

# Your Business Matters

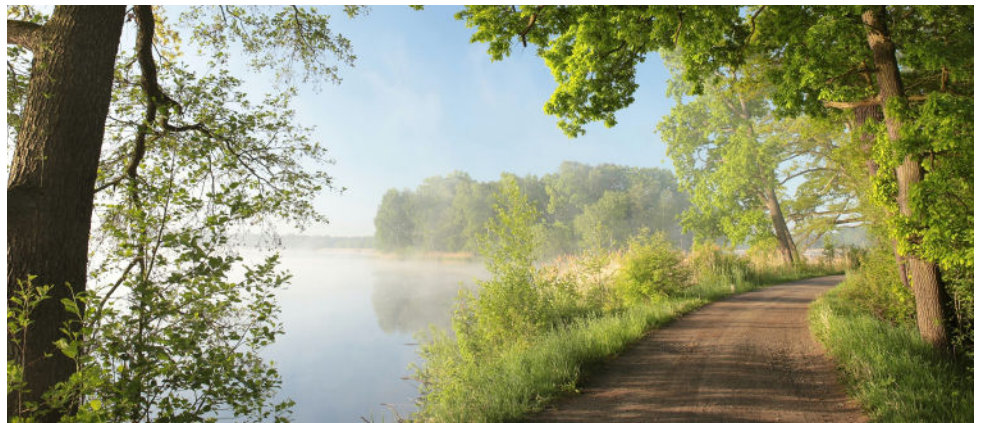
March 2020

## Finding My Happy Place

If you know Faith and me, you know we have different opinions when it comes to the great outdoors. To put it frankly, she doesn't think they're all that great. And I'm fine with that; it's healthy for couples to have different interests. Still, I appreciated it when she decided to go to an RV show with me last month in our attempt to try and find a happy middle ground between comfort and adventure we could both enjoy.

The outing ended up being a good laugh for the both of us. You wouldn't believe the sorts of boats-on-wheels they're selling these days. We saw one RV with a hefty quarter-million-dollar sticker price — the interior was dark wood and gold like a cruise ship suite. But at the end of the day, it was still a box on wheels. If anything, seeing that extreme end of the spectrum made it clear that compromising between comfort and camping just wasn't realistic.

That said, I'm not a huge proponent of the word "glamping," or accusing people of "glamour camping." To me, it's a very relative thing — some would call kayak camping "roughing it," but compared to some of the backpacking trips I've been on, getting to paddle downstream with a cold cooler feels pretty darn luxurious. I'm not here to judge how people choose to experience the wilderness.



It's funny how the outdoors can have very different impacts on people. The same forest grove that would have me in my happy place would give Faith nothing but anxiety. There's probably some nature and nurture elements at play here. For me, I trace my love of wild places back to my teenage years.

My grandfather had always loved nature, and growing up, I thought I understood where he was coming from. The forests where we would go camping in upstate New York were certainly beautiful. But it wasn't until I went on a hunting trip at age 15 with my friend Ken and his dad that I really understood what people found so great about the wilderness.

On this trip, I wasn't so much hunting as I was aiding and abetting the hunters. Ken's dad tasked us boys with going up and over a ridge to

drive the deer toward them. Not the most exciting job, I know, but I took it. Trudging up that mountain in the South Otselic state forest, I began to appreciate how tranquil the place was and how free my mind was to wander as I padded through those trees. It's a feeling I never got tired of chasing.

So, these days, I largely go on solo excursions. Some people think I'm crazy for it, but I deeply love the solitude I can find out in the wilderness. Besides, it's not like I'm doing anything too crazy — though I did get into a rather tense staring contest with a gator during one of my kayaking trips. But even then, I'd rather be in that 14-foot kayak than a \$250,000 RV.

Here's to our happy places,

*-Ed Alexander*

# BREAKING DOWN FACEBOOK

## What Is 'Decentralization' and How Will It Change Social Media?

Nowadays, getting locked out of your Facebook account often means losing access to your Spotify, Tinder, or any of the other sites you can sign into through Facebook. The amount of personal data social media has access to grows all the time, and it can affect your private and professional network. Thankfully, a few tech CEOs, such as Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter's Jack Dorsey, believe social media decentralization could give users greater control over their personal information.

Social media decentralization was once a pipe dream for activists, but Dorsey has recently revealed his hopes for redesigning his social media software to put the power back in the users' hands. Zuckerberg also admitted in a Harvard interview that decentralized software is "quite attractive."

Currently, Facebook and Twitter live in relative anarchy. Their sheer size makes them nearly impossible to audit or manage, which makes falsified information and propaganda infamously easy to pass around. This anarchy also makes it much easier to conceal illegal activity. In an age where identity theft, financial fraud, and selling user information are more digital than ever, it's important that users and businesses alike have full confidence in the security of their online pages where clients interact with them — especially if information, goods, or services are exchanged.

A decentralized system could split the massive, unregulated wilderness of Facebook and Twitter into user-managed "neighborhoods." Rather than relying on one centralized server that holds over 2.45 billion users, businesses and individuals could host their information on their own computer. This would give businesses and individuals much greater control over their information and how they share it.

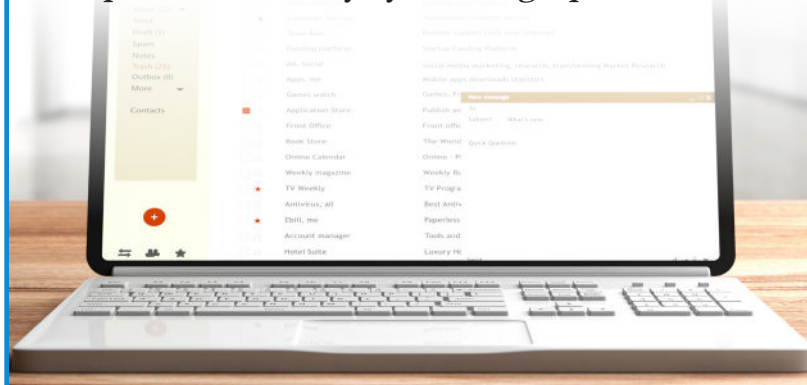
That's not to say there aren't risks associated with decentralization. If unprepared, private hosts could be left defenseless against hackers. Some critics even suggest that a push to decentralize could just be an attempt by Twitter and Facebook to dodge responsibility by moving data off of their own servers.

While decentralization offers solutions to some the problems of social media, it's an approach that requires cautious implementation. Only time will tell if decentralization's benefits outweigh its risks.



# IS EMAIL CLUTTER DRAGGING YOU DOWN?

## Improve Productivity by Cleaning Up Your Inbox



Do you cringe every time you open your email, preparing yourself for a barrage of unanswered messages? If so, then it's time to take tidying up your inbox more seriously because poor organization results in far worse problems than simply missing out on happy hours with coworkers.

According to psychology professor Susan Krauss Whitbourne, mental and physical clutter can impede productivity. It may also have long-term effects on our ability to process information. One University of Toronto researcher has even found evidence that mental clutter may worsen age-related memory loss. Since most people can cite their digital inbox as a source of stress, starting there is a big step toward organizing your mind and your life. Plus, you can declutter it in just one hour by following these steps.

### 1. Sweep away the junk.

Begin by going through your emails from oldest to newest and deleting anything you know you won't need. When you see an email you want to delete, search to find others from that sender — it's likely there are multiple you can trash right away.

### 2. Categorize necessary messages.

Create folders to organize the remaining emails. You might use a time-based system, like "First Quarter of 2020," or descriptive names, like "Receipts" and "Current Projects." Choose a system that works for your personal preferences.

### 3. Respond to urgent emails.

Have unanswered emails that can't be filed away? Use the two-minute rule: Immediately respond to anything that will take less than two minutes to answer. For the ones that need more effort, put them on your to-do list and schedule a time on your calendar to respond.

### 4. Maintain a healthy email habit.

Now that your inbox is in a manageable state, develop habits to keep it that way. Check your inbox when you get to work and follow the steps above. Once a week, set aside a few minutes to sort through and organize anything you missed. The more time you devote to decluttering your email first thing, the more time you'll have to accomplish bigger and more important goals.

# Is That Picture Worth \$1,000?

## *How to Avoid Copyright Infringement for Your Business*

We've all heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words," and for businesses, this is especially true. Images used on a website and in marketing materials contribute to a specific vision and encourage customers to buy into a service or product. However, obtaining and using those images requires much more than a quick search on Google. To make the biggest splash while avoiding heavy penalties that can tank your business, follow these tips when searching for images.

### **Presume all images are protected by copyright.**

Never assume that an image you find while browsing the internet is free to use. It may be easy to download one you like and use it on your website, social media account, or blog, but it can have devastating consequences. Someone who wrongfully uses copyright material worth at least \$2,500 may face up to five years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines according to federal statute. Play it safe by assuming every image or photograph you find online is protected by copyright law.

### **Always ask permission for use.**

Even if an image isn't under copyright, you still might not have permission to use it. Find the source of the image, and inquire about using it for your own business. The image itself may have certain conditions you need to meet before you can use it. For instance, a licensing agreement may require you to pay a fee, give credit to the original creator,

or guarantee the image's use as-is without further alteration. In other instances, ask the photographer, designer, or artist for permission to use the image and agree to include a watermark or a link to their website.

### **Find and use free images instead.**

Several websites, such as Pexels, Pixabay, and Morguefile, provide hundreds of photos for businesses to use for free and without worry of copyright infringement. Creative Commons is also a great resource to consult. This nonprofit provides free licenses and tools that make copyright material easy to understand. You may need to meet some agreements under a Creative Commons license, but afterwards, you can access and use numerous photos.



# HAVE A *Laugh*

SO DOES THIS SYNC TO OUR PHONES OR...?



WHEN THE REALIZATION OF HOLIDAY DEBT SETS IN



# PUZZLE

	2	7	8	4	6			3
				7			8	
					5		2	
	5			8		3	4	
	7	6				8	9	
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9	1	5	6	3	8	2	7	4
7	6	8	5	2	4	1	3	9
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8	4	3	9	1	5	6	2	7
6	9	1	2	7	3	4	8	5
5	2	7	8	4	6	9	1	3

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# Heads or Tails?

## *The Scientifically Smarter Way to Make Business Decisions*

You have two options in front of you. They both sound great, are backed by research, and could transform your business for the better, but you can only choose one. Which do you commit to?

When you're faced with two equally worthwhile options, science says the best way to make a decision is to flip a coin. When you flip a coin, you're not really leaving the decision up to chance; you're actually calling on your intuition to guide you. The practice is often regarded as unscientific, but there's a lot of research to support making intuitive decisions. Friederike Fabritius and Hans W. Hagemann, authors of "The Leading Brain: Neuroscience Hacks to Work Smarter, Better, Happier," explain how we develop that "gut feeling."

Intuitive decisions are driven by two structures in your brain: the basal ganglia and the insula. The basal ganglia are connected to movement and building habits. The insula, part of the cerebral cortex, becomes engaged when you experience pain, feel love, listen to music, or even enjoy a piece of chocolate. Neuroscientists believe the insula is responsible for self-awareness, particularly for recognizing changes in your body.

When you have to solve a problem, your basal ganglia start working on a solution, even if you aren't consciously thinking

about it. If you make a conscious decision that agrees with the subconscious solution of your basal ganglia, your brain gives off a subtle reward. The decision doesn't have to be logical to feel right — that's your gut feeling. However, if the conscious and subconscious parts of your brain don't agree, your insula detects the discrepancy and registers a threat. It's the "I have a bad feeling about this" response.

Fabritius and Hagemann note that gut feelings "represent the most efficient use of your accumulated experience." According to the authors, flipping a coin is the best way to really listen to your basal ganglia and insula. Your subconscious brain has already made a decision; flipping a coin helps you test your intuition about each option.

If the coin lands on heads and you feel relieved, then heads is the right choice. However, if the coin lands on tails and you're uncertain or want to flip again, then that's your intuition saying the other option is the better choice. So, the next time you're caught in a pickle, grab the nearest quarter and put your intuition to the test.

