the people who count on them. My friend Chris does video production with large corporations. The day he starts any project, he sends his contact person a link to a private webpage that maps out every single process and timeline for the job. This embeds expectational clarity into the work, but more importantly, gives the client something tangible to show to her boss. After all, people who work at big companies love nothing more than to walk into their superior's office, show them that they're in control, and walk out with a greater sense of accomplishment. That's called the second customer. And everyone has one. No matter what your position is in the service industry, always be mindful of the peripheral characters who work downstream of the lead role. Because if you can guaranteed that clients will look like heroes in their eyes, your services will be in demand for a long time.

11. **Every one of my nametags is handwritten.** People assume they're printed because they all look so similar, but I assure them that I personally write every single one. And not just because I'm an anal-retentive obsessive-compulsive control freak. There is a method behind the madness. My brand is done by hand. By writing the nametags myself, I inject soul into my conversations. I give my values a heartbeat. I bring my humanity to the moment. I exude interactional casualness wherever I go. And I make my exchanges with people unexpectedly personal and memorable. Because I care about people's experience when they're around me. Had I chose to print the nametags en masse, to outsource the human function and automate my authenticity, the brand wouldn't be honest. Of course, I'm just one guy. The debate I've been having with my clients is, what happens when your brand becomes so big that you're no longer able to do it by hand? Just ask Disney. Their artists built the most magical brand in the history of entertainment, by hand. Just ask Taylor. Their luthiers built the most innovative brand in the history of acoustic guitars, by hand. Just ask Etsy. Their users built the most vibrant independent online marketplace, by hand. Looks like the size of the brand doesn't affect the use of the hand.

12. **Feedback has become a fetish.** Businesses plead with customers to keep their seven-inch receipt, go to their website, fill out a short survey and enter their name for the chance to win free drinks, gift cards and other cash prizes, all for the low price of their email addresses, which will most likely be spammed with future offers of the same ilk and potentially vulnerable to online privacy violations from hackers. Meanwhile, customers don't feel special, don't feel heard and don't feel part of a community. They just feel like statistics. And don't get me wrong, I'm all for building a listening platform. But surely there are other, better, cheaper ways to gauge customer sentiment than wasting paper on eight inch receipts. My friend Janelle is the social media director for a large grocery chain. When her customers have feedback to share, they don't use surveys – they use cell phones. Whatever question, comment, complaint or suggestion is on their mind, they publish online. Instantly. For all the world to see. And no trees have to die. No wonder her company was ranked in *Forbes* magazine as one of the best in the nation. The thing is, people have always had opinions, but now they're delivered to our face. Right now. From all around the world. For free. Forever. Whether we like or not. And if you're trying to decide which technology to invest millions of dollars in, just so you can relentlessly tug customers on the sleeves and trick them into liking you, think again. Asking what survey to use is the wrong question. What matters is, where are people already giving their opinions – whether you're asking for them or not – and how can you convert that into a smarter conversation?

13. **Fish in the barrel.** We're told to avoid clichés like the plague.

Then again, clichés start to matter when personal experiences remind us why people said them in the first place. Warnings about silk purses and sow's ears never quite make sense until we spend four years in a toxic relationship desperately trying to morph our partner a clone of ourselves. So what we learn is that most clichés do represent genuine empathy. Centuries ago, the first time a cliché was uttered, somebody somewhere felt better. Somebody experienced a greater sense of perspective and comfort while dealing with life's difficulties. Back then, it wasn't a cliché – it was an act of compassion. Years later, clichés are useful as advanced warnings and memory aids. They're helpful for making sense of an ambiguous world. And they offer us a handle by which can lift things. And even though they're not the best choice for opening a speech, writing a cover letter or titling a book, sometimes a cliché is as good as gold.

14. **Generosity always pays.** It's one thing to be generous, give gifts, make an impression and create a moment worth remembering. But if you're hoping to run up the score just to guilt people into working with you, if you're trying to make something happen in the first minute of the conversation, you don't have someone's best interests in mind. Creating a sense of indebtedness and social pressure to reciprocate doesn't work anymore. Instead of trying to make a sale, earn the right to a relationship. *Begin with some light stalking.* Spend twenty minutes online looking for that one kernel, that one detail, that triggers a whole character, even a whole world, for your prospect. Something there's no possible way you could have known. Then, when you show up at their office, hold something in your hand that speaks to that. *Help people think differently.* Bring them new ideas. Create and capitalize on the content others neglect. Find value in the discarded, see things nobody else can see, then paint a picture that changes everything. Then, when you sit down with people, the ideas you share will equip them to spot a new story with their own eyes. *Have you earned the right to a relationship?*

15. **Give people a greater sense of occasion.** Turn a routine arrival, subscription, payment or membership into a happening, a big deal and a moment worth remembering. When you practice yoga at Bikram Los Angeles, new students get their name written on a huge chalkboard in the lobby to commemorate their first class. When you order speakers from Noogi, their trademark wooden shipping containers turn the routine chore of opening boxes into a substantial moment of celebration. When you board the Disney Fantasy, crewmembers announce your family's name on the intercom system for the entire cruise to hear. When you buy tickets for Once, actors encourage audience members to join them onstage for preshow jam sessions and intermission popup pubs. When you sign up for Zipwhip, employees celebrate new customer acquisitions with a whimsical automated flag raising to keep victories visible. Each of these organizations makes the mundane memorable in a fun, unique and engaging way that's consistent with their brand and worth sharing.

16. **Information is invaluable.** If you can find out who they are, what they read, where they work, what they do, how they think, what's important to them and how to reach them, you're off to an awesome sales start. In light of the digital revolution, however, there's another piece of information that might be even more valuable than any of those: *What they're saying*. That's the biggest misconception about the web, more specifically, social media. It's not a sales tool, it's a hearing aid. It's not a cash register, it's a listening platform. And it's not a device for tricking people into giving you money, it's a direct channel into how and why they make decisions. People are sharing more ideas, more experiences, more opinions and more thoughts than ever before in history. And all you have to do is listen. All you have to do is care enough to understand their world. That way, you can help people with what they're already doing, instead of artificially squeezing yourselves into their overcrowded lives. That way, you can learn how you fit into their world, not how they fit into your marketing plan. And if you're lucky, what they're saying will soon include something positive about you.

17. **Innovation is impossible without imagination.** Only when our curiosity overwhelms our certainty, only when we're more open to the complete possibility of what could be, does everything change. Kodak failed to innovate. Instead of reading the writing on the wall and adapting to the digital world, they clung to their analog past and went bankrupt. And the irony is, they were actually the first film company to develop digital cameras, and the first to acquire an online photo-sharing site. And yet, Kodak died with over a thousand digital imaging patents under their belt. Because they never outgrew the belief that they were in the business of printing pictures. Had they used their imaginations, had they been more open to the complete possibility of what could be, maybe they still would be.

18. **It was worth it.** There are four words we need to hear. Whether we're interacting with customers, employees, students, vendors, fans, readers or listeners, the ultimate goal is to be worth it in their eyes. Worth noticing, worth crossing the street for, worth standing in line for, worth taking a picture of, worth paying extra for, worth showing off, worth socializing around, worth blogging about, worth sharing with others, worth being tired for, worth getting yelled at for, worth being sore for, worth sitting through traffic for, worth coming back for, and worth saving forever.

19. **It's hard to be weird alone.** When it's just us, we feel like outcasts. When it's just us, there's nobody to lean against. But when find the people who applaud, mirror and amplify our weirdness, our loneliness disappears. Now we belong. Now we feel normal in our weirdness. And wow we experience a spiritual release like nothing else in the world. *Without that kind of human support, our spirit collapses.* The goal is to find a safe place to geek out. A sacred spot where we can be our most emotional, most irrational selves. That special venue where we don't need permission to let the geek come out and play. No fear of ridicule, no fear of being feared. Just somewhere – either online, in person or both – where we can honor each other's uniqueness while reveling in our own. The good news is, it's easier than ever to find this place. The bad new is, it's lonelier than ever when we don't.

20. **Knocking is an interruption.** The days of darkening doorsteps to bother people into buying from us are over. Instead, we need to go where the door is already open. To follow the path of permission, greet the people who invited us in once before and gently remind them why we're worth keeping around. What if, during a slow season of business, we spent a few days personally emailing every single person who ever gave us money, and asked them to buy again? I tried that once, and it worked like a dream. But not because I used a clever subject line or a strategic sales letter template. Rather, because I had already spend years delivering a value forward campaign that brought them joy, left them better and made them hungry for more. And now, when I walked through the door, all they had to do was say yes.

21. **Lead with cool, not possible.** Lester Young was the original king of cool. In the late twenties, not only did he originate the hipster ethos with his cool tenor sax style, he literally coined the word “cool” in jazz circles as a slang term for someone, someplace or something that created a smile in the mind. Nearly a century later, cool still matters. In fact, cool matters more than ever. With the end of mass, the rise of tribes and the popularity of social sharing applications like Pinterest and Instagram, people don’t just know it when they see it – they share it when they see it. And while cool isn’t a guarantor of success, a substitute for quality or a panacea to anonymity or, it’s certainly a powerful accelerator to help our ideas travel. But most of us take the safe bet. We’d rather bow to the altar of practicality than knock at the door of whimsy. Instead of asking, “Will this be cool?” we ask, “Will this be possible?” Can you imagine what our world would look like if Steve Jobs thought that way? He didn’t design for practicality – he designed so customers would lick their computers. Literally. Apple products belong in our mouths. If that’s not cool, I don’t know what is. The point is, if we plan to change the world, we need a reasonable amount of irrationality. Starting with what’s possible can be profitable, but starting with what’s cool can be priceless.

22. **Like buttons are nothing new.** Long before social media governed our relationships, long before the web changed our economy and long before digital technology shifted our culture, we all had like buttons. They may not have been visible. Or clickable. Or even called like buttons. But we all had them. *Still do.* In our nature is a built-in need for approval from others. It doesn't come from a well of insecurity. It doesn't stem from a sense of unworthiness. It doesn't grow from a lack of positive affirmation. Humans are social creatures who were born to be liked. And no matter how independent, confident and popular we think we are, no matter how often we remind the world that we're not operating out of a need for their approval, it's time we finally stop bullshitting ourselves and just admit it: *We want to be liked, by everybody, all the time.* And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. As long as we don't violate our own constitution. As long as we don't let it become our controlling motivation. As long as we don't change who we are for every person who doesn't like us. As long as we don't allow our need for approval to bring us to the brink of a nervous breakdown. Let's wear our like buttons for the all the world to press. *If we don't need people's approval, why do we need to keep reminding them of that?*

23. **Love is a temple that can crumble.** We can love what we do, but we can't fall in love with what we do. That type of attachment will be the end of us. Nothing against love, but when we're smitten by our own enterprise, hopelessly enchanted by our own work, the blinders of the heart obstruct the vision of the brand. And like Narcissus, infatuated with our own reflection, we can't see what's obvious, practical and profitable. Sometimes we fall in love with *our own technology*. And we never question our own assumptions about redundancy. Take Kodak. They filed for bankruptcy because they failed to innovate and adapt to the digital world. Sometimes we fall in love with *our own inventory*. And it's hard to imagine why the rest of the world doesn't feel the same way. Take BlackBerry. Their sales plummeted last year because they never realized the mobile world had already passed them by. Sometimes we fall in love with *our own press*. And we spend all our time soaking in the accolades instead of trying to get better. Take Toyota. Their quality slipped because they obsessed over company legend instead of customer legroom. Sometimes we fall in love with *our own ideas*. And we get so close to them that we overestimate their potential. Take John Carter. Pixar lost two hundred million dollars because this boring, bloated, poorly marketed epic couldn't recoup their massive budget. Sometimes we fall in love with *our own perspective*. And terminal certainty blocks our acceptance of better ideas. Like Lehman Brothers. They filed the largest bankruptcy in the nation's history and started a global financial crisis because they were too big to fail. I still believe that business without love, isn't. But I also believe that emotion distorts evaluation. And if we want our brand to stick around, we owe it to our customers, our employees and ourselves to love what we do, but not fall in love with what we do.

24. **Make your brand a badge.** One of my clients serves on the board of national charity. Her biggest complaint about the organization was, they don't know how to thank their donors. At least, not in a way that's memorable, unique and personal. Not in a way that encourages them to pledge continued financial support. Sherry's charity defaults to the same, boring outreach efforts that every other organization on the planet uses. Thank you letters, social media shout outs, website leader boards, interactive gratitude pages, certificates of appreciate, membership dinners, newspaper ads, gift cards, progress reports, customized video messages, personal phone calls, public acknowledgements, free facility tours, pictures of staff members, annual report mentions. But then I posed a new question. *What if the organization gave its donors a gift that reminded them why they donated in the first place?* Something tangible. Something beautiful. Something to memorialize the mission of the organization. And something donors could wear as a badge, share with their friends and be proud to display in their office or home. Forget about churn, people like that donate for life. Because they don't buy the brand, they join it.

25. **Nine words worth repeating.** *“Thank you for allowing me to learn something today.”* That was the exit line from the customer service agent of Bank of America. Not, thank you for calling. Not, is there anything else I can do for you? Not, are you satisfied with your level of service today? Not, would you be willing to take a minute to answer our online survey about your customer experience for the chance to win a thousand dollars? Just thank you. Thank you for teaching me something. In his gratitude, he demonstrated respect. In his ignorance, he projected vulnerability. In his unexpectedness, he created memorability. I wonder if your service department can do all that in nine words.

26. **No one needs us.** Everything they used to need from us – information, answers, ideas, advice – is available to them right now, for free, in perfect form, forever. It didn't used to be that way. There was a time when we were vessels of knowledge. Pillars of wisdom. Narrators of the story of life. And paragons of experience that those who were hungry could climb mountains to pursue, even if only to touch the hem of our garment. *But now people just google stuff.* Nobody needs to wonder, think, reflect, ask, create, mediate, listen or read. Just download, verify and repeat. Download, verify and repeat. And if we don't do something to reverse this trend, our species is not going to make it. If the pendulum doesn't start to swing the other way, we are not going to last. Human beings are social creatures. We need to need each other. Our craving for belonging, connectedness and togetherness is no less essential than food, water or shelter. But if we insist on ignoring, avoiding and circumventing each other – if we continue to solely depend on the pixels of digital surrogates instead of the perspective of actual people – we will continue to become less human by the hour. Eventually, we'll serve no purpose other than fleshy holsters for electronic devices. We don't need more access to information. *We need more access to each other.*

27. **Our priorities are way out of wack.** The assumption is that we need to make something better, sell something cheaper or ship something faster. *No, what we need is to have smarter conversations.* We might change the interaction model, by being unreasonably accessible where the rest of the world is hard to reach. *That's a smarter conversation.* We might build our listening platform, by turning social media into a hearing aid while the rest of the world uses it as a sales tool. *That's a smarter conversation.* We might position ourselves as teachers who solve expensive problems while the rest of the world is selfish with their knowledge. *That's a smarter conversation.* We might create acts that make emotional connections while the rest of the world is bothering and interrupting people with advertisement. *That's a smarter conversation.* Point being, customers already have everything they need. *Except us.* In the flesh. Ready to listen to them. *Why don't we sell that?*

28. **People are afraid to act like people.** Especially owners who are often terminally certain, unwilling to admit wrongdoing and allergic to apology. And because they've been around for thirty years, they never listen to anybody because the company has enough customers where they can afford not to care. Why personally respond to negative online reviews in a manner that blows people away and creates new customers for life? Why not use social media as a listening platform, view complaints as gifts and turn feedback into inspiration? And why not admit you've outgrown some of your beliefs, upgrade your attitude and rebuild your understanding of yourself? I'll tell you why. Because that would mean changing, and changing means admitting you were wrong. If we plan to move forward as human beings, we can't be afraid to be human beings. That means being wrong, imperfect, vulnerable and real. Not authentic or transparent or whatever other bullshit corporate buzzword rules the day. Human. People. Our native posture. The one that got us into business in the first place.

29. **People buy what we aren't.** If having a brand means taking a stand, then our job is to make it abundantly clear to the marketplace what we are the antithesis of. Who we aren't, what we don't want, what we won't do and what we refuse to stand for. This boundary, this stake in the ground, is the sweetest freedom available. It makes our brand simpler by reducing the burden of choice. It gives our brand room to maneuver within the vicinity of our values. It helps our brand focus on the small corner of the world we've chosen to serve. When we choose our enemy, when we become the antichrist to something, we leave no doubt in people's minds what we stand for. We are defined by what we decline. Franklin Covey, the leading provider of time management materials and corporate assessments, operates a few dozen stores nationwide. But if you stop by the mall on a Sunday, you'll notice the following sign on their door: "*Closed Sundays to allow employees time for family and worship.*" Even on the second busiest shopping day of the week, they refuse to take people's money. And as a result, they've lost millions of dollars each year for the past two decades. All because they put their beliefs on the line. They know who they aren't. And they're not afraid to shout it from the rooftops.

30. **People don't want duplicate happiness.** It's only when we help them experience a joy they can't have in other areas of their lives that we create a real, lasting and profitable connection. It's only when we offer them a one-time, limited edition, never before/never again moment that actually captures their imagination, that we win their hearts forever. It all depends on our embodiment of three powerful words: *And nowhere else*. True exclusivity. Sun Studios offers this kind of joy to their session musicians. Anybody in the world can sit down in the most famous booth in the world, actually play music with the very instruments Elvis once used, and feel like real rock stars – if only for three and half minutes. True exclusivity. *And nowhere else*. It's rare, and that's precisely why it's remarkable.

31. **People pay for possibility.** Ever been to Lifetime Fitness? These facilities are a marvel of modern exercise. Consider the amenities: Two lap pools. Concert quality cycling theater. Four hardwood basketball courts. Multiple machine options for each body part. One hundred thousand square feet of exercise space. Hundreds of cardio choices with no waiting, guaranteed. Sound excessive? Sound wasteful? Maybe. But at the gym, it's not that we need it, it's that it's possible. And we will always pay for possibility. Lifetime doesn't sell fitness – they sell hope. Lots of it.

32. **Profit motive, schmoft motive.** One of my clients runs a recruiting agency. He called me for lunch one day, saying he needed an hour to vent, preferably with someone outside of the company. I was happy to oblige. After a few minutes of small talk, Ray shared a comment I'll never forget. According to his most recent company survey, the biggest complaint about the management team was: *"All you ever do is ask us to make money."* Ray wasn't sure why that was a problem. Frankly, I wasn't sure either. Seemed like a reasonable request to me. Especially from the president of the company. Then I remembered the advice of Peter Drucker, who said that the purpose of a business is to make a customer, not a profit. Which doesn't make money less important. But if profit is our only motive, we're going to be left with an empty enterprise.

33. **Put yourself out of business.** My friend Bill is a chiropractor. In the past five years, he's sent over one hundred of his patients to the yoga studio down the street from his clinic, where he is also a student himself. The other day his assistant yelled at him for sending too much business away. He feared the patients would fall in love with yoga and never come back from another adjustment again. But Bill, a true professional, a true artist, a true champion of human health, told his assistant that a good doctor tells his patients, "I hope you never have to come in here again." That's the difference between profit motive and people motive. One earns money – the other earns trust.

34. **Reverse word of mouth.** I recently chatted with woman who ran a mom and pop garden center. When we got on the topic of word of mouth, Ellen bragged about how her customers rarely told people about her plants. I was confused. Anonymity didn't seem like something to be proud of. Until she told me what one of her customers told her. *"I love your flowers, so please don't send me your catalogues. I don't want my neighbors to know where I buy them."* Yes, it's a selfish thing to request. And yes, it's a frustrating marketing dilemma for any business to manage. But this level of loyalty, this echelon of exclusivity, might contain huge leverage potential. Sometimes buzz that goes the wrong way, goes a long way. Because if a business is willing to stay small, willing to focus all of its energy on a single, narrow, high-end micro audience – who buys enough to keep the lights on – maybe it doesn't matter if not everybody's talking about us. Maybe all we need is a small handful of people who love us to help our brand last forever.

35. **Sign your work.** I recently talked a woman who designed her own wedding gown. When I saw a picture of the dress, I asked where she planned to sign it. After all, it truly was a stunning work art. She said hadn't given it much thought. Funny. I tend to give these things a lot of thought. Seems to me, if we don't sign it, why ship it? A crucial part of being an artist is signing our work. Taking pride in our creations and putting our name on them for people to see. It's not narcissism or shameless self-promotion. And it's not born out of some kind of artistic insecurity. It's simply part of the job description. Taking accountability for our art. When we express ourselves, there's nothing wrong with signing a name on the self we express.

36. **Something has to change.** If we want our businesses to thrive, we have to make a move. Fortunately, we have options. Maybe we'll hire somebody to do the things we shouldn't be doing, that way we can focus on the activities we love, we're great at and that have the highest return. Maybe we'll build a digital empire and make money while we sleep, that way we can enable multiple streams of predictable income that stabilize our enterprise. Maybe we'll work a different axis that positions us an idiosyncratic exception to the standard, that way we avoid competing for the same shelf space as everybody else. Maybe we'll play a bigger game altogether, that way we can earn mass appeal and use that attention to kick open professional doors previously unavailable to us. Maybe we'll chase our fifteen minutes of fame, that way we can leverage our celebrity status and increased visibility into higher fees and better projects. Maybe we'll keep punching along, that way our micro-efforts gradually move the entrepreneurial pile forward a little more each day. *Lots of options.* The hard part, then, is deciding whether to pick one, pick a few or pick them all.

37. **Stick your fingers in your ears.** If we're too busy listening to everybody, we'll never hear the sound of our own voice. On one hand, we could listen to what people say they want. Do market research and focus groups until we're blue in the face. And then launch something that predictably fits into their nice little box. *It's the safe path that pleases people, satisfies their expectations and challenges the competition for a while.* On the other hand, we could figure out what people are going to want before they do. Give them what they don't realize they need. And hope that they get to a point where they can't live without it. *That's the bold path that changes people, captures their imagination and erases the competition forever.* Steve Jobs rarely gave the customers what they wanted. He believed people didn't know what they wanted until somebody showed them. So he spent his career showing them. And the entire world watched in awe.

38. **The draw of social media.** Clearly, it's automatic listenership. Which makes sense, considering people are lonely and want to be listened to. And when they can scratch that itch for free, instantly and everywhere, it's hard to resist. But the number of followers, friends and subscribers you have doesn't necessarily mean people are listening. This calls for a heroic dose of humility. Do people actually care about your feelings, or is it just simulated compassion? Do people actually dig your work, or did they just friend you so you would reciprocate back to them? Do people actually take an interest in your lives, or are you just a random number in another faceless, fake relationship? And do people actually want to connect with you, or are you just the next stop on their transcontinental digital pissing contest? You may never know. And that's the hard part about the social media world. Sometimes it feels like you're winking in the dark. All you can hope is that your work, the ambition that fuels it and the audience who consumes it is enough to make money, make a difference and meet your quota of usefulness. Just something to think about before you publish your next tweet.

39. **The fear of irrelevancy.** The other night I had dinner with a group of travel agents. I was curious how the economic, technological and generational shifts were affecting their industry, so I asked what the future of their profession looked like. And without skipping a beat, this one woman launched into a story that blew my mind. About a week ago, she was talking to the cashier at a local bakery. When the guy asked what she did for a living, Cindy said she was a travel agent. The cashier replied, “I thought you all were dead!” Proof once again, there’s nothing more frightening than the prospect of irrelevancy. *How do you stay up with the world?*

40. **The five-finger discount.** The Bible is interesting. It's the most popular, most printed, most published, most purchased, most read, most recognized, most translated, most demanded, most donated, most circulated, most owned and most influential book in the world. *But it's also the most stolen.* And yet, people rarely put up a fuss. In fact, it's the exact opposite. Every time another copy is stolen, the people who love the book the most never view it as a loss, but as a new opportunity to inspire someone's life. That's how passionate they are about their message. They'd rather let people steal the very book that instructed them to be honest in the first place, than risk watching another soul go unreached. I even met a woman from a local congregation who said their church allows anyone who doesn't own a Bible, to steal one. Talk about turning the other cheek. Maybe piracy is the most profitable thing that could ever happen to a brand. Certainly worked for Christianity.

41. **The frontloading crisis.** I recently met a computer programmer who does government contract work. When I asked about the state of the industry, he complained that most of his competitors were frontloaders. Not being familiar with the term, I asked him to explain. He said their entire business model is getting the business. And that's it. Nobody said anything about actually delivering. Once they get what they want, they collect their commission, throw the rest of the carcass back in the water and move on to the next guppy. Like the waitress who delivers your food, then disappears for twenty minutes. Like the salesman who writes your policy, then never calls back after it goes through. Like the direct selling rep who signs you up, then conveniently turns you over to his supervisor. Like the moving company who takes your credit card info, then never calls to let you know their arrival time. Like the insurance agent who wins your account, then gouges you by raising prices at subsequent renewals. Like the factory who bids extremely low, then cuts corners to recover a profit margin. And like the consultant who books your contract, then magically reminds you of her no refund under any circumstances policy. Those are frontloaders. And while their actions aren't illegal or unethical, they're still unacceptable, disrespectful and classless. That's not the way you treat people and that's not the way you do business. If you make the choice to serve, consistency is far better than rare moments of greatness.

42. **The inverse relationship between size and surrender.** I learned this from my friend Devon, a veteran of the landscaping industry. He tells a story about running the marketing department of a large organization. Like many corporate behemoths, his company leadership scrambled to stay in control of what every employee said. Every time they logged on, checked in linked up, there was always some manager looking over their digital shoulder, screening tweets and monitoring status updates for potential risks. Which might sound smart from a liability standpoint, but it also sounds like a lot of work, constantly turning the volume up and down like that. When the reality is, it's easier to assume the volume is always up. To go about our days knowing that everything matters, everybody's watching and everything's a performance, and that we're always in danger of becoming known for what we're about to do. That way, instead killing ourselves trying to edit every word we publish, we simply act from a place of integrity and class, hoping that our language will follow suit. Peter Drucker was right. Trust is always cheaper than control.

43. **The portrait of care.** Among the fifty coffee shops in my neighborhood, Postmark Cafe is always slammed. Not just because the location is ideal, the wifi is free, the coffee is organic, the food is tasty, the staff is friendly, the music is cool and the art is inspiring. But because they donate one hundred percent of their tips to charity. Every month, they select a organization that does meaningful work in the world, whether it's donating livestock to poor countries or building wells in drought prone areas of Africa. They write a summary of that group's mission on the chalkboard to inform customers exactly where the money is going. And at the end of the month, they post the total amount donated on the wall, then keep it on the wall until the next month. And I've see a lot of companies donate to charity. But there's something special about the way Postmark approaches their generosity. First, they select a new cause every month, which allows them to reach diverse organizations. Second, they let their customers have a say in the causes they select, which gives them ownership of the process. Third, they make their financial information public and handwritten, which demonstrates accountability and transparency. And lastly, their donations actually come from people's pockets each month, not just from the president writing a check at the end of the year and forgetting about it until tax season. That's straight class.

44. **The purpose of online is offline.** Every time we email, tweet, retweet, direct message, instant message, write somebody's walls, upload pictures, publish videos, post reviews, chime in on message boards, write blog posts, leave comments, press like buttons and share links, our goal is to get one one step closer to interacting with other human beings, face to face, in person. The proof is everywhere. In the *political* realm, we've watched oppressive governments crumble, horrifying laws disappear and war criminals meet their demise. In the *music* realm, we've watched performers leverage digital media to create live events that bring joy to change the lives of fans forever. In the *movie* realm, we've watched online microfinancing enable the dreams of a generation of hopeful filmmakers, whose ideas finally have a chance to make a difference. In the *business* realm, we've watched entrepreneurs use the power of mobile technology to hire themselves, do work that matters and deliver value to their people. In the *social* realm, we've watched outcasts tap into the bandwidth of social networking portals to meet other people just like them, making them feeling less alone in the world. All thanks to bold people who used online to get offline. It's not the future, it's the present. But if we never endeavor to communicate beyond digital, if we never connect to each other by more than just pixels, we fail to experience the truest, highest form of human interaction. Online is the journey, offline is the destination.

45. **Thought leadership is not an accident.** *Start by having a stance on why the world doesn't make sense.* Take time each day to rant about the injustice of the world. Start by doing so privately. Use dissatisfaction as your ember of initiative. Then, make it worth publishing by attaching practical suggestions to pessimistic thoughts. Otherwise you're just complaining. *Continue by infusing a modern sensibility into a classic context.* Show your audience something they might reject instantly, but then tell them to look behind it. Build a beautiful reminder of what could be, still capture the universal human experiences we all share, and you'll thrill people's imaginations forever. *Accentuate by making passion palpable and recurrent.* When you see something and can't wait to share it, don't hold back. Through your online messaging, insist that a whole new world is bursting forth and everyone everywhere can be a part of it. That's how you equip people to spot the new story with their own eyes. Because it's one thing to have something to say. It's another to just have to say something.

46. **Treat people like adults.** That's the simplest, cheapest and smartest way to deal with people. Evernote gives their employees unlimited vacation time and a thousand dollar spending stipend to boot. Because they know that trust is cheaper than control. Don't make attendance a form of punishment. Commerce Bank allows their employees to kill any stupid rule that stands in the way of pleasing customers. Because they know service is more important than policy. Don't demand their mindless compliance. My friend Jessica, a social justice educator, insists that her students send texts during class. Because she understands it's their lifeline to the universe. Don't police cell phone usage. Twitter keeps their users in the know with a detailed system status log and a corporate blog. Because they respect people's time and patience. Don't neglect elementary feedback loops. My friend's ad agency has a rule that you can be up to an hour late to work, as long as you bring donuts for the rest of the team. Because they know people had lives outside of the office. Don't obsess over the clock. It's time to grow up and treat people like adults. That's all they want.

47. **Vocalize dissatisfaction.** Let those who serve us know that we're not happy with the exchange. Unfortunately, this is harder than it sounds because, as humans, we dread confrontation. We avoid conflict. And we don't want to be difficult. We'd rather suck it up and eat the overcooked steak instead of making a fuss, sending it back and risk being the topic of conversation in the kitchen. *Because nobody wants to be the freak at the table.* The problem is, this kind of passivity hurts both parties. It hurts the server because he misses out on valuable feedback from his customer. Our silence robs of the opportunity to create a service moment and a story worth repeating. But it also hurts us. It reduces our experience. We get annoyed that an employee missed the mark, and we selfishly assume it's because he's an incompetent dolt who doesn't listen to his customers. When in reality, the real reason we're so unhappy is because we made that employee do unnecessary guesswork. *We never helped them help us.* We just sat there, winking in the dark, hoping they would read our minds. And unless we're getting our palm read, that's not the smartest path to happiness.

48. **When privacy is at stake, reassurance is priceless.** I once worked with a document destruction company. Their specialty was paper shredding and hardware demolition, mainly for large financial institutions. Stockbroking firms paid them big bucks to destroy old client records, annual reports and other sensitive materials. Naturally, prospective clients were skeptical. Outside of the standard disclosure agreements, and outside of whatever trust was established between the firm and the destruction company, there was really no way to guarantee that their information could be fully protected. So I asked the president how he handled the issue of client privacy. And said that most players in his industry struggled with it. To the point that it became a barrier to growth. *“But at our company, it’s easy,” he said, “Most of my employees can’t read.”* Wait. What? That’s right. The majority of his warehouse staff was blind, mentally retarded or cognitively impaired. *They didn’t steal the information because they couldn’t read it.* That’s reassurance. And don’t forget, this document destruction company staffed dozens of permanent and temporary workers each year, most of whom could never get a job anywhere else because of their preexisting conditions. That’s reassurance too. I wonder what your company does to deliver it.

49. **Wow is the distance between expectation and experience.**

And the bigger we make that gap, the bigger impact we have. In the service world, when our interactions are over the top for no good reason, when we deliver so much wow that clients have no choice but to tell their friends, people love us forever. Even if it's as simple as sending a text message to someone who took the time to reach out, our immediate response can overwhelm someone to the point of shock. I recently commissioned a cartoonist named Jose to do a series of drawings for me. Considering I was only paying him five bucks apiece, I didn't expect much. History taught me that we get what we pay for. Except for when we don't. The work Jose delivered was so unbelievable, so unexpected – and so criminally inexpensive when you consider the gap between experience and expectation – I not only showed his work to everyone I know, not only hired him for a series of future projects, but I also sent him a substantial gratuity check. Wow, indeed.

50. **Why caring works.** If the first step in selling is stopping the eye, the first step in service is meeting it. When I walk up to the counter to put in my order, you don't have to read my mind. You don't have to perform a miracle. I just need you to care. Instead of being completely preoccupied with yourself, stop using your phone, stop surfing the web, stop talking to your coworkers, stop reading the paper, stop eating lunch and stop doing whatever else you're doing for three seconds to extend me the common courtesy of a simple glance. Caring is not about eye contact. It's not about nonverbal indicators of interest. And it's not about another a tired technique that creates the illusion of hospitality. It's about bother to acknowledge my presence as a human being. I know it's not part of the handbook, but it is part of your heart. Try it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

What happens when you wear a nametag twenty-four seven? Even to bed? Just ask Scott Ginsberg. In the beginning, it was just a gimmick to make friends. But soon, his crazy idea didn't seem so crazy. In the past twelve years, Scott's social experiment has evolved into an urban legend, world record, cultural phenomenon and profitable enterprise. Simply google the word *nametag*, and you'll see his work being benchmarked as a case study on human interaction, revolutionizing the way people look at approachability, identity and commitment. As a writer, Scott's authored twenty-five books, produced his own online show on NametagTV.com and reached millions of readers on his an award-winning blog. As a performer, his one-man show has made over six hundred corporate appearances in five countries. And as a media personality, he's done over five hundred interviews in print, television, radio and online outlets, including an induction into the hall of fame of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*. He blames this on his parents.