

The Power of starting something Stupid

Richie Norton—2013.

What You Must Know First: Gavin's Law

The Anatomy of Stupid as the New Smart: Used Blue Jeans and the Creative Puzzle

Where You Don't Want to Be: Lost in Waiting

- There is a great saying, often attributed to Abraham Lincoln, which poignantly reminds us, “Good things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.”

The Bezos Test: Will I Regret It When I'm 80?

- Sometimes it's not the idea that's stupid, it's the idea within the context of the current situation.
- ‘When I teach what I call the “Stupid Principles” to audiences or in private consultations, I'm asked this question more than almost any other: “I have so many ideas! What if I pick the wrong one? Beware! You're in the quicksand of paralysis by analysis, and it has suffocated more great ideas than all the other potential stumbling blocks combined!”
- **You can't let** fear and indecision sink your creativity—they do not easily release their hold. Fear and indecision will stop you dead in your tracks every time. They'll keep you stuck where you already are; and you will start exactly zero of your beautifully stupid ideas. Another temptation people face when trying to decide where to begin is to say, “Well, I guess I should just try them all and see what sticks.” But then they flip right back around and say, “No, I must focus. Focus is the key!” These two conflicting thoughts can quickly freeze you in the realm between thought and action, and as a result, again, you'll find that absolutely nothing happens at all. Here's the deal: If you're scared of choosing the starting altogether. And on the flip side, if you try to start all of your stupid ideas at once, you're bound to waste time, energy, and money (and go completely loco in the process). Plus, no matter how hard you focus, if you're laser-focused on the wrong activity or activities, your laser is going to end up burning a hole right through your potential for success.
- **The Bezos Test:** Will I Regret it When I'm 80?
 - Question 1: Do you have a pressing thought or idea that simply won't go away?
 - Now, imagine your eightieth birthday. You're relaxing in your rocking chair on the porch, you pull out the list you just created, and you start thinking back over the years
 - Question 2: Looking at your list, what would you regret not doing?
 - Question 3: If you had only a short time to live, and you were required to rid yourself of all the things from your list except for three or four, “which three to four ideas would remain?”
 - Question 4: If you had to prioritize these few things in order from most important to least important, which order would you choose?

The T.E.M. Gap: No Time, No Education, No Money = No Excuse

- “What would the gray hairs think?” Then, Covey taught me a priceless principle that would forever change my outlook on the nature of education and experience. He said, “Richie, experience is overrated. Some people say they have twenty years’ experience, when, in reality, they only have one year’s experience, repeated twenty times.’

The Business of Stupid

- IBM CONDUCTED a face-to-face study of more than fifteen hundred CEOs from sixty countries and thirty-three industries and identified creativity as the most important leadership quality for future success in times of complexity.
- The willingness to be a champion for stupid ideas is the key to greater creativity, innovation, fulfillment, inspiration, motivation and success.

Innovation and the Stupid Loop: Don’t Get Stuck at Model T

Stupid Projects: How One Tiling Leads to Another

- www.Digital-Photography-school.com
- One Thing Leads to Another: How a Simple Project to “Make Caine’s Day” Turned into Much, Much More
- “1984” is a legendary Apple commercial that ran during the 1984 Super Bowl. TV Guide hailed it as “the greatest commercial of all time.” But the story behind the story is that the advertisement almost didn’t make it on the air. The ad was intended to highlight the launch of the Macintosh personal computer, but not even once did the commercial show the product. Instead, the advertisement showed a woman, running with a sledgehammer, smashing an image of “Big Brother,” reminiscent of George Orwell’s book 1984. The board at Apple wasn’t thrilled. In fact, when Steve Jobs presented it to them, they “thought it was the worst commercial they had ever seen.” Jobs was beside himself.” He went to cofounder Steve Wozniak, and showed him the ad. Wozniak “thought it was the most incredible thing.” Jobs told Wozniak about the board’s decision to scrap the ad for the Super Bowl time slot and explained that they consequently needed to sell the air time. But Wozniak was committed. He asked the cost of the Super Bowl slot. And when Jobs said it was \$800,000, Wozniak replied, “Well, I’ll pay half if you will.”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axSnW-ygU5g>

Crush Fear: How to Turn High Fear into High Achievement

- Get small wins. Small wins, a term coined by psychologist Karl Weick, are the way we compensate for our fears and make sure we don’t fall into fear-based inactivity.

End Pride: The Humble Power Alternative

- **I have a memory** of grocery shopping with my mom when I was around six years old. I wanted my mom to purchase a certain brand of sugary cereal. The odds of a favorable response were not on my side. Those kinds of cereals weren’t allowed in our home aside from special occasions such as birthdays or camping trips. When she told me no, I responded by starting to cry. I don’t

remember the details of my behavior, but I know I was acting very irrationally. Even for a six-year-old. I eventually wrapped up my tantrum monolog—which likely included all the reasons she was destroying my life by denying me bowlfuls of refined sugar for breakfast—and my mom was just standing there. She was calm and completely unaffected. If she had been embarrassed by my behavior, she certainly didn't show it. In a last-ditch effort to get a rise out of her, I wailed, "Mom! You make me soooooo maaaaaad!" and as calm as can be, my mother gently responded, "Wait a minute, who makes Natalie mad when she's mad?" Of all the lessons my amazing mother has taught me throughout my life, this is the one I am most grateful for. That day in the supermarket, she taught me that I am never absolved of responsibility for my own behavior. No matter what happens, I am always in charge of me.

- It's common to blur the line between pride and confidence, and it's just as common for people to confuse humility with weakness.

Overcome Procrastination: Breaking the "Tomorrow" Habit

- Myth One: Procrastinators are lazy. Reality: Procrastinators can be workaholics.
 - Mike Michalowicz. A successful entrepreneur and author, was proud of his twelve-hour workdays and his eighty-hour workweeks. But when he reduced his workday to nine to five, he discovered something interesting about himself. He said, "Ironically, when I forced myself to leave work each day by 5 p.m., my whole schedule changed. I started skipping the nonsense distractions, such as the constant checking of e-mail, or surfing (ahem—researching) the Internet. I actually got down to work during that time. My per-hour productivity sky rocketed! And I was getting more done in a 9-to-5 day than I used to in an entire workaholic day."
 - Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson, authors of the book *Rework*, say, "In the end, workaholics don't actually accomplish more than non-workaholics. They may claim to be perfectionists, but that just means they're wasting time fixating on inconsequential details instead of moving on to the next task. Workaholics aren't heroes. They don't save the day, they just use it up. The real hero is already home because she figured out a faster way to get things done."
- Procrastinators seldom do absolutely nothing; they do marginally useful things, like gardening or sharpening pencils or making a diagram of how they will reorganize their files when they get around to it. Why does the procrastinator do these things?: Because they are a way of not doing something more important. If all the procrastinator had left to do was to sharpen some pencils, no force on earth could get him [to] do it. However, the procrastinator can be motivated to do difficult, timely and important tasks, as long as these tasks are a way of not doing something more important.
- Most people who procrastinate are glaringly aware that they are neglecting what is most important to them by filling their time with less important things. However, it is common for people to be neck deep in patterns of procrastination without even recognizing it. This happens when people genuinely believe that they are unable to act on their most important goals because of time-related restraints. They say, "I can't do this important thing the thing I'd most like to accomplish—right now because these other important obligations take up all my time." Remember, procrastination doesn't always come in the form of frivolous activities. Often we're

filling our time with good or even essential tasks, but even so, anytime you postpone doing the things that are most important in your life, you are falling victim to procrastination.

- I like to set an alarm to ring every fifteen minutes in order to keep myself on task. When the alarm goes off. It reminds me to check in with myself to see if I'm being productive or if I'm wasting time. Once I get in the zone, I turn off the alarm and simply focus on the work at hand.

Be Authentic; The Power of Authenticity

- 3. Set Standards, Keep Them, and Get Respect
 - “The Quicksilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau is the most venerated big wave surfing event on Earth, held at Waimea Bay, Oahu, on a single day during the Hawaiian winter when, and if, waves exceed the 20-foot minimum requirement. Only twenty-eight surfers (along with some alternates) are invited to compete, making this a very prestigious and coveted event. Because of these strict standards, “The Eddie”—as it’s known—has only been held eight times over twenty-seven years (from 1984 through 2011)—“but those rare and special days are recognized as the most spectacular days in surfing history—for both surfers and spectators.” The surfing contest has no set date and is open between December 1 and the end of February in hopes the ocean will provide the right conditions. On January 21, 2011, the contest organizers gave the waves a “50/50 chance” that they’d be big enough the next day, and they spent the day preparing for the “world’s most prestigious big wave event.’
 - Thousands of people poured into Waimea Bay the next morning to watch and wait—not an easy thing when the parking lot has only fifty-five stalls. However, “after 4 hours of monitoring, only eight waves more than 20 feet had crashed Waimea Bay.” Despite all the spectators, surfers, time, energy, and money that was put into the event, the contest was cancelled. The waves weren’t “big enough for the namesake of the Quicksilver in Memory of: Eddie Aikau.”
 - How did the crowd react? One newspaper reported that they “actually clapped upon the announcement that there would be no contest on this day, apparently in respect of the process. Ever heard applause at a rainout?’ Quicksilver CEO Bob McKnight said this about the decision to cancel the contest:
 - This event has created a life all its own and has come to stand for much more than just big wave riding. Standing on the beach at Waimea Bay on January 20, surrounded by tens of thousands of spectators from around the world, we were disappointed to have to call a No Go. But when the crowd began to cheer, we knew it was the right call and that The Eddie represents something special that we all want to uphold. Eddie was a young man of character, integrity and incredible athletic ability. His story took surfing’s story across boundaries and around the world. Through his legacy, we look to inspire young generations of surfers for decades to come.
 - Standards were set. Standards were kept. And people respected that; they even applauded and cheered when they missed out on the event of a lifetime.

The 5 Actions of the New Smart: Serve, Thank, Ask, Receive, Trust

- Thanking is a form of payment that exponentially pays forward both personally and professionally. People are far more likely to collaborate with, hire, or refer a grateful person than an ungrateful one.
- “Asking is the beginning of receiving. Make sure you don’t go to the ocean with a teaspoon. At least take a bucket so the kids won’t laugh at you.” Jim Rohn.
- When I first met Justin Lyon, it was immediately apparent that he was unlike anyone I’d ever known. “Charismatic” is a heavily diluted description. So when Lyon told me he hadn’t always been that way, it was a shocking revelation to say the least. When he described what he was like growing up, he used words like “shy” and “insecure.”
- Lyon had always wanted to work in the movie industry. He pictured himself producing independent films and changing the world. However, in the small town in Idaho where he grew up Well, to say his dream was frowned upon would be an understatement. “It’s devil’s work!” was essentially the response. So he put his dream away. “My culture told me that going into filmmaking would be foolish,” he recalls, “so I stopped dreaming about it.”
- A few years later, Lyon moved to Arizona where he was hired as a bellboy at a luxury resort. He quickly worked his way up the hierarchy and was promoted to the position of Bell Captain. The other full-time Bell Captains were in their forties and fifties, and frequently discussed where they’d be now if they had made different decisions when they were younger. The regret these men openly expressed made a deep impression on young Lyon, who was in his early twenties at the time. “Do I want to make this job into a career?” he thought.
- Lyon did his job well; he always served cheerfully and took a genuine interest in each hotel guest. In turn, guests often took a genuine interest in him—and celebrity guests were no exception. It wasn’t uncommon for him to wait on people who made headlines. Actors, musicians, and even movie producers frequented the resort. With the other bellmen’s regrets ringing loudly in his ears, Lyon remembered his dream of working in the movie industry and decided he was ready to do whatever it took.
- He worked up the courage to discuss his dream with celebrity guests by reasoning with himself: we’re all human, and famous people are just humans who are better known. He opened up to these guests, and many of them took a genuine interest in him. Over time, his paradigm began to change. One day, he asked a visiting studio executive from Los Angeles about his concern that the industry would make him corrupt. The executive responded, “You can be corrupt at anything. There are corrupt lawyers, dentists, and doctors too. You can make it in this industry and still be yourself.”
- Lyon later related, “I learned that if you love something, if your heart is really in it, you can live your dreams and maintain your ideals.”
- He was done waiting. In his own Hollywood-worthy moment, he quit his job, packed his bags, and headed for LA. After he arrived, he placed a call to Mark Mulcahy, a VP at Paramount Pictures whom Lyon had met while he was bell-hopping. Lyon asked Mulcahy if he would take him on a tour of the Paramount studio. He said yes. And Lyon got to see behind the scenes and get a better idea of what it really took to make movies.
- Next, Lyon cold-called one of his idols, producer Gerry Molen, who had produced Schindler’s List alongside director Steven Spielberg. Lyon told Molen that he was an aspiring producer and

asked him for advice. Molen graciously agreed to part with some nuggets of wisdom for the industry. He advised Lyon to go to school, but not to let that stop him from producing along the way. So, Lyon enrolled at the Art Center College of Design and started doing as many projects as he could. He remembers, “These projects had shoestring, rather. No-string budgets,” so he volunteered his time.

- One day, Lyon was contacted by Christian Jacobs, “The MC Bat Commander” from the popular rock band The Aquabats, and Scott Schukz, an accomplished artist and musician. “They were sick of boring TV programming for kids,” he recalls. “They wanted to create an educational children’s show that was fun for parents. Too.” The problem was, the pair had been pitching their idea to networks for six years with no results. “They had their own unique talents and backgrounds,” Lyon said, “but they were not finding success getting their children’s show picked up by a network.”
- Because Lyon had taken Gerry Molen’s advice and started working right away, he already had enough projects under his belt to legitimize himself as a producer. So the three of them started a production company called The Magic Store, and got to work. Again remembering Molen’s advice, Lyon decided to just bite the bullet and make some pilot episodes. Luckily, Lyon had learned how to bootstrap from his early projects, and the team was able to convince family and friends to make costumes, create the music, and design the sets for the show. They figured, worst-case scenario, they could recoup the little money they borrowed by selling some DVDs.
- Once the pilots were complete, they resumed the process of pitching the show to the networks. Nothing. Then the game changed. They decided to upload a trailer to the Internet to see if there was any interest. The video went viral. Over a four-day period, there were over a million views, crashing their server.
- “Suddenly,” Lyon said, “people from television networks started e-mailing us every five minutes, from all around the world, asking us where they could find out show.” At the same time they were fielding all these calls, viewers started calling Nickelodeon, suggesting they pick up the show. Even Jared Hess, the director of Napoleon Dynamite and Nacho Libre, called the director of Nickelodeon Movies and told her she needed to see the pilot.
- Yo Gabba Gabba went into production just a couple of months later, and within four seasons, it has become a household name. Brands like Vans have licensed Yo Gabba Gabba shoes; Volcom licensed T-shirts; Neff licensed beanies, and on and on. The show has even done live performances, selling out Radio City Music Hall in New York City.
- All because of two dads with a stupid idea they weren’t willing to give up on, and a shy kid from a small town in Idaho, who wasn’t afraid to ask for help in achieving his big-city dreams.
- How did Abrashoff spur such a monumental change? The answer is, he extended trust. In the captain’s own words, “I trusted my crew with my ship and my career.” And clearly, that made all the difference.

Leverage Existing Resources: How to Make Moccasins for a Kardashian and Do Anything Else You Want to Do

- When Susan couldn’t find any “cute” shoes for her son, she decided to make her own. She hadn’t ever made shoes before, so she went online, found a shoe pattern, and modified it to make what she had in mind: a simple pair of children’s moccasins. She loved the finished result so much that

she decided to put them online to see what her customers thought. They were a hit! Moccasins for babies became her staple product.

- Leverage is the process of maximizing the resources that are available to us, in order to increase effectiveness. When we leverage, we aggregate and organize existing resources to achieve success.
- Think about your local supermarket. Do they actually produce anything they sell in the store? In some circumstances perhaps they do, but for the most part, your local supermarket leverages everyone else's existing products to stock their shelves with the food you put on your table. Movie theaters play movies made by other people. Radio stations play music written by other people, and newspapers tell other people's stories. Teachers teach other people's information, and even authors often cite other authors to support the validity of their own claims. Leveraging other people's information on the Internet is simply an online reflection of what has been happening for years in the physical world. Google Search can be effectively summed up in one word: leverage.

The End of the Book. The Beginning of Your New Smart Life