

Escape from Cubicle Nation

Pamela Slim -- 2009.

Section 1: opening up to the opportunities.

Chapter 1: I have a fancy title, steady paycheck, and good benefits. Why am I so miserable?

- Large corporations have experienced tremendous change over the last twenty years, which have made them fundamentally difficult places to work, even for extremely smart and motivated employees in an “ideal” job situation.
- I said “almost,” because it depends on your definition of brain damage. What the research suggests is that in unstimulating, unenriched, stressful environments, the brain STOPS producing new neurons. But it’s only been the last few years that scientists have finally realized that the human brain can build new neurons. For most of the previous century, it was believed that we were born with all the neurons we’d ever have.

Chapter 2: if it is so bad, then why am I afraid to leave?

- Your essential self formed before you were born, and it will remain until you’ve shuffled off your mortal coil. It’s the personality you got from your genes: your characteristic desires, preferences, emotional reactions and involuntary physiological responses, bound together by an overall sense of identity. It would be the same whether you’d been raised in France, China, or Brazil, by beggars or millionaires. It’s the basic you, stripped of options and special features. It is “essential” in two ways: first, it is the essence of your personality, and second, you absolutely need it to find your North Star. The social self, on the other hand, is the part of you that developed in response to pressures from the people around you, including everyone from your family to your first love to the pope. As the most socially dependent of mammals, human babies are born knowing that their very survival depends on the goodwill of the grown-ups around them. Because of this, we’re all literally designed to please others. Your essential self was the part of you that cracked your first baby smile; your social self noticed how much Mommy loved that smile, and later reproduced it at exactly the right moment to convince her to lend you the down payment on a condo. You still have both responses. Sometimes you smile involuntarily, out of amusement or silliness or joy, but many of your smiles are based purely on social convention.
- Instead, view your corporate time as a wonderful opportunity to meet smart, creative people, develop new skills, learn how business works, and get funding for top-notch educational experiences (many companies still pay for university-level certificate programs or advanced degrees).
- Examine the truth in the fear. “What if no one buys my product?” This could be an extremely legitimate fear if you have not taken time to clearly define and research your market, identify competitors, develop a compelling marketing strategy, and define a sales process. If you have done all that and received positive and encouraging feedback from smart and successful people in your field, I say move forward.

Chapter 3: detox from corporate life.

- If you are serious about starting a business, you will need to completely reorganize your schedule so that you have time to work on your ideas.
- TV zone-out time. When I am really stressed out, I can get sucked into a bad pattern of zoning out in front of the TV to unwind and relax. One hour can turn into three or four if I am not careful (especially if I am watching one of those home improvement shows—for some strange reason, they are highly addictive).
- What is a beginner’s mind? Beginner mind is a state of being where you approach situations with no judgment, censoring, editing, or preconceived expectations. When you are in a state of “beginner mind,” you think things like:
 - Wow, this is cool! I wonder how it works.
 - That is interesting! Why do you think that?
 - I want to learn as much as I can about this topic!
 - I really don’t understand this person, but I wonder what makes him tick.
 - I can’t wait to get in front of customers to hear what is important to them!
 - What else? Tell me more.
- It is in direct opposition to its cousin “expert mind,” where you think things like:
 - ‘Expert mind’ can be very dangerous to a new entrepreneur, since you are in a phase of discovery where you need to soak up as much as possible about your new venture. Some expert-mind traps particular to corporate employees can be things like:
 - ‘I know there is a need in the market, since I have studied it extensively online for the last two years and have the spreadsheets to prove it. I do not want to bother talking with someone in the market, since I know they will just confirm my research.’

Chapter 4: what’s really involved in moving from employee to entrepreneur?

- He referred to the ultimate work situation as your “sweet spot.” This is the intersection of three interlocking circles:
 - The first circle is “what people will pay you to do”—marketable skills and abilities that you have developed over your working life.
 - The second is “that which you have great passion for—areas of interest, hobbies, ideas, or causes that make your heart race
 - The third, and most elusive, is “that which you are genetically encoded to do”—the things that you were brought on this earth to accomplish that no one else on the planet can do as well as you.
- Jim started his investigation by gathering data on himself much as a scientist would observe an insect in its native habitat. So when he was stuck in meetings, or listening to Brahms, or involved in a variety of other activities, he would document his behavior in a notebook he called “A Bug Called Jim.” He would notice when he was engaged, or bored, or sad, or angry. His process of discovery lasted years, and he supplemented his data gathering with personal mentors and lots of reading. After a while, he began to see patterns, and made steps each year to bring his working life closer and closer to his ideal picture.
- Here are some starter questions. Feel free to add your own:
 - What interests me?

- What repels me?
- Which topics are exciting?
- Which environments make me want to crawl out of my skin?
- Which kind of people do I like to be around?
- What time of day do I feel most awake? Energized? Relaxed?
- What do I really love to do?
- Who in my life is a bloodsucking leech?
- When do I feel the most free?
- When do I feel “in the zone” “flowing,” and so preoccupied that I literally lose track of time?
- Who am I? You must get to know yourself deeply and completely if you want to act from a place of truth and self-confidence. This will include gaining insight into both your essential and social selves described in chapter 2, in addition to the part of yourself that is more creative and spiritual.
- Who are my people? These are not just those people who would grudgingly fork over money for your product or service; they are people who would clamor to do business with you because you are the exact answer to their problems. They are your ideal partners, clients, customers, and mentors. These are people whom you like to spend time with, who embrace you despite your perceived warts, mistakes, and flaws and who are deeply affected by your work.
- What work do I love to do? We often think of career development as is answering the question “What do I want to be when I grow up,” insinuating a job title or specific profession like lawyer, doctor, or accountant. The problem with this is that as you change, your ideal work situation can change too. So while you may revel in being a high-flying consultant.
- For a downloadable template of the life plan, go to www.escapefromcubiclenation.com/book.
- I once worked on a program with fantastic, smart partners who had a great reputation, raving fans, and connections with a huge market. We all “knew” that our product idea would be just what people needed. So instead of testing the idea with a small group, we designed the whole program and rolled it out. No one bought anything. Zip. Zilch. Nada.
- **This valuable** lesson taught me that the only way to know whether or not an idea is viable is to test it in little bits in the real work.
 - If you think your baked goods will make Mrs. Fields run home crying to her mommy, start selling your cookies on the corner.
 - If you think you have a “space-changing, curb-jumping” application, slap together a prototype and try it out with some potential customers.
 - If you think you have what it takes to be a great coach, start coaching your seatmates on the evening train on the way home from work.
- Stop doing what you hate! Gary’s slogan is the sum of Jim Collins’s advice to “find out what you are genetically encoded to do” plus Gary’s concept of “Hustle 2.0.” Basically, once you know what work you can “kill at,” do it full out, every day, until you make it a viable business.
- Work your face off! Gary is not one who believes in working four hours a week to launch a business. He advocates doing whatever it takes to grow your brand, connect with your customers,

and monetize your business, even if it means working on your side business from nine p.m. to one a.m. for a year or two.

- Stop watching f*mg episodes of Lost! Despite feeling like there is no extra time in the day, many people waste time on pursuits like cheesy television shows and meaningless Twitter conversations. If you want to make your business happen, you will have to be ruthless with your time.
- Legacy is more important than currency. How do you want to be remembered by your children and grandchildren? Will they be more excited by their grandma who diligently trudged into her cube at 7:58 each morning and clocked out at 5:00, or by Grandma 2.0 with strong opinions? Passions, and an unwavering dedication to making a difference in the world?

Stage	Example	What You Need
<p>STAGE 1: UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE you aren't aware of what you don't know. otherwise known as blissful ignorance.</p>	<p>If you are a full-time employee of a corporation and have never pondered becoming an entrepreneur, you have no real idea what Is Involved. The Idea sounds dangerously romantic, and you spend hours In your cube. Fantasizing about your carefree lifestyle.</p>	<p>A dose of reality</p>
<p>STAGE 2: CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE You become painfully aware of what you don't know. This is the "hopeless klutz" phase.</p>	<p>You get excited about the possibility of working for yourself, see poke around on the web and buy a few books. You find out there are 1 million things to take into consideration and everyone has a different opinion about what will make your business a success. You don't feel like you have a handle on things, and it feels both uncomfortable and overwhelming.</p>	<p>Sound guidance, support. And Information from trusted experts.</p>
<p>STAGE 3: CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE You are able to do the task with focus and mental effort. Think of how you felt as a kid when you were able to ride your bike without your mom or dad's hand on the back of the seat, and you didn't wipe out.</p>	<p>With careful planning. Study and support, you are able to start your business. You develop your product or service md begin to sell it. You start to Interact with customers and handle 3/^ aspects of running your business. You still need to use Instruction manuals. Get expert guidance, and spend a lot of time preparing, but you are able to run your business with a decent level of comfort.</p>	<p>Practice, practice, practice. And feedback from a trusted source.</p>
<p>STAGE 4: UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE You do the task</p>	<p>You are in business for a few years and work very hard. You</p>	<p>What you need in this phase: not much, as you are comfortable at</p>

<p>effortlessly without even thinking about it. Very smart author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls this flow.</p>	<p>perfect your products and services, understand your market, and develop real expertise in your field. You learn from your mistakes. You handle all aspects of running your business without a lot of stress. People look at you as an expert and think “Man, he must have been born doing that, since he does it so well.”</p>	<p>home with your new skills. Pretty soon, however, you’ll need to challenge yourself with something new or focus on improving your performance, since if you stay in the unconscious competence stage for too long you can get bored.</p>
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Section 2: the reality of entrepreneurship.

Chapter 5: what are all the ways to be self-employed?

- **The way to avoid** this is to create a plan that outlines in great detail the kind of life that will make you happy and healthy. Over time, as your life changes you can adjust the plan. The important thing is to think about your ideal life before you make any serious decisions about your business plan.
- Components of a Business Model
 - What Do You Do?
 - Why do you do it?
 - How do you do it?
 - Where do you do it?
 - Whom do you do with?
 - Do you work with companies or individuals?
 - If you work with companies, what is the typical size?
 - What are the particular demographics of your client base? (Age, income, Affiliations, etc.)
 - Are you planning on working by yourself, or hiring a team to work with you?
 - Do you intend to have employees, or just work with independent contractors?
- For some reason, this analogy has stuck in my head ever since, and is an excellent way to think about making it easy to sell complementary services and products to your customers. Some examples of ways business owners can “add fries” to their offerings:
 - A coach offers a transcript of a recorded teleseminar.
 - A construction contractor offers to add a few outdoor plants in addition to building a deck.
 - • A sales trainer offers CDs of key material covered in class for each student.
- WHAT DO I DO?
 - Chief evangelist for Alltop.com—Handle all of the online administrative duties.
 - Blogger—Share my thoughts and experiences with my life, family, and living in Hawaii, via photos, text, and video.
- StartupNation, a resource-rich site for entrepreneurs, breaks down business models in seven different categories:

- Licensing your product If you're working a day job and don't want to start a business, you can still take advantage of your great product idea by licensing the product to another company that has the entire infrastructure in place to properly manufacture, market, and sell the product.
- Opening to Liquidation—the moment it is made. The Fatal Assumption is: if you understand the technical part of the business, you understand a business that does technical work. And the reason it's fatal is that it just isn't true. In fact, it's the root cause of most small business failures! The technical work of a business and a business that does that work are two totally different things!
- If you have young kids, you most likely will have to get a babysitter during your working hours. Sometimes it is possible to fire out e-mails or write in short bursts with kids around, but anything requiring careful detail or professional phone demeanor needs your dedicated time. Kids deserve full attention, as do your clients. Factor this cost into your start-up plans.

Chapter 6: how do I choose a good business idea?

- Here is the problem: intense passion for something and a viable business model to turn this passion into a decent living are two totally different things. In order to have a successful business, you must combine the creative excavation you did in chapter 4, with the business model analysis you did in chapter 5, with the business planning you will do in chapter 9.
- From these general notes, start to extrapolate information and put it in categories (my examples):
 - Activities you really enjoy doing (writing, coding, coaching, drawing. Selling, running)
 - Industries that interest you (alternative energy, high-end luxury resorts. Construction, home organizing)
 - Problems you are eager to solve (teenage pregnancy, horrible screaming sales letters that plague online marketing, broken music distribution system for independent musicians, corporate employees who feel trapped in their jobs because they don't know how to navigate the transition to entrepreneurship—sound familiar?)
 - Products you love (the iPhone, Cold Stone Creamery ice cream. Moleskine notebooks, Sony PlayStations)
 - Another way to organize the information is to fill out the circles that form the “Sweet Spot” that Jim Collins described.
 - Circle 1: What people pay you to do: Skills you have that are natural strengths, enjoyable and marketable?
 - Circle 2: What you love to do: Activities that are not exactly work-related but that get you really excited.
 - Circle 3: What you are genetically encoded to do: Activities and/or skills that you do effortlessly, get energized by, and feel deeply competent in. This is the most elusive of the three circles, but if you ever do something and get a flashing thought like “I was meant to do this work,” this can be a Circle 3 activity.
- Situation: You get laid off unexpectedly and scramble to track the details of your job search. You forget whom you called, which version of your cover letter you sent, and the name of the recruiter you worked with last time you were out of work.
 - QUESTIONS TO ASK
 - How can I track my conversations with potential employers?
 - Are gigantic spreadsheets the best way of doing this?

- Am I the only one who feels overwhelmed by the job search process?
 - Is there an easier way to do this?
 - POSSIBLE BUSINESS IDEA
 - Fool that allows you to manage and track your job search over the course of your career.
 - REAL BUSINESS
 - www.jibberjobber.com
- What would make this better?
- What is missing?
- What is really needed here?
- Why isn't someone already addressing this problem?
- What are people hungry for?
- What could make this experience easier?
- How could I improve this by leaps and bounds?
- Who is serving this community well?
- The more you get used to looking at the world as full of problems to be solved, the more you will start to think about particular business models help us solve the problems.
- It's not what you sell, it's what you teach that matters. Or rather, what you help someone learn. Too many books and businesses take users through the first steps and then leave them stranded and alone still in the frustrating and painful stage! How many readers claim they actually finished or even got halfway through a technical book? How many users ever learn anything but the most basic features of the software—even when they'd be thrilled if they could do more? But it just isn't worth it for them to struggle, so they stay with what they know, often using very inefficient steps to do something simply because that's the only "safe" way they feel comfortable with.
- Kicking ass is more fun regardless of the task. It's more fun to know more. It's more fun to be able to do more. It's more fun to be able help others do more.
- I'll say more on this later, but I can think of a lot of wasted ad dollars that might be better spent teaching. Red Bull, for example, wants to be the drink of choice for late-night dancers. But rather than simply sponsoring raves and keeping popular DJs well-stocked (like anyone else would in that business) they create new and better DJs. They offer the Red Bull Music Academy:
- The Red Bull Music Academy is a unique environment where musical innovators shed light on the history, the motivations and the technology behind the tunes that we love. It's a place where ideas are expanded and friendships are forged in real time. It's where sonic theorists meet up with beat junkies and communicate the best way they know how—through music.
- By helping more DJs (and wanna-be DJs) kick ass, they've done more to inspire real passion than any of their freebie promotions ever can. So ... how are you helping your users/customers/students/guests/ visitors/clients/members/readers kick ass? What are you teaching them? How are you helping them get past the painful parts and into the better-than-drugs flow state?
- It's not like you get up in the morning and say "I want to be an entrepreneur. Should I make chips, software, a dry cleaner, desks?" That is the wrong order. The right way is you love dry cleaning or software or chips and because of that love of and knowledge of that industry, you are going to change that industry. If you want to be an artist, be an artist! But don't do it because you

read in Business Week that the market for art is getting bigger. Quite frankly, you might not have the talent.

- This theory nicely relates to career and entrepreneurial pursuits. How many “lukewarm” projects and endeavors have you been pursuing as if they were the ideal marriage candidates when the emotional signs all point to a temporary fling with someone of questionable character? Here is how you can start to determine if your former “burning flame” is now a “smoldering ember”:
 - When you sit down to work on it, you don’t feel much of anything.
 - You find yourself justifying its value or purpose, but don’t really believe your own reasons.
 - When you step back to view it in the context of your long-term strategies or goals, it either doesn’t fit or has a minor role.
- Signs Your Business Idea Might Be Feasible
 - You have a unique approach, skill, or capability that will allow you to serve this need better than anyone else.
 - You have the capacity, resources, and support for getting the business launched in a timely manner.
 - You have chosen an area in which you provide value beyond cheap production price.
 - Your target market not only is interested in what you have to offer, but has the money to pay for what you are selling.
 - You create a prototype and it generates buzz and interest.
 - You have a firm grasp of the financial metrics of your business.
 - If you require others to build your business, you have a network of smart and capable people who would like to work with you.
 - You welcome any and all feedback about your business idea, and use it to continually improve your product or service.
- An opportunity however, is an idea coupled with market potential, management, and resources to get it done. There’s a good potential return, a decent risk-return relationship, credibility, a team to implement, and a business to be built.

Chapter 7: recruit your tribe.

Chapter 8: rethink your life, options for scaling back, downshifting and reallocating.

- Your need for expensive toys or vacations is often correlated with your level of loathing for your job.
- When you want to reduce your spending, you need to figure out what your needs are, and then stop spending on everything else.

Chapter 9: die really have to do a business plan?

Element	Description
Your business identity	How are you different from others? What are your strengths and weaknesses? What Is your core competence? What are your goals?

Your market	Who are your customers? Why do they buy from you? What do they want and need? What business are you really in?
Strategic focus	Since you can't do everything well, what do you do that is unique to you? What do you sell?
Assumptions	All assumptions about your business including market size, conditions, constraints, and opportunities
Review schedule	Specific times when you will review your plan to see how reality meshes with projections. The key is to make plan reviews a key part of how you run your business, not an extra chore.
Metrics	Tangible metrics like sales, costs, expenses, taxes. Interest, profitability assets, liabilities, capital and "soft" metrics like customers, deliveries, complaints, calls, presentations, meals, people served
Who does what	Description of organization, team, roles and responsibilities If you will be the only person in your business, still describe your key responsibilities, and describe other ways you might use outside resources for specific tasks.
Timeline	Milestones and associated deliverables with specific dates
Costs	Budgets, cash flow projections

- **As a coach, I probably** spend 50 percent of my time working with my clients on defining their target market. This is so exceptionally important since it is the area that most people get wrong when starting a business.
 - They are deathly afraid of turning away anyone, so they cling desperately to the notion that their product or service would be good for anyone with a credit card and a pulse.
 - They feel resistant to lock into a specific market since they enjoy working with all kinds of people on all kinds of projects.
 - By trying to market to everyone, they water down their message, and in their attempt to reach everyone, end up appealing to no one.
- **Some prefer "target** market," others "my people" or "my niche." You can call them your peeps, your homies, or your crew. The term doesn't matter; defining its characteristics does. Here are some ideas:
 - Life situation (first job, retiring, changing career, surviving breast cancer. Losing weight, etc.)
 - Demographic (African American females, residents of New York City, gay former firefighters turned circus acrobats, etc.)
 - Psychographic (optimistic, sassy, resilient, motivated)
 - Common interest, affiliation (raging liberals, Ann Coulter conservatives. Tree buggers, salsa dancing enthusiasts, etc.)
 - Income level (low, middle, or high income)

- Challenge or issue (hopeless procrastinator, arrogant bastard, parents of ADD child, etc.)
- Which problems do they face?
 - Want to start a business but don't know how and are afraid (sound familiar?)
- And you can further define you're "niche by asking the following question: Who would I really enjoy working with who would find my product or service extremely valuable and have the means to pay for it?
- Now take the following steps:
 - Write your annual income goal at the top of the page. It doesn't matter if it is \$10,000 or \$100,000 this year. There is no right or wrong answer.
 - Create three columns on your page.
 - In column 1, list your products or services.
 - In column 2, list the cost of each product or service.
 - In column 3, list how many units you think you can sell of each product or service.
- Your salary doesn't include your benefits like health insurance, retirement investments, vacations, and sick time. An extremely crude general estimate for these things in the United States is 30 percent of your salary.

Chapter 10: define the spirit of your friend.

- Spirit of a brand:
 - He provides value to a specific, defined niche.
 - His personality clearly shows up in every part of his business, from the message on his answering machine to his Web site to the quality of his work to his physical location.
 - He inspires trust, enthusiasm, and evangelism in every one of his customers. You walk away after working with Pat and not only feel great having given him money, but want to tell twelve of your friends about his auto shop.
 - He attracts a great team. He values and supports his employees better than most leaders I've met in entrepreneurial and corporate settings. He once told me, after explaining how he was paying for his mechanic to take a day off a week to take an art class, "When you learn what is important to people who work for you and support that, no matter if it is related to the work they do for you, they will be happier. That translates into better work and natural loyalty."
- First draft of your business plan.
 - Brand Name: Catchy, easy-to-understand name that says something about what you do.
 - Unique Selling Proposition (USP): Phrase that describes what you do more specifically, preferably addressing a key problem faced by your target market.
- **In The Art of the Start**, Guy Kawasaki recommends some guidelines for choosing a name (my explanations are in parentheses):
 - Have a first initial that's early in the alphabet (you will be in a directory. May as well be in the top)
 - Avoid numbers (too hard to know how to spell: 1 or one?)
 - Pick a name with "verb potential" (think Google)
 - Sound different (don't choose a name close to a competitor or other, unrelated brand which will get confusing)

- Sound logical (match your business name with what you actually do)
- Avoid the trendy (probably not a good idea to call your firm Sick and Phat Technology Services)
- Because despite all the other things that you worry about when setting up your business, the most valuable and enduring asset you have is providing the absolute best service that solves not only the articulated needs of your customers, but also the unspoken ones.
- Make it easy for the customer to buy from you. Analyze the steps that your customers have to take to purchase a product from you. If you have a Web-based business, how can you make it “1-Click Amazon” simple? For a retail store, how can you be like Apple and avoid the line at the cash register altogether?
- Let people mess around with your stuff. I learned from a savvy salesperson that the key to getting someone emotionally ready to buy is to let them “test drive” your product. Find ways to let them try on, hold in their hands, eat, listen to, and play with your products. If you are a service-based company, offer a free sample of a great audio program, assessment tool, or video.

Chapter 11: test often and fail fast: the art of prototypes and samples.

- Ramit Sethi is the cofounder of PBwiki, the largest host of business and educational wikis in the world.
- Visit Ramit’s Web site: www.iwillteachyoutoberich.com

Section 3: make the money work.

Chapter 12: look your finances in the eye.

Chapter 13: how to shop for benefits.

Section 4: making the leap.

Chapter 14: dealing with their friends and family.

Chapter 15: line your ducks in a row.

Chapter 16: when is it time to leave?

- Passion without a business model or viable market is a sure road to perdition.
- Business case checkpoints:
 - Have you spent time developing and defining your idea?
 - Have you prototyped and tested your idea with real people in your target market?
 - Have you made sales, or signed up people on your mailing list, or gotten them to download your trial product?
 - Are you willing to change strategies immediately if things don’t go as planned?
 - Can you identify your competitors?
 - Can you describe what makes you different, more effective, or more appealing?
 - Could your business survive if the market radically shifted?
 - Do you have a truly useful product or service?

- Do you have all the right business processes and infrastructure in place to execute your business idea?
- Have you consulted with professionals to make sure you won't get sued? Audited, or arrested?
- Are you prepared for various disasters, natural and otherwise?
- Market checkpoints:
 - Can you define your target market in clear and specific terms?
 - Do you know where they congregate in person, online, in associations or in the media?
 - Have you spent lots of time with them?
 - Do you know what they crave?
 - Do you know what will happen to them once they buy your product or service?
 - Do you know what they care about deeply?
 - Do you know what they care about deeply?
 - Do you know how they like to communicate?
 - Do they have access to cold, hard cash to pay you for your services?
 - Are they the kind of people who would be fun to hang out with, regardless if you were doing business or not?
- Marketing checkpoints:
 - Have you chosen a marketing model and are you implementing it step by step? (Duct Tape Marketing, Action Plan Marketing, and Michael Port are all great models.)
 - Have you started an official opt-in mailing list?
 - Do you communicate with your list at least once a month?
 - Do you have a functional Web site that clearly nudges people to do what you want them to do? (Sign up for your list, download your product, join your community, etc.)
 - Are you doing a handful of marketing activities consistently each month like writing articles, blogging, speaking, participating in online forums? Or inviting interesting people to lunch?
 - Do you have a clear referral program in place for happy customers?
- Selling checkpoints:
 - Do you know what problem your product or service solves?
 - How does it add specific value to your customers?
 - Are you a good investment for other people's money?
 - Do you know what your sales process is? Do you lead your prospects | through it or wait for them to take the lead?
 - Is your enthusiasm and vision for your idea stronger than your fear and terror of selling it? (Hint: all you need is a 51 percent to 49 percent ratio for it to work.)
 - Are you willing to talk about your idea with people every day for the next 1-2-3-4-5 years?
 - Do you sincerely care about solving your customers' problems?
 - Do you have a good sense of humor?
 - Can you get over criticism, even if it is undeserved?
 - Would you feel proud to sell your product or service to your most trusted mentor?
 - Do you know how to ask for a sale?
- Market checkpoints:

- Have you learned as much as you can about the market you are operating in?
- Do you regularly read information about your market?
- Have you identified competitors who are successful in your market?
- Have you studied what they do?
- As I mentioned in the Money section, do you have a Plan B, C, and D?
- Do you have a positive mindset and constructive thoughts about your new venture?
- Are you willing and able to look on the bright side of the most stormy market condition, even if it means radically adjusting your plans?