

Your Business Matters

May 2021

A Freedom on the Road That Beats Driving

What I Love About Biking

My wife says that I have too many bikes. As someone who loves to bike, I would have to disagree! Biking has been my hobby of choice for years now, ever since I bought my first mountain bike to ride on the trails in the reserve land in our neighborhood. I rode that first mountain bike until it basically fell apart. Then, I bought a better mountain bike. Then, I bought more bikes. Now, I have a garage full of different bikes for different purposes, and I ride every single one of them.

While I'm nowhere near as serious as some cyclists out there, it's still something I could talk about for ages. Since May is actually National Bike Month, I want to share a little bit about my bikes and why I love biking so much.

Even though I didn't really consider it a "hobby" until I was an adult, I think I can trace my love of bikes and cycling back to when I was around 13 years old. I got a black Ross 10 Speed for Christmas, and I used it to go everywhere. There was an airport 15 miles from my house on Long Island, and I used to ride my bike all the way there to watch the planes take off. When I was with friends, we used our bikes to get wherever we wanted to go. What else were we supposed to do before we could drive cars? Our bikes were our ticket to freedom!

When I did receive my driver's license, my love for biking went dormant for a while, but it did not last. Today, I have a number of bikes in my garage that I love taking out on nearby (and sometimes far away) roads and trails. The first one has a carbon fiber frame. On a scale from low-end to high-end carbon fiber bikes, mine is somewhere in the middle in terms of quality, but it's so light that when you're riding it, it feels like you're just strapping wheels to your feet. It's a great choice if I want to ride somewhere fast (for me anyway)!

I also have what's called a touring bike that's used for gravel riding (riding bikes on dirt roads). It's a good, sturdy bike. I usually use it to commute to work. For any roads that are rougher than your standard gravel ones, I have a 29+ bike. With the right tire pressure, that bike will ride over anything.



You also sit a lot higher off the ground when you ride it, so I like to think of it as the monster truck of bikes.

Finally, I have my mountain bike. Mountain biking was my first love, and it's still just so much fun. There's nothing quite like careening down a trail, leaning into curves, and flowing through the woods. The mountain bike I have now is a dual-suspension model, which makes the ride a lot more comfortable on bumpy trails.

Regardless of the bike I'm using or whether I'm riding on a road or through the woods, I feel like I can experience so much more around me than if I were just driving in a car. The world feels more vibrant and real. I'm in the process of planning a biking trip between Cape Canaveral and St. Petersburg, Florida, with a buddy. I hope to do more trips like that in the future, maybe along the C&O Canal Path and the Great Allegheny Passage between Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh or even on the San Juan Islands in Washington state. If I had the time and opportunity to ride across the country on a bike, I would do it in a heartbeat.

I know I'll be riding my bikes a lot this month. If you're a hardcore cyclist or just like to bike for fun, maybe I'll see you out on the trails!

-Ed Alexander

Confidence Is Key

When You Want Every Decision to Be a Touchdown



If you're a business owner, you've no doubt faced hard decisions. And when we say "hard decisions," we don't mean the ones you make on a daily basis. We're talking about make-or-break decisions that have serious long-term consequences. Choosing the right path forward could mean years of business growth, but choosing the wrong path could be the death knell.

With stakes that high, decision-making may not feel that exciting. The prospect of making difficult choices leaves many business owners understandably in a state of paralysis. You may stop and ask yourself: Am I making the right call? What if this endangers the livelihood of my business and my employees? This paralysis is normal, but it can prevent you from making the moves your business needs to survive. Luckily, however, you can change this initial reaction.

According to David Meltzer's book, "Game-Time Decision Making: High-Scoring Business Strategies From the Biggest Names in Sports," you can be ready to make hard decisions before the buzzer signals the end of the game. As Meltzer's book title suggests, decision-making in sports parallels decision-making in business. Business leaders can learn lessons from the court, field, or rink, even if they're just sitting courtside.

The biggest lesson is that confidence is key. But having confidence in your decisions — especially ones with serious consequences — is easier said than done. According to Meltzer, one way to boost your confidence is by surrounding



yourself with people who support you and trust your judgment. Just like having an all-star team that trusts your judgment in the game, having friends and colleagues who affirm your decisions goes a long way toward building your confidence.

It's also important to have a positive mindset. It's tempting to expect the worst from any decision you make, but according to Meltzer, the most confident decision-makers are those who have a positive outlook on the future. This makes sense, considering how challenging it is to move forward with a decision when negative thoughts are clouding your judgment. After all, no one ever made a game-winning touchdown after imagining all the ways they might fail to do so!

While reading books like "Game-Time Decision Making" can certainly help you become a more confident decision-maker when everything is on the line, the fact is that confident decision-making comes with time and practice. So, if you want to be ready to beat the buzzer on your next tough decision as a business owner, surround yourself with a team that supports your call. Let their confidence in your leadership inspire your abilities, and remember: Don't let thoughts about how your decision could go wrong stop you from making any decision at all. Maintain a positive outlook, put together an all-star team, and you'll be making confident decisions in no time.

TAKE A *Break*



The Bet That Spawned the Filet-O-Fish Sandwich

Inside the McDonald's History Books

If you're one of the 68 million people who dine at McDonald's each day, you're probably familiar with the Filet-O-Fish Sandwich. This simple dish has a contentious history. Ray Kroc, the owner of McDonald's, hated it. But it reached his menus anyway for one reason: Kroc lost a bet.



In 1962, McDonald's franchisee Lou Groen masterminded the Filet-O-Fish to appeal to his Catholic customers. But Kroc refused to add it to the menu. He didn't want his stores to smell like fish!

So they made a bet. On Good Friday, select McDonald's put both the Filet-O-Fish and the meatless Hula Burger on the menu. The entree that sold the best stuck around. As you might have guessed, Groen blew Kroc out of the water, selling 350 Filet-O-Fish sandwiches to his six Hula Burgers. Smelly or not, the filet was there to stay!

Connecting Your Employees to Your Mission

Making Your Passions Their Passions

Your business might be doing well, but if your workforce doesn't feel any sort of personal connection to your business's mission, that could prevent lasting success. You want to boost employee morale and make them happy about their work. To reinvigorate your employees' passion for your business's mission, try a few of these tips.

Walk the talk.

Patagonia CEO Yvon Chouinard decided to make his products out of organic cotton after he saw how industrially grown cotton was hurting the environment. It cost more to do that, but he stuck to Patagonia's mission of creating environmentally friendly products. If you're not willing to sacrifice for your mission, then it's not your mission — and your employees will know it.

Make it clear.

Make sure everyone at your company knows exactly what your mission is. Only when employees have a clear understanding of the goal can they actually abide by it. If your mission statement can be interpreted in multiple ways, clarify it throughout all levels of your business.

Speak passionately about it.

While you want the mission itself to be exciting, even the most intriguing of mission statements will be DOA if your delivery doesn't convey your excitement. Humans are emotional creatures, so connecting with your employees emotionally in regard to your mission is just as important as the mission itself.



Make it personal.

While you might think tying your personal story to the company's mission seems narcissistic, the truth is that your team wants to hear your story. People like stories, and if you can convey yours with honesty and humility, no one will think you're an egoist.

Re-work it.

If your mission doesn't seem to be inspiring passion in your workforce, then maybe it's time to tweak it a little bit. Whether you're just starting in business or have had the same mission statement for 10 years, a new mission lived out, made clear, and made personal by you can spark a newfound appreciation for your business among your employees.

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4. Why Customer Stories Are Your Best Marketing Tools

How You Can Use Customer Stories *To Create a Killer Marketing Campaign*

Stories are one of the oldest forms of communication. For as long as there has been language, people have used words to spin yarns and convey ideas. Today, when it comes to marketing your products, stories emotionally impact your customers in a way that mere facts never could.

How do stories do this? According to behavioral economist and author Peter McGraw, memories are built on associations. When you form a habit, routine, or ritual, you're essentially creating a new set of associations. Using stories, you can show how customers who use your product or service incorporate it into their rituals. If others see that your product has a benefit, they might be compelled to do the same.

Before sharing testimonials of customers using your products willy-nilly, however, there are a few tips that might help you curate the stories your customers share and see.

Make your customers the center of the story.

Many businesses make their product or their brand the hero of the story, but this isn't the most effective way to grab your customers' attention through storytelling. Instead, focusing on your customers, their rituals, and the success they've achieved can resonate a lot more powerfully. Of course, you'll want to make it clear how your product helped them achieve success.



Meet your customers where they are.

Find a way to get customer feedback on the products and services your business provides. What do they like about your product? How have those products and services helped them the most? Incorporating this information into your storytelling campaign can also ensure that those stories resonate a lot more with your customers.

Ditch the jargon.

Always remember to keep your stories short, to the point, and accessible. No customer is going to be interested in reading an eight-page white paper or listen to a testimonial that they can't understand because it's so full of industry jargon. That's the beauty of good storytelling — it can impact anyone, transcending industries.