



# from one creative to another

*A Practical Guide To Navigating Entrepreneurship*

*From the contributors of the Brand Meets Creative  
Thought Leadership Initiative*

COMPILED BY ELAINE MENSAH



# *Foreword*

Entrepreneur(ship) are words we hear about significantly lately. It seems everywhere you turn you are inundated with what it means, how you can become one, and who is making the next million dollars.

However, for many like myself, entrepreneurship came to me out of necessity versus want. I was a young adult unsatisfied with the corporate career I had at that time and wanted to do work that would change my life and that of others. I was looking for an opportunity to develop the breadth of skills sets, experiences, and knowledge that I had and share them with like-minded individuals.

Over the past 10 years since I began my journey as an entrepreneur, I have learned (many times the hard way) what it takes to build a business, a brand, and keep your sanity at the same time.

With the help of amazingly talented fellow entrepreneurs who contributed these pieces of work to my company Brand Meets Creative, I wanted to compile some of our lessons learned into this e-book [From One Creative To Another: A Practical Guide To Navigating Entrepreneurship](#) in the hopes that it will inspire and motivate you to either get started or keep chugging along on your journey.



Elaine Mensah

**FOUNDER, ELAINE MENSAB INC  
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# The Business of Business is Business

BY ROBIN FISHER, CEO POLISHED IMAGE & STYLE

**“As you walk into the new world in a few months, never forget, the business of business is business. Nothing else.”**

I will never forget the day my college professor belted out those words. I was a senior and ready for the world. Already working on a corporate level in the fashion industry as a technical designer. I was having an absolute ball meeting interesting people and thriving in the midst of the hustle and bustle (or what we often call the creative process).

In my mind, I had a pretty good idea of what the fashion business was all about.

So what exactly did my professor mean? What was I missing?

Fast forward ahead two years, and I am climbing my way up the corporate ladder in international production. I'm either combing Asian and European countrysides sourcing fabrics and trims for upcoming collections, or sitting in a four-hour meeting with corporate executives who care more about profit margins and current inventory levels than how fabulous customers look in their product. Suddenly it hit me.

I was a far cry away from the runways and perfectly-merchandised show rooms that I (like most industry newcomers) envisioned. I understood design, drafting, and product development, but that was only scratching the surface. To truly be successful in this business, I also needed to learn international trade, statistics, accounting, advertising, and loss prevention— all of the operational functions needed to make a fashion company run.

Luckily I'd promised myself years before to do whatever it took to have a career in the fashion industry. So that's exactly what I did. Having graduated with a degree in Industrial Technology (a major that merges manufacturing and business) I was determined to know the ins and outs of the overall business.

Many years later, I can say the fashion industry is truly an industry. And honestly, it's nothing like I originally thought.

Throughout my career I've seen many people start out ready to take on the world, only to find themselves burned out and uninspired a few short years later.

Why? Because this industry was not what they originally expected.

Those people were in love with what they thought fashion was, only to find out that runway shows and red carpet events only make up about 5 to 10 percent of what really goes on during the day-to-day operations. At the end of the day, fashion is about business, and to be successful you must function as a multi-tasking, polished professional at all times.

The one thing I absolutely love about the fashion industry is the endless career opportunities. Like Russell Simmons stated, “There are more jobs in the fashion industry than just being a designer or a model.” In fashion, you'll find merchandisers, sales representatives, attorneys, publicists, and accountants, just to name a few. The fashion industry's design cycle dictates the personnel needed to support the day-to-day operations of a fashion organization.

Through the years I've learned you have to be flexible in this industry.

If someone would have told me that I would not be working in San Francisco, New York, or another fashion city somewhere in the world I would not have believed them.

But life led me to DC, where I run my own successful company using all of the skills I learned that at one time I thought were non-fashion related. When my husband and I decided to settle in DC metro, my corporate options were limited, so I had to create my own opportunities in the industry I loved. It was not an option for me to do anything else.

Many fashion companies start off small with limited resources, and saying you have to be a team player is an understatement.

Sometimes you will have to definitely wear more than one hat in order for your organization to be successful. The fashion industry is not a place for someone who only wants to do what's in their formal job description.

As my professor said, “The business of business is business.” Although the world of fashion can be fun, exciting, and glamorous, at the end of the day it's a global, multi-billion dollar industry currently employing over four million people. And the good news is they definitely are not all the glamorous designers and beautiful models we see in the magazines. Most of them are business professionals with various skills just like you!

**"GOOD BUSINESS LEADERS CREATE A VISION, ARTICULATE THE VISION, PASSIONATELY OWN THE VISION, AND RELENTLESSLY DRIVE IT TO COMPLETION."**

**JACK WELCH, FORMER CEO OF GE**



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# The Creative Dreamer

BY FREDERIQUE STEPHANIE, FOUNDER & STYLIST THE POPUP HOUSE

## WHY PERSONAL BRANDING IS ESSENTIAL TO CAREER SUCCESS.

Developing a brand is essential to advancing your career and growing as a leader. It's not just about self promotion or being very present on social media, it's about telling a compelling story that will appeal to other people. It is all about perception and how you want to be viewed.

"A lot of people have taste, but they don't have the daring to be creative"- Bill Cunningham

## CREATE A STRATEGY

The most important part of building a brand is being authentic. Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, once said: "Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room". Branding is your reputation. A good and powerful brand is based on your talent, your values. What you believe is important. This will help people to be clear about who you are, both in person and online. Your brand must also be distinctive and flexible. You must grow with your audience and constantly appeal and be relevant to them.

## SOCIAL MEDIA: FRIEND OR FOE?

Social media is a great tool to get known. When used as part of a carefully designed strategy, the results and rewards can be immense. It is a great interactive and powerful platform which allows you to tell your story visually. Nearly 2.1 billions people have social media account, so it makes sense that it is crucial to building your brand. Post relevant content. Posting for the sake of it can damage your brand in the long term. Be sure to not only use social media as a branding tool, but to use effectively in order to stand out and keep customers engaged and interested.

## BE CONSISTENT

Building a brand can be fun, but it is hard work and it's all about being consistent, especially when using social media. Concentrate your efforts in places where your target audience congregates and participate regularly to build visibility and reputation. The story also needs to be consistent across all the mediums you are using: social media, website and stationery. The most powerful brands are the most recognizable ones. Branding is the combination of tangible and intangible characteristics that make a brand unique. Branding is developing an image – with results to match. Branding today is as much about consistently delivering on your promise as it is about differentiation. You have to position yourself in unique ways in order to stand out from others.

## GET INVOLVED

There is a widespread belief that if you work very hard, someone will eventually notice. Sadly, in an incredibly competitive marketplace, this is no longer sufficient. You have to be actively, get out of your comfort zone and market yourself and the product you are offering. Participating in industry events, will reinforce your brand offline but also inspire you and will encourage you to stay connected to other people, businesses, customer behaviours and generally what's happening around you. Branding is about building a name for yourself, showcasing what sets you apart from others, and describing the added value you bring to a situation.

## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most powerful in the marketing bubble is word-of-mouth. Nothing is more valuable than your little black book, which consists of your friends, your colleagues, mentors, clients and previous bosses. Keeping your network strong Personal branding isn't easy, but thinking through your unique strengths, your career goals and aspirations, and how you want others to perceive you can have dramatically positive results.



**"CREATIVITY IS THE  
ROOT OF  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP."**

**KARNDÉE LEOPAIROTE, THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY**

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# The Wonderful World of the “Slash” Entrepreneur

BY KIM ELLEEN ATKINS, JOURNALIST & FASHION DESIGNER

## **I never set out to be a “slash” entrepreneur.**

In fact, when I started, I had never even heard of that term!

It refers to someone who has an established career, and then launches and runs a separate business simultaneously, becoming, for example, a lawyer/jewelry designer, or an accountant/pet groomer, or – like me – a journalist/fashion designer.

I just knew that as a working newspaper reporter who often appeared on television and attended many work-related events, I needed a wardrobe that could go from board rooms to bar rooms to ballrooms. But I could never manage to find clothes that fit me properly, let alone reflected my personal style.

So I started utilizing the sewing skills I learned as a kid from my mother, a seamstress, and began making my own garments.

Within a few years my designs had caught the eye of my friends, friends-of-friends and eventually fashion industry professionals. Before I knew it, I’d launched a new business designing womenswear collections that were being featured on runways and in magazines. I never intentionally chose to become a fashion designer, but the fashion industry chose me. And I’m so glad it did!

## **But like many entrepreneurs, I soon began facing questions from friends, colleagues, family members and industry professionals alike.**

“What will you choose,” they asked, “a career in journalism or in fashion?”

My answer every time: “Both!”

I love being a journalist. The challenge of taking on complex topics, telling stories about our world and the way that it works, and literally learning new things each day and explaining those things to my readers and viewers is rewarding and intellectually satisfying. But I also love the freedom and challenge of designing garments for women like me, who don’t want to sacrifice comfort and fit for great style.

Don’t get me wrong – if journalism wasn’t right for me I wouldn’t be afraid to walk away from it. After all, I went to law school and practiced as a lawyer for years before I realized that a career as an attorney was not my calling, so I left the law office for the newsroom.

And having a “slash” career isn’t for everyone, I know.

But for many people, juggling two careers isn’t just possible, it’s for best of both worlds.

## **If you’re thinking about launching a new venture in addition to your current gig, here are a few things to keep in mind based on my own personal experience:**

**Be a planner.** I utilize calendar apps for absolutely everything, scheduling my days meticulously –including rest and relaxation time. That way I can ensure that I allocate enough time to complete all of my work projects while still ensuring that I have a good work-life balance.


**Set aside time every single workday for both jobs.** I know that may sound like a lot of work, but if you set aside at least an hour or two for your startup – even if it just means taking some time to brainstorm ideas – it will help you stay in the entrepreneurial mindset, and I’ll also keep you on track to complete your short and long-term goals.

**Follow your bliss.** Don’t start a new venture just because you think it’s trendy or just because you think it will be a lucrative. If you don’t love what you do, especially if it’s your second job, it’ll feel like a chore.

**Don’t go broke!** Funding a new venture is challenging in the best of times. Take time to seek out both traditional funding sources as well as crowdfunding and angel investors who believe in your business or product. Make a budget and stick to it. It’s better to keep your business small – and affordable – than to try to start too big and end up in the red. A big benefit for “slash” entrepreneurs is that you don’t have to rely on your new venture to pay your rent. Be patient.

**Believe in yourself!** Then others will too!



The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly asphalt, with a road-like pattern of white lines. Faint, large, light-colored text is visible in the background, including the number '1', the number '2', and the word 'SPRIN'.

**"CREATIVITY IS NOT  
JUST A SKILL BUT AN  
ATTITUDE--A  
REBELLIOUS DESIRE  
TO BE DIFFERENT."**

**CHAIPRANIN VISUDHIPOL, TBWA**

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# Your Brand, Your Image, Your Success

BY ROBIN FISHER, CEO POLISHED IMAGE & STYLE

## “What exactly is my brand?”

As an executive Image Consultant, I hear this question weekly from my clients at various professional levels and from various industries. Branding has become quite the buzzword, and even if you're not exactly sure what a brand is, it's clear that brands aren't just for big businesses and designer labels.

**Your brand is holistic representation of who you are, and equally as important, how you are perceived.**

And just how it works for businesses, your brand is what will distinguish you from the competition, and position you as a key player in your industry. Your personal brand is vital to your success. Your brand—is everything.

Building a great, quality brand takes vision, authenticity, discipline and a genuine understanding of the customers that you seek to attract. Businesses visually communicate their brand with imagery and verbiage, using both to make an impactful and distinct statement about who they are and what they do.

When curating your brand, you should strive to do the same by focusing on impeccable business etiquette, communication skills and of course, personal appearance.

## Here are my top 4 tips for developing your professional brand and image:

1. Always be respectful, no matter what.

I've received lots of good advice over the years, but something my aunt shared with me as a teenager tops the list. Through words and action, she taught me the importance of being groomed, reserved and respectful at home, which in turn taught me how to respond publically and professionally in tough situations. While there was a time when aggressive personalities got the promotions or made the big sale, these days, respect and thoughtfulness are winning.

2. Watch your words, and tailor your communication style to your industry.

Today's professionals must manage and respond to all types of communication, such as emails, voicemails and social media, and also represent their organizations and divisions in meetings and at networking events. Some industries are more relaxed than others when it comes to communication, so make it your business to understand what is acceptable in yours. What you say—and how you say it—can separate you from the pack, and develop your reputation as a class act.

3. Always dress appropriately.

Before you can say a word, you are already being sized up! Let's be honest. Everyone makes judgments when they meet someone for the first time. Don't you?

Anyone who sees you will make an assessment about your professional, socio-economic and education levels based simply on what you're wearing.

Did you know it only takes 10 seconds to make a good first impression, and 75% of that is based on how you look? That's not a lot of time to make it count, so I say, be prepared. When selecting your look for a meeting or event, ask yourself:

Where am I going?

Who will be there?

What type of outfit is best for this experience (Traditional Suiting, Business Casual, After Five or Casual)?

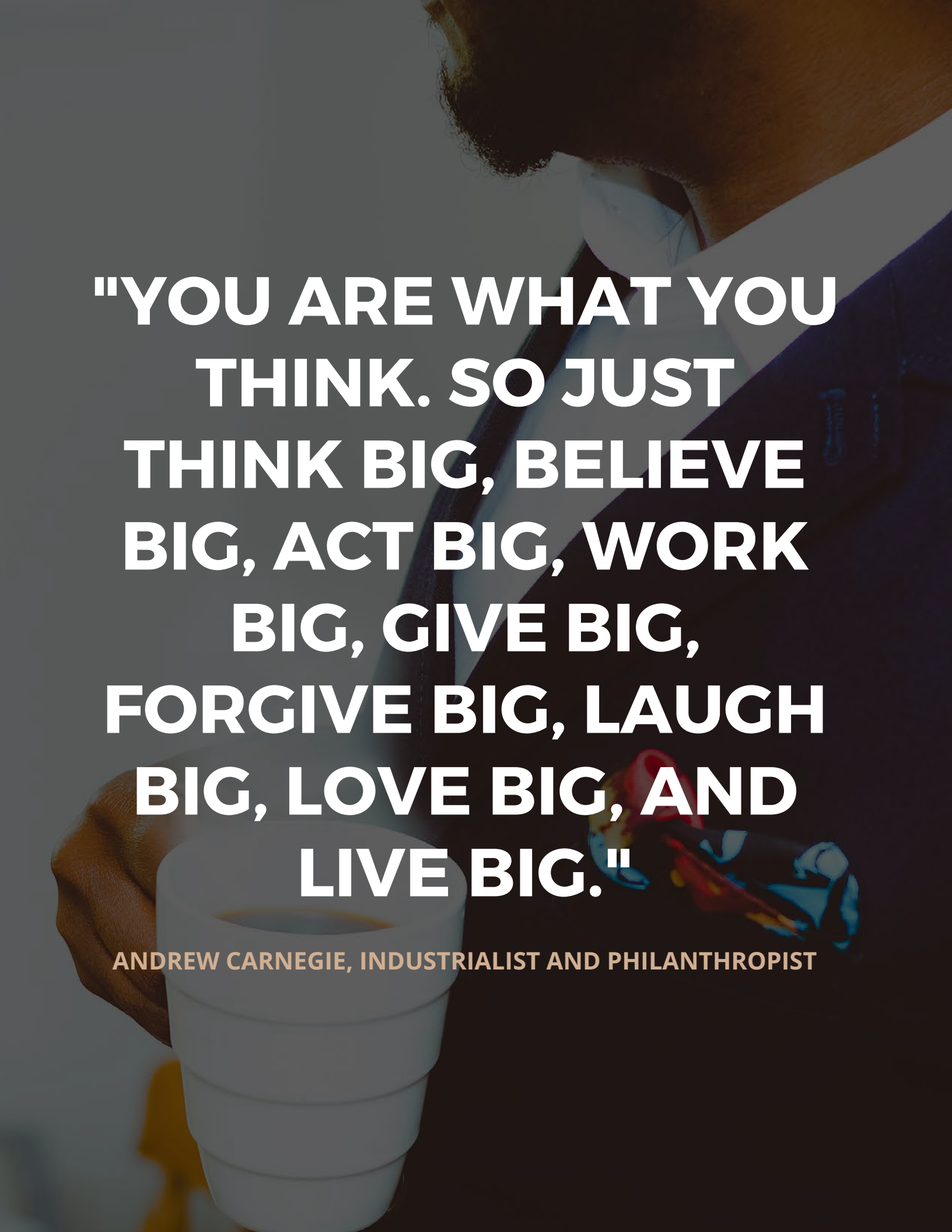
4. Define what you want to say.

Even when you don't think anyone is watching, believe me, they are. On several occasions during my professional career, I was presented with opportunities, seemingly out of the blue, because senior staff felt I was ready. At that time, I didn't know anyone was paying attention. But, my professional image conveyed me as an ambitious, high performer who was poised to advance to the next level.

Whether you're seeking to get on the fast track at your current company, or to become the face of your own at some point, you should update your professional image on a regular basis. I advise all of my clients to audit themselves annually to determine if their current image communicates the following:

- + I am mature and ready to handle business
- + I am trustworthy, and can be promoted with confidence
- + I respect myself and the people around me
- + I am aware of my current professional environment, and know what it takes to succeed

**What is your image saying about your brand today? Is it making the right statement? Remember someone is always watching.**

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a white shirt and a dark tie, holding a white cup. The image is dimly lit and serves as a background for the text.

**"YOU ARE WHAT YOU  
THINK. SO JUST  
THINK BIG, BELIEVE  
BIG, ACT BIG, WORK  
BIG, GIVE BIG,  
FORGIVE BIG, LAUGH  
BIG, LOVE BIG, AND  
LIVE BIG."**

**ANDREW CARNEGIE, INDUSTRIALIST AND PHILANTHROPIST**

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# Vanity Trumps Privacy

BY SONYA GAVANKAR, CONTENT CREATOR, FILMMAKER & HOST

We all know the story of Narcissus who fell into water and drowned while trying to get closer to his beautiful visage. Vanity isn't a positive attribute, but neither is absolutely privacy. You must be able to share to have a real relationship and friendship.

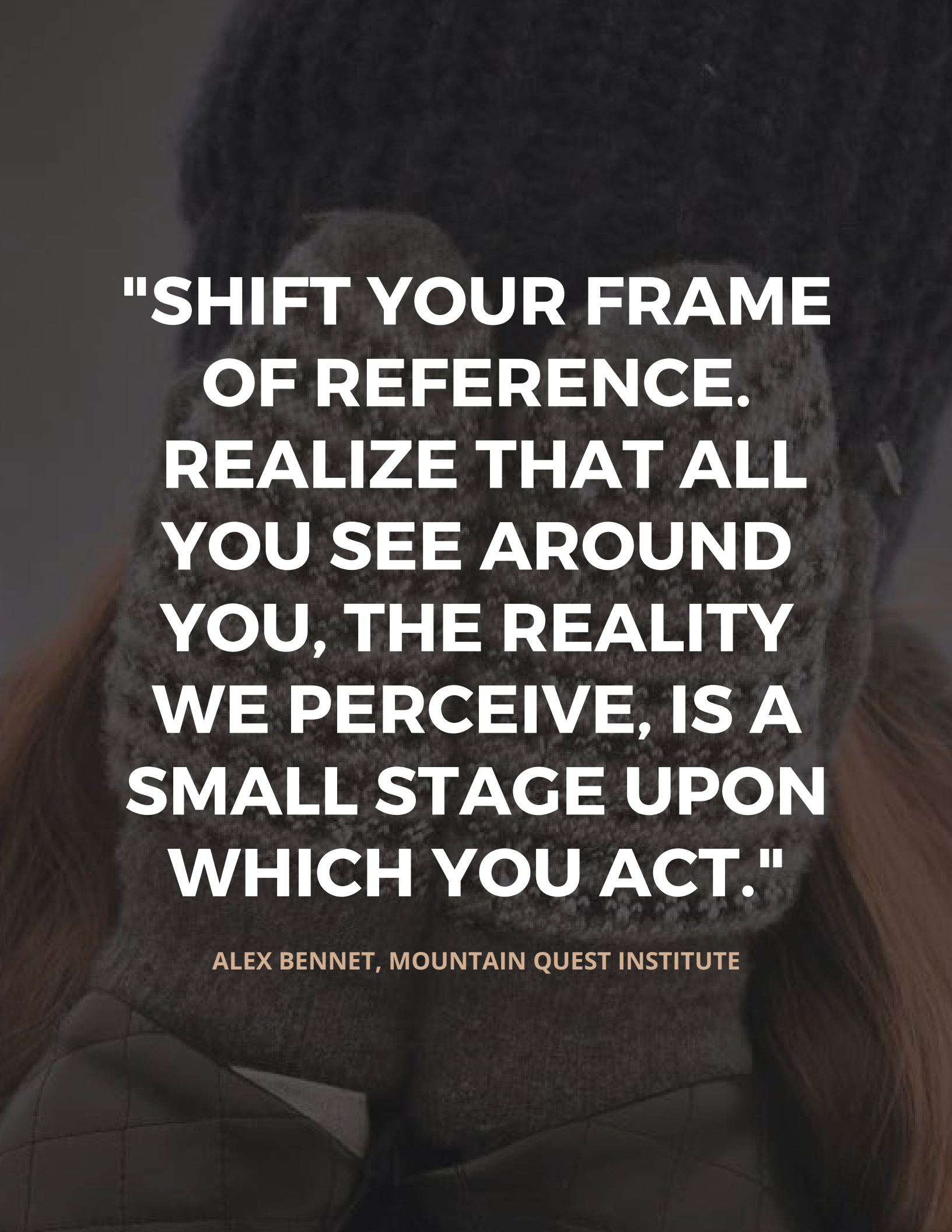
The digital natives know how to share. They know what works and what does not on all the different platforms. They know going viral is less important than impact on audience. They tune how and when they post and what technology they use. They curate their visual image and their narrative of life. All this information feeds one thing. Ego.

A recent State of the First Amendment report found that 65% of people are concerned with their privacy. Yet, there hasn't been a decrease in people using social platforms. People even over share when it comes to personal records, leading to credit card hacks being constant news.

## **How does one weigh privacy versus the over share and vanity?**

When you don't think about how and why you friend people on social media, you are far more likely to over share. Many think the number in your audience counts more than the influence of your audience. Crowd sourcing is only useful when your crowd has content worthy of being sourced. The size of your audience doesn't suddenly lead you to over share, but what you do share does have a further reach in a nefarious way. Think about a simple post, geo tagged, of an emoji of a crying female face with the words "Dropped them off for the first day of school." Suddenly your crowd knows where your most prized possessions are. When you curate your crowd you are able to almost ensure your message has a positive impact.

Maybe that is why I have an easier time sharing on Facebook rather than Twitter. I like sharing with my curated friends. People I actually know in real life. Folks who I know truly get my humor because they know the real me.



**"SHIFT YOUR FRAME  
OF REFERENCE.  
REALIZE THAT ALL  
YOU SEE AROUND  
YOU, THE REALITY  
WE PERCEIVE, IS A  
SMALL STAGE UPON  
WHICH YOU ACT."**

**ALEX BENNET, MOUNTAIN QUEST INSTITUTE**

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# Why You Need a Mentor, Whether You're a Novice or an Expert

BY KIM ELLEEN ATKINS, JOURNALIST & FASHION DESIGNER

Recently a friend and longtime professional advisor said to me over lunch: "I think you're overlooking a fantastic opportunity that is right in front of you!"

I was caught a little off guard. I had spent years carving out the life I thought I wanted, right down to my self-styled career paths. How could I possibly be missing something?

She went on to point out an opportunity that I almost missed because I was so consumed by the day-to-day bustle of my professional and personal life. She spotted a chance for me to grow and flourish that I hadn't seen at all.

That's the beauty of having a trusted mentor.

When we think of mentors, we usually picture students, recent graduates or other novices seeking the sage advice of established veterans in their fields.

But mentors aren't just for the newbies! A trusted advisor is an essential asset to any creative professional, regardless of experience level.

But it's important to find the right mentor and make the most of the relationship. Here are some tips to help you – whether you are just starting out in a field, or you are a seasoned expert looking to take your business to the next level.

**Identify your need.** Before you begin any mentorship relationship, ask yourself exactly what you would like to get out of it.

**Are you breaking into a new field?** You need someone with a strong understanding of all the essential components of your industry who can help you find exactly where your strengths and talents fit in.

**Are you a mid-career professional unsure of what your next upward move should be?** Find someone who has been in your shoes and then moved on to do something daring and dynamic – even if it's not exactly the move you are seeking to make. Tap him or her for guidance on how to think outside of the box and consider career paths that may not have occurred to you.

**Are you a boss in a major company and looking to strike out on your own and launch a new business?** Consider reaching out not only to those who have hung out their own shingles, but also those with whom you would like to build a professional relationship. By finding out their needs and learning from their experiences, you clarify your own vision in a way that will help you shape your new venture.


**Be open to the universe.** Finding a mentor may come about in the reverse way as well: if you meet someone and you are impressed with their ability to do something well or a particularly talent strikes you, build a relationship with them.

**Be picky and patient – but don't restrict yourself.** My mentors have ranged from well known industry icons to longtime family friends. You have nothing to lose by asking – even if he or she ultimately says she can't help you.

**That doesn't mean you have to take the advise of everyone.** It's fine to decline advice when you know it won't help you, no matter how well-intentioned the offerer may be.

**Check in regularly.** I make a point of meeting with my mentors at regularly-scheduled intervals – depending on their availability and mine. Make a standing appointment to meet with your mentor once a month, once a quarter or even once a year, for busier folks. Flexibility is fine, but don't sacrifice the quality of the meeting. Schedule a FaceTime session if you can't meet for coffee or lunch – sending the occasional email won't meet your needs in the same way.

**Pay it forward.** It's not just vital to have trusted mentors, it's important to become one. As your rise on the ladder of your industry, remember to reach out a hand to those coming behind you.



**"NEVER TELL PEOPLE  
HOW TO DO THINGS.  
TELL THEM WHAT TO  
DO, AND THEY WILL  
SURPRISE YOU WITH  
THEIR INGENUITY."**

**GEORGE S. PATTON, U.S. GENERAL**

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# 8 Reasons Why You Should Network

BY FREDERIQUE STEPHANIE, FOUNDER & STYLIST THE POPUP HOUSE

Networking is the art of creating and maintaining beneficial relationships for professional purposes. It is a two-way street: to maximize the benefits, you need to be proactive. If you are open to sharing your experience, knowledge, and contacts with other “members,” you will benefit from your relation with them the same way. For this relationship to be successful, you have to be qualified, consistent, and dedicated. There is no better time than now to strengthen or build your network.

Each and every one of us has a large network of contacts; however, most of us don't realize this. The most important point to remember about your network is that it is larger than you can imagine and includes people you've never even met.

## **Be interesting and be interested**

Networking is free and a great way to raise your profile. Being visible and getting noticed is a big benefit of networking. Make sure you regularly attend business and social events that will help to get your face known. You can then help to build your reputation as a knowledgeable, reliable, and supportive person by offering useful information or tips to people who need it. You are also more likely to get more leads and referrals as you will be the one that pops into their head when they need what you offer.

## **It's full of like-minded people, and therefore is good for you**

Having like-minded business owners to talk to also gives you the opportunity to get advice from them on all sorts of things related to your business.

Networking is a great way to tap into advice and expertise that you wouldn't otherwise be able to get hold of. Just make sure you are getting solid advice from the right person – someone who actually knows about what you need to know and is not just giving you their opinion on something that they have no (or very little) experience in. It is important to be surrounding yourself with positive, uplifting people who help you to grow and thrive as a business owner. Networking is great for this, as business owners who are using networking are usually people who are really going for it, and who are positive and uplifting.

## **Face-to-face approach: Create lasting impressions**

Personal relationships enable you and your organization to stand out, rise above the noise, and remain top of mind. Relationships are the catalyst for success. People do business with those they like and trust. Networking provides the most productive, most proficient, and most enduring tactic to build relationships. To succeed, you must continually connect with new people, cultivate emerging relationships, and leverage your network.

## **Digital expansion**

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are ideal for contacting and becoming noticed by employers that you otherwise wouldn't have been able to speak with in person. LinkedIn has several groups that you can engage in to showcase your knowledge and allow you to meet new people. Of course, making a compelling first impression online can be just as difficult as making an impression in person.

## **Networking can further your career: Aim high!**

Often times people miss opportunities to network because they feel intimidated, particularly if the other person is more senior. However, there is very little downside when aiming high, other than a bruised ego from time to time. The worst that can happen is they say “no” or ignore you. At that point, it is onward and upward!





**"BE SO GOOD THEY  
CAN'T IGNORE YOU."**

**STEVE MARTIN, COMEDIAN AND ACTOR**

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# Dealing With Naysayers

BY KIM ELLEN ATKINS, JOURNALIST & FASHION DESIGNER

Everyone is a critic, as most people in creative industries know. It's a part of the business and we all learn how to roll with it.

But sometimes naysayers can be a major distraction to even the most confident creative professional. They may tell you that your latest idea won't work, they might quibble with your business model, or even take aim at your talent. Sometimes the criticism may be unintentionally brutal – but often those who attack or undermine you are purposefully aiming to throw you off your game.

But that negativity doesn't have to get the best of you if you know how to handle the haters.

## **Remember your own vision – and trust it.**

It's easy to lose sight of your own creative vision – and that can make you a prime target for those who doubt your abilities.

## **Take time to reconnect with your own creative instincts.**

Recall what drew you to your industry in the first place. Take some quiet time – away from cell phones, schedules, and other people – and focus on your own creative ideas. Recall the ideas that inspired you most, of the projects that brought you the most satisfaction and make a plan to build on them. Being focused and secure in your own vision is the best defense when naysayers come calling.

## **Differentiate haters from motivators.**


Bad news is always hard to hear, but sometimes it's necessary to listen. To differentiate those who are trying to help you from those who are trying to tear you down, consider both the source and the message.

Are the criticisms coming from those who are actual or potential clients, business partners or collaborators? If so, it may be worth considering – the opinions may be efforts to help you grow or prevent you from falling into an unforeseen pit hole.

Are you hearing similar critiques coming from several different sources? This may be an indication that your product or vision is missing its mark. Consider their observations.

## **Ignore them.**

If the naysayers offer only persistent nitpicking, denigrations, and insults – particularly if they have an interest in seeing you fail, tune them out – except to the extent they make you more determined to be successful. Let your haters be your motivators!



**"THERE IS ONLY ONE  
SUCCESS--TO BE  
ABLE TO SPEND  
YOUR LIFE IN YOUR  
OWN WAY."**

**CHRISTOPHER MORLEY, JOURNALIST**

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# The UnBusiness Plan: Yes, Your Creative Business Has a Soul

BY EVELYN BANDO, TRANSFORMATIONAL SPEAKER, WRITER,  
TEACHER, COACH AND SPIRIT WHISPERER

Here's the bottom line: If your business is feeling like a huge drag, very little is working well, or the business is not growing as you hoped it would, it's time to check in with the soul of your business. And when I say soul, I mean the people. And if your business is a solo enterprise, then it's time to check in with yourself.

What makes me say this? In addition to my Spirit work, I've spent 13+ years (on and off) as a business owner/freelancer/creative/self employed person. I've also trained, coached and counseled hundreds of business owners, leaders and executives. I have seen up close a lot of personal dysfunction and have seen how that personal dysfunction eventually becomes business dysfunction. It's not a pretty picture.

## **What is the soul of your business anyway?**

My view is that the soul of your business is comprised of the energy (essence, emotions and mentality) of the people who lead and work in the business. The more people on the team, the more energies that are going into the "genetic makeup" of the enterprise. Some people call this organizational culture. I call it the soul of the business. Regardless of what you call it, it's important to pay attention to it.

For example, remember the job that you hated so much? The job that had you telling anyone who would listen how TOXIC the environment was? The one that inspired you to quit and create your own business because "you could do a better job" and "run things your way?" Yes. That job. Have you ever thought about what made the environment so toxic? Sure the policies were dumb, the rules dumber and you were overworked, under appreciated and underpaid. And if I had to wager a guess, I'd say it was the people (or a person) who made things heavy and rife with negative energy. That it was the people who made and enforced silly rules and policies that made the work experience redundant at best and unbearable at its worst. The same can be said for some of your best work experiences in life- it was the people, the soul, that made it great.

## **What makes any of this important?**

Well, a business is only as joyful, productive, prosperous and successful as the mentality of the people who lead and run it. Also consider, what do you think happens to the productivity and profitability of any business if there is dysfunction in the soul of that business?

When people come to me with their business challenges, one of the first questions I ask them is "how happy are YOU/the people who work with/for you in this moment?" Next I ask, "how congruent are you with your business at this moment?"

The answer to these two questions gives me insight into the health of the business's soul and how to guide people on restoring that health so they and their business can move forward and prosper.


## **Two questions to ask yourself**

I say all this to say- If things are going well in your business and you have no complaints, keep going! If you are reading this and right now and your business feels like the pits, ask yourself:

"How happy are YOU in this moment?"

"How congruent are YOU with your business at this moment?"

There is more to this, but answering these two questions honestly will give you a starting place on how to begin healing what ails your creative business.



**"HAVE THE END IN  
MIND AND EVERY  
DAY MAKE SURE  
YOU'RE WORKING  
TOWARDS IT."**

**RYAN ALLIS, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF ICONTACT**

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# How To Run A Business Without Losing Your Creativity

BY KIM ELLEEN ATKINS, JOURNALIST & FASHION DESIGNER

The demands of running your own business are endless. But when you are an entrepreneur or a slash entrepreneur, in a creative field, finding sources of inspiration and keeping a strong focus on your creative vision are as important as bookkeeping, marketing, sales and other tasks that take up the brunt of your time and energy — and can often lead to artistic burnout.

Here are some tips on how to keep your creative juices flowing even as you labor to keep the business end of your endeavor running.

## **Schedule it in.**

Yes, the idea of scheduling 15 minutes each day or an hour a week to be creative may seem strange. After all, creative ideas hit us when they do, sometimes even when we are asleep and dreaming.

But making room in your schedule to allow yourself to sketch, build an inspiration board, go for a walk in the city or in nature, or even surf Pinterest will help to keep your creative mind active.

## **Daydream.**

While letting one's attention wander on the job may seem like a bad idea, for creatives it's not only useful — it's necessary in order to be more productive.

Researchers have found that creative people are better at performing tasks when they are able to keep their internal stream of consciousness "on call" and allow themselves to be periodically distracted, according to Psychology Today. For creative individuals, periodic daydreaming is a sign of being more focused, not less.

## **Get a fresh perspective from someone you trust.**

Sometimes others can spot when your creative focus is drifting better than you can.

Recently a fashion industry expert took one look at my most recent collection, pulled out one of the party dresses I'd designed and said: "Your customer is all about these fun, colorful dresses. That is your girl."

Then he pulled out a pair of trousers.

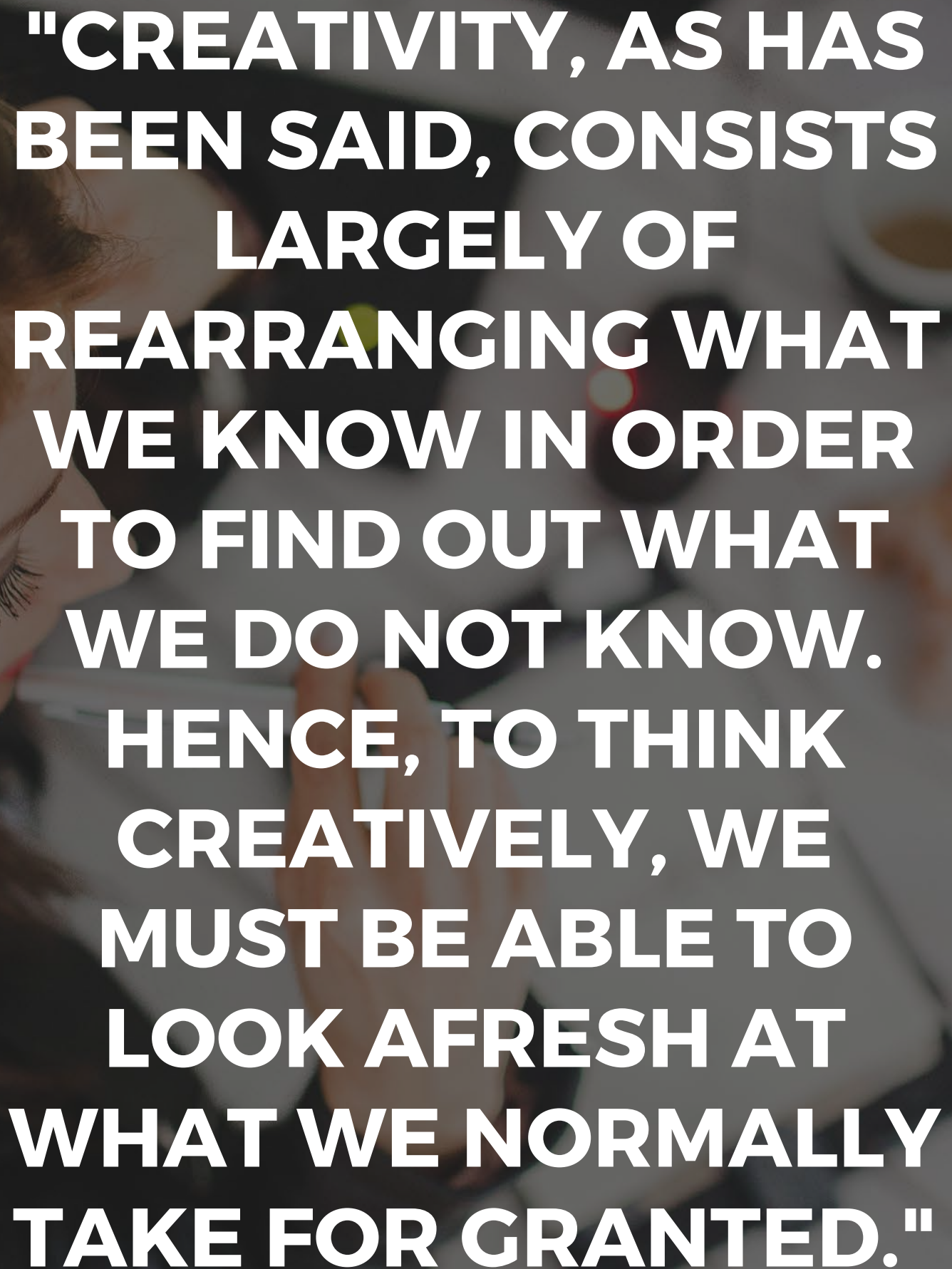
"So why are you making these separates?" he asked. "That's not where your heart is."

The truth was that while I initially focused on designing dresses, which I love and wear almost daily, I reluctantly added tops and skirts and pants to the mix because I'd been told never to make a dresses-only collection. I realize now that the fact that my heart was not in those separates was apparent in the designs themselves. I was harming my own product by not honoring my creative vision. It was a crucially important lesson — and one I could only learn from the frank observation of another.

## **Surround yourself with other creatives.**

If you work with other creative people in your business, utilize that resource. Schedule regular creative brainstorming sessions. Suggest a company outing — even if it's just having a work picnic lunch in a nearby park — in order to provide a fresh and stimulating environment for you and your team.

If you run a sole proprietorship or don't have other creatives working with you, seek out other opportunities for creative fellowship, even if it's outside the field of your business. I recently took a cooking class and the colors, scents and textures of the food inspired me to seek out more greens and earthy tones while working on new fabric prints. Inspiration can come from anywhere.

A woman with blonde hair is looking at a laptop screen. The background is slightly blurred, showing a white plate with a brown sauce and some green garnishes. The text is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters.

**"CREATIVITY, AS HAS BEEN SAID, CONSISTS LARGELY OF REARRANGING WHAT WE KNOW IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW. HENCE, TO THINK CREATIVELY, WE MUST BE ABLE TO LOOK AFRESH AT WHAT WE NORMALLY TAKE FOR GRANTED."**

GEORGE KNELLER, AUTHOR

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# All Good Things Must Be Revitalized: Keeping Your Business Fashion Forward And Fresh

BY EVELYN BANDO, TRANSFORMATIONAL SPEAKER, WRITER,  
TEACHER, COACH AND SPIRIT WHISPERER

Sitting in my hotel suite in Portland, OR, looking at Mt. Hood in the distance, I am taking the moment to reflect and ponder some questions, one being “how do people create successful, life changing businesses”?

The answer comes as clear as day:

“Life changing businesses are soulfully creative. The entrepreneur in charge never stops creating, never stops loving what they do, always honors their clients and customers, and never stops aiming to provide their client/customer an avenue to express themselves and live their own dreams.”

Powerful stuff.

This thought brings me to the point of this blog post about the importance of purposeful business revitalization. Let’s play with this concept for a little bit... You may not have to create new stuff all the time but it is in your best interest to revitalize aspects of your business (products, services, people, branding, etc ) on a continual basis. Purposeful business revitalization is one of the most important strategies you can engage in to make sure that your business stays relevant. It helps your business and your brand stay fresh, stay reflective of the times in which your business is functioning; and to help you, the entrepreneur, to stake your claim as a trendsetter and a business to watch and support.

If creativity and the art of creation is the LIFE FORCE that literally keeps people and things alive, then its revitalization that keeps us fresh and renewed. If we stop creating, we die. If we stop revitalizing our lives- we become stagnant. If your business stops creating, stops inspiring people- it will eventually wilt and die. If you stop revitalizing aspects of your business it will become stagnant and start to stink; and the first place you will experience this stinkiness is in your revenue and profits (are you experiencing this already?).

Yep, my sentiment is pretty colorful but take it from someone who has been there. Nothing diminishes the impact of your business more than an unwillingness to let go of products, services, people, customers and clients that no longer serve you or allow your business to create and grow. Once I realized that my business was stagnant, instead of trying to revive it, I decided to let it die and start over from scratch....but that is a longer story for another time.

If you’re in this fashion business game (or any other business game for that matter), it’s not enough to create something and put it out there. You have got to revitalize the “things”, “widgets” and “experiences” that you are selling to make sure they continually change people’s lives, or at least continue to solve a person’s problem and make them feel good in the process. If your business is suffering or is not growing as much as you would like it to- it may be time to revitalize certain aspects of your business.

The great news is that you can start this process at any time. To start, ask yourself the following questions and be honest with your answers:

- + How excited and soulfully connected are you to your fashion/creative business?
- + Who do your creations/services speak to and how do these creations make others feel?
- + Where’s the dead weight?
- + What’s it time to get rid of?
- + What is it time to stop doing?
- + What is it time to START doing?

Taking the time to ask and answer these questions will give you a lens on where to start making some shifts and changes in your business strategy. It is more than possible to profit from your passion; you just have to make sure that what you are offering stays continually relevant to the marketplace.

The one thing we know about fashion is that it is always changing. The other thing we know about fashion and creativity is that inspiration is drawn from our physical, spiritual, emotional and mental environments; giving us power to create great things that allows other people to be inspired, to create and to express themselves. Do not be afraid of change. Embrace it and allow your creative business to evolve as you evolve and most importantly, as your clients/customers evolve. It’s only prudent to make ongoing tweaks to your business so that it stays fresh and fashion forward, thus giving your audience something to be excited about and something new to try.



A photograph of a white ceramic coffee cup with a black sleeve that has the word "coffee" written in white cursive. The cup is on a wooden table with a black and white striped napkin and a silver spoon. The background is blurred, showing a wooden chair and a window with curtains.

**"DONE IS BETTER  
THAN PERFECT."**

SHERYL SANDBERG, COO OF FACEBOOK

# so, what next?

*It doesn't have to end here*

Have you been meditating, dreaming, planning, researching and to-do listing your business concept to pieces? Is all you want to do is go from your idea to executing what you love, but you're overwhelmed by everything it takes to get there?

I'd love to help with **Brainstorm To Brand**, a self-paced online course designed for creative entrepreneurs & solopreneurs who are ready to build a successful brand and business.

**OR**

Do you have the big vision but just need the strategy to match?

Let's talk—one creative thinker to another.

A 90 minute strategy session with me to help you scale your creative company with strategic branding and business development insight may just be what you need!

Strategy Doesn't Have To Be Solo.

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