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Your Business Matters

APRIL 2022

Celebrating Earth Day

April 22 is Earth Day and, if you've been reading this newsletter for any length of time, you know being outdoors is my happy place. Whether it's the woods, the water, or anywhere in between, being outside calms and relaxes me.

I'm lucky enough to have a 9,000-acre preserve right behind my house. I spend a lot of time there, biking on dirt trails and hiking. So, it and the natural world are important to me.

On a recent "gravel" biking ride there, I thought about the similarity between environmental protection and improving a business.

When it comes to taking action to protect the environment, I've heard many people proclaim that the problem is so large that no individual can make a difference. Since all they hear about is the enormity of it, they can't see how anything they do could have an effect on it — so, they do nothing.

This is classic learned helplessness. Someone believes they have no control over a situation, and they give up trying to change it.

Unfortunately, this also happens in business. An owner has a vision of where the business should be but sees the enormity of its current problems and is overwhelmed by the number and depth of changes that need to be made. So, the owner does nothing.

The key to overcoming learned helplessness is to take action. *Any* action. Start with one small step. Then follow that up with another small step. Action produces results — no matter how minor — and results overcome learned helplessness.

If you're a bit of a perfectionist like me, you can get hung up on the "right" step. You'll worry, what should go first, then second, then third, etc.

You must avoid everything that stops your action. What you do doesn't need to be perfect; it just needs to happen. Eventually you'll find the right combination of actions, and in the process, you'll have produced results. Things will improve and the business will produce more profit and be more valuable.

In the book, "The One Thing," Gary W. Keller uses the phrase: *Think big, go small, and trust the dominos will fall.*

I find it helpful to keep this in mind because it keeps my focus on constant small actions — the types of changes that are most likely to take hold and last — while simultaneously keeping an eye on the big picture. The book is certainly worth a read.

If you're looking for somewhere to get outside and enjoy the natural world, check out some of the beautiful state parks and preserves throughout Florida or your home state. The easiest way to get out is to simply go for a walk in the woods.

–Ed Alexander

GO GREEN AND GET NOTICED

3 Ways Your Company Can Stand Out in 'Green Noise'

Earth Day is a great opportunity to give your customers what they want: proof that your brand genuinely and authentically cares about your local economy and the planet.

Many companies promise to "go green," but these days, a simple recycling program just won't cut it. To win over eco-friendly prospects, you must continually prove that your business doesn't take a day on this planet for granted! Here are three ways to do just that.

1. **Bring your whole team onboard.**
   To become a "green-thinking" business, you should start from within. It's not authentic to promote recycling or planting trees if your employees don't believe in it, too. Start by launching an internal incentive program with a different challenge each month (like recycling at home or driving less to reduce emissions), then reward the employees who recycle the most or carpool, bike, and walk to work. To really go the distance, consider volunteering at a cleanup or local conservation event together. This creates meaningful change and builds strong employee relationships.

2. **Create a green task force.**
   Could you be doing more to protect the environment? The answer is probably yes, and you can start by developing a task force of employees dedicated to examining your business's processes and products. They can determine how to improve your systems to make them more sustainable and bring local experts to help!

   Here's an idea to get your group started: Food waste has a tremendous impact on the environment. Approximately 38% of land on Earth is used to produce food, but about 32% of all food that is produced is wasted, according to Recycle Coach. That wasted food emits carbon dioxide in the landfill, but you can fight food waste in your employee kitchen by donating uneaten food to local pantries, creating a community garden, and investing in a compost system.

3. **Take your efforts community-wide.**
   In today's business world, going green looks good! According to First Insight, 73% of Gen Z customers are willing to pay more for sustainable products, and other research has shown they and millennials want to work at/with green companies. You can leverage your new eco-image by engaging your local community, hosting events, and offering incentive programs.

   Consider hosting a community Earth Day event like a 5K to raise funds for a local conservation group or planning an environmental lecture, trash cleanup, or sustainable farm-to-table dinner. To ensure this benefits your company as well as the planet, partner with other businesses, offer prizes that include your products and services, and/or make an offer to customers who attend the event to boost your retention. Beyond events, you could offer special promotions for customers who choose eco-friendly options like going paperless.

Once you have developed strong internal and external practices, don't be shy about the work you're doing. Promote it on social media, in your newsletter, and in conversations with your clients. Be proud of the work you do to protect our planet — you just might create a strong movement behind you.

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HAVE A *Laugh*

Not Just a Condiment

KETCHUP ONCE CURED ALL

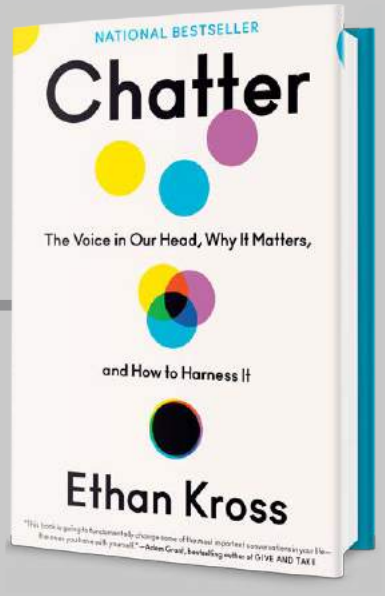
In 1834, Dr. John Cook Bennett came up with a recipe for tomato ketchup that he advertised as a cure for indigestion, jaundice, diarrhea, and rheumatism. The ketchup was packed into pills, and his research made its way into well-respected American newspapers.

The craze over the ketchup pills grew, and many other entrepreneurs began creating their own versions of the "extract of tomato" pills. Some versions didn't contain any tomatoes at all and, instead, were filled with laxatives. Still, Americans believed these ketchup pills were the key to ultimate health.

Scientists then began to look into Bennett's research claims, but the ketchup pill craze died down by 1850. Modern research shows that tomatoes contain the antioxidant lycopene, which is linked to reducing the risk of cancer and heart disease. They also are abundant sources of potassium, vitamin C, vitamin K, and folate. While Bennett's research was exponentially exaggerated, we can say it wasn't *completely* inaccurate.

Take Your Internal Pep Talks Up a Notch

WITH TIPS FROM 'CHATTER'



You probably know about the benefits of positive self-talk, but have you mastered it? If not — or if you've never heard that phrase — "Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It" by Ethan Kross may be the most important book you read in 2022.

Positive self-talk is something most of us engage in daily. It's the "you can do this" nudge you give yourself to combat dark thoughts like "I don't know what I'm doing" and "no one will take me seriously" before a big presentation. But few resources give you precise strategies for how to engage in positive self-talk effectively so you can make those negative impulses go away.

"Chatter" is an exception to the rule, perhaps because it was written by an actual psychologist! Leaning heavily on scientific research and engaging case studies, Kross offers concrete tips for reducing negative thoughts (what he calls "chatter") and giving your self-confidence a boost. One of his biggest tips, which drives a big chunk of the book, is the importance of creating "mental distance" during your internal pep talks.

Mental distance is exactly what it sounds like — stepping back mentally from your worries and problems so you can gain a new perspective. Kross goes over several ways to do this, including trying to "look back" at your current situation from one, five, or 10 years later; comparing this hurdle to tougher ones in your life; and shifting your internal monologue to third person so you can try talking to yourself as if you were your own friend. With these strategies, we can transform our thoughts, rather than avoid them.

Of course, those suggestions just scratch the surface of what's offered in the book. Kross also goes over how to help your friends, colleagues, and employees eliminate chatter, and how mastering your inner voice will help you thrive under pressure. The magazine Inc. named "Chatter" one of the "4 Business Books That Will Accelerate Your Success In 2022" — don't miss it.

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SHOULD YOUR COMPANY BE ON PATREON?

3 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS POPULAR FUNDING PLATFORM

If you have a favorite artist, are dedicated to a YouTube channel, or listen to a lot of podcasts, you've probably heard of Patreon. But what exactly is the platform — and how can you leverage it for your business?

What Is Patreon?

Patreon is an online funding tool that allows businesses and individuals to offer their supporters tiered monthly memberships in exchange for exclusive perks like behind-the-scenes clips, extra content, and one-on-one time with creators.

3 Things to Know

1. *Patreon isn't just for artists anymore.* Patreon started as a platform where artists and other creatives could get financial support from their fans, but in the last few years, it has expanded dramatically. Now, all kinds of small businesses including newspapers, event venues, and nonprofits are funded in part by Patreon members.

2. *You can monetize your side projects and passions.* Does your company have a podcast or YouTube channel? If so, you could put that passion project on Patreon rather than asking people to support your whole business. Your Patreon supporters will chip in on a monthly basis, making your creative process easier financially. This is a great way to explore your favorite parts of your business, strengthen relationships with clients, *and* grow your marketing toolkit.

3. *Patreon makes giving back easier.* If you run a nonprofit on the side or want to launch a giveback program within your company, Patreon might be the platform you need. It's more interactive than Kickstarter or other crowdfunding options, and the bonus content you provide will get supporters really invested in your vision. If you go this route, launch your Patreon early so you have the support you need to fund the nonprofit approval process and startup phase.

To Patreon, or Not to Patreon

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