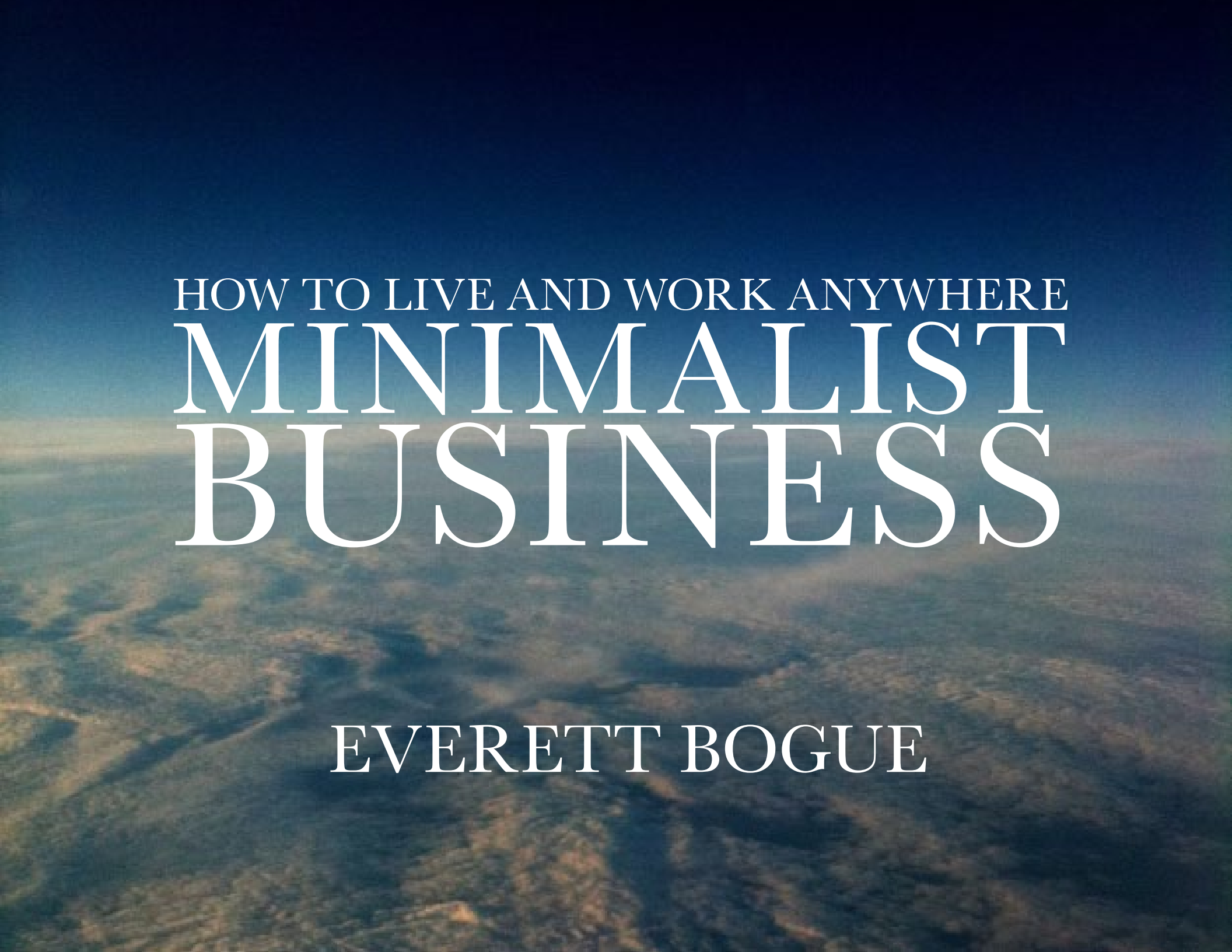

HOW TO LIVE AND WORK ANYWHERE
MINIMALIST
BUSINESS
EVERETT BOGUE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR EVERETT BOGUE

Everett Bogue is the author of *The Art of Being Minimalist*, *Minimalist Business*, and blogger at Far Beyond The Stars. He lives in the world, with somewhere around 50 things.

Currently, he lives in San Francisco CA, but depending on when you read this, he could be living and working from anywhere.



THE BEGINNING

INTRODUCTION TO MINIMALIST BUSINESS

In August of 2009 I conducted an unconventional experiment: what if I quit my job, got rid of my stuff, and started to live and work from anywhere?



I jumped on a plane to Portland, Oregon and began my minimalist journey. It was incredibly successful, and also a lot of fun. In a surprisingly small amount of time I built an incredibly small business online that supports me wherever I am in the world.

This minimalist business has no overhead, runs itself, and most importantly doesn't require me to sit in an office all day under flourescent lights.

My goal with *Minimalist Business* is to teach you how to create this kind of business so that you can quit your day job and live anywhere in the world.

THE MINIMALIST BUSINESS LIFESTYLE IS ONE THAT'S WORTH LIVING.

Not long after releasing my first e-book, *The Art of Being Minimalist*, I began to receive dozens of inquiries a week from people who wanted to start their own minimalist businesses, but didn't know how to begin.

I've answered dozens of questions, questioned my own questions, and spoken with dozens of successful minimalist business owners across the world.

I hope it helps you create a minimalist business in order to live and work from anywhere.

Best of luck,
Everett Bogue

WHAT BUSINESS DO I HAVE WRITING THIS E-BOOK?

THAT'S A GREAT QUESTION! I'M GLAD YOU ASKED.

In October of 2009 I launched a blog, Far Beyond The Stars, about how I was living a minimalist life in order to live and work from anywhere. To my surprise, I started generating a small income from this blog immediately.

It became apparent that I was onto something. So I stopped pursuing other job leads and focused my entire attention on making this small writing outlet, my minimalist business, my sole income source.

In February of 2010 I launched an e-book detailing how I was able to apply minimalism to live and work from anywhere. It was an overnight success.

After 3 years working at a desk in New York, I was frankly disappointed that I didn't pursue this path sooner. It was so much easier than waking up every morning and slaving for the man.

I'D FOUND A WAY TO FOCUS ON MY PASSIONS, AND ALSO EARN A LIVING

It is possible to make a living by running a single-person business with no overhead! Amazing!

Previous to my online success, I ran the photo department of New York Magazine's website. I negotiated contracts with high-powered photo agencies and came in under-budget for most of the time I worked for the company. This gave me a distinct view of 'the other side': working in a cubicle, maintaining a tight budget at a web start-up, and the fast-paced lifestyle of blogging.

I believe this gives me a unique perspective on running a minimalist business, and my only hope is that you benefit from my knowledge.

I also graduated from New York University in three years with a double major in Journalism and Dance (ballet/modern).

I believe that you can achieve success with or without an education or job experience in New York though. I care very little for what credentials you have. The only thing that matters is creating work.

YOU CAN ACHIEVE SUCCESS THROUGH A MINIMALIST BUSINESS.

I could release this e-book for free, but I'm a solid believer that artists should be compensated for their work.

I feel like this is a small price to pay for a business e-book that I believe will change the way you look at reality. I also believe that if you successfully apply the methods discussed in this e-book, you will be able to create an additional income stream of at least $250 a month (that's $3000 a year) —high-performers will do much better. If you give a good effort, and don't give up before you get past the challenging first couple of months, I'll personally guarantee the cost of this e-book.



Paypal only allows me 60-days to refund this. But I will do my best to get you your money back at any time in the future if you're less than satisfied with the results of this e-book.

Some people will say I'm crazy by offering a guarantee like this, but I'm just a realist. Some people aren't cut out to be business people, and I don't want to take your money if it turns out that you don't have the abilities to make it work.

If you've put in a decent effort, and it isn't working then e-mail me at any time (evbogue@gmail.com) and I'll give you a refund of your purchase price if you're not happy or not successful.

THE LEGAL STUFF

Disclaimer: I can't be held responsible for any losses you may incur in your business endeavors.

In fact, *Minimalist Business* teaches you how to build a business with no-overhead, so you shouldn't be spending much anyway.

Be sure to test your product and do your market research before you jump ship at your day job. Please consult other business experts, friends, and books before you do anything crazy. I can't save you if your idea doesn't work out.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

CREATE A BUSINESS THAT YOU LOVE



BY LEO BABAUTA
AUTHOR OF *THE POWER OF LESS* AND *A SIMPLE GUIDE TO A MINIMALIST LIFE*.

I've learned a lot when it comes to growing a tiny business over the last few years, but what I've learned all boils down to one thing, at its essence.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE FIRST, ABOVE ALL.

That sounds trite, but I hope to show you, briefly, why and how this is so important.

1. Building a business takes a crapload of hard work, over the course of years. If you do something just for the money or thrill of success, you'll eventually run out of motivation and fail. So do what you truly love, and you'll never want to stop doing it.

2. There are a lot —a lot— of distractions. They'll kill your business, because when you're distracted, you're not focused on doing what's most important, what's really going to get your dream off the ground. Distractions must be killed, or at least minimized. To do that, you'll need to put them aside and focus on what you truly love. Nothing else — just that one thing. Then killing distractions isn't so hard, because you're saying no to them so that you can say yes to the thing you love.

3. There can be a lot of administrative work that goes with running a business: emails, calls, social networking, checking earnings and stats, monitoring comments or doing customer support, holding meetings, doing finances, filling out forms. It's all a waste of time. What you want to do is forget about all of this, and do what you love. The business and your customers will be better off for it. This often means restructuring things so that you can eliminate most of your emails, calls, meetings, paperwork, financial work, and so on. That takes some careful thought, some planning, and groundwork. It's worth it.

Focus on what you love, and nothing else.

-Leo Babauta

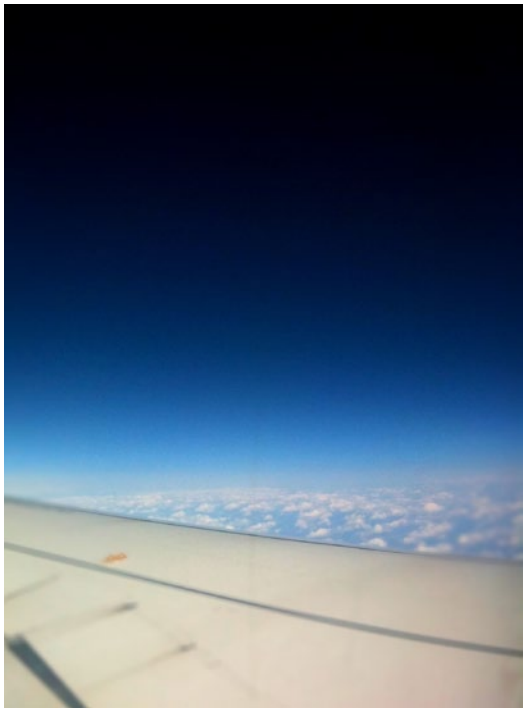
WHAT IS A MINIMALIST BUSINESS, EXACTLY?

The idea behind a minimalist business is simple, and can be broken down into three rules.

1. It has no, or very little, overhead.

2. It employs as few people as possible, ideally only one.

3. It runs on automation in order to free up as much of the owner's time as possible.



A MINIMALIST BUSINESS IS VERY MUCH THE ANTITHESIS OF A BIG BUSINESS.

Large businesses are plagued by bureaucracy and gridlock, they cost a lot to run and maintain, and, in most cases, are difficult to make changes to when needed.

By contrast, a minimalist business is flexible and instantly profitable (because there's no overhead). It is easy to change its direction at a moments notice. You (the business owner) make all of the important decisions and put them into play immediately.

Best of all, the profits go directly to you, and no one else.

Once you establish the business, your ultimate goal is to put it on autopilot. Using available and incredibly inexpensive technology, you will make the business run itself and generate passive income. This will free you up to do whatever you want —explore the planet, go sailing, become an artist, learn new skills, and lie in the sun on summer afternoons. The possibilities are limitless.

THE REALITIES OF A MINIMALIST BUSINESS

Up until this point I've been talking mostly about the possibilities of running a minimalist business. I'm an optimist by nature, so it's only natural that I'd start with hopes and dreams. But now it's time to get down to the work.

I've been able to apply all of the principles that follow to great success.

HOWEVER, FOR EVERY SUCCESS STORY THERE IS A FAILURE.

The truth is, not everyone will be able to make a minimalist business work. There will be people who don't get their businesses off the ground. There will be people who will sell products to no one.

THE REASON FOR THIS IS SIMPLE: SOME PEOPLE DON'T GET IT

I get dozens of emails a week from people who are incredibly enthusiastic about the idea of starting a business, but they can't seem to put these ideas into practice. I hope this e-book helps answer some of those questions, I really do.

But...

Inevitably there are people out there who just won't make it. That's the nature of life: some succeed where others fail.

THE DOWNSIDE OF FAILURE IS SMALL

The best part about a minimalist business is that the downside of failure is slim indeed. At worst it will be an adventure, and you will learn a good deal about yourself and your abilities.

There are risks in any business. My only recommendation is to keep trying. You will learn more about running a successful business from every failure.

To get to the point of success that I've achieved, I read dozens of business, marketing, and leadership books. The best of these business books are listed in a couple of pages.

In order to create this business, I streamlined my life so that I could survive at the basis of existence. Additionally, I purposefully designed my business so that it had no overhead.

I suggest that you do the same. Eliminate as many costs for your business and your life as possible.

Sell your car, stop buying crap, cook your own food.

Don't hesitate, get rid of the stuff that costs you money. High overhead has a way of making minor successes look like failures.

If the cost of doing business exceeds the profits from the work, then you don't have a business.

THE MINIMALIST BUSINESS LIFESTYLE



In most cases, a minimalist businessperson leads a minimalist lifestyle.

Throughout this book, I'll be abbreviating minimalist businessperson as MB. For the sake of simplicity I may also refer to a minimalist businessperson as a 'he'. I'm only doing this to keep the words simple.

A minimalist businessperson can be a man or a woman, of any race or religion. Nothing can stop you from achieving this life in the digital age.

I spoke in depth about how to adopt a minimalist lifestyle in my first e-book, *The Art of Being Minimalist*. I'll do my best to sum up the fundamentals here, but there's a lot more information on how to live a minimalist life contained in that book and others.

A MINIMALIST LIMITS HIMSELF TO THE ESSENTIALS, IN ORDER TO FIND FREEDOM THROUGH LESS.

One of the biggest challenges with starting a minimalist business is being able to survive while you're building income streams.

Some choose to stay at their day jobs, others adopt a minimalist lifestyle in order to dedicate all of their time to building their business.

The most important element of being minimalist, for the purposes of this book, is reducing your overhead.

HOW TO START A BUSINESS IN A RECESSION

If you've picked up a newspaper anytime recently, you know we're in the greatest recession since the great depression. Rumor has it that we're pulling through, but unemployment in the US at the time of this writing (June 2010) is still around 10%.

YES, RECESSIONS SUCK AND NO ONE HAS ANY MONEY.

This is why you need a minimalist business model more than ever.

An MB realizes that he can start a business no matter what the economic climate. In fact, he is probably at an advantage starting one immediately, because everyone else is scared to death that they won't get venture capital to start their business.

Very few people get venture capital to start their businesses anyway, even during a good year.

Take the smart approach: don't worry about funding your business, instead simply keep your overhead low.

AN MB FOCUSES ON CASH FLOW AND IMMEDIATE PROFITABILITY.

A minimalist business isn't about generating enough revenue to gather heaps of clients and then sell to a bigger company. These are the businesses that you hear about all of the time in tech business magazines, because they are rare and amazing.

Your minimalist business isn't going to be the next Facebook or Zappos.

An MB admits that he is not an exotic and remarkably skilled business genius who will create the 'next big thing.' On the contrary, his whole intent is to not create any 'next big things' at all.

You simply want to focus on helping people, filling a need, and repairing a hurt as simply as possible. An MB does this quickly, and with the limited resources that he already has at his disposal.

This way you have an operating business in less time, and it's also profitable.

You're not relying on someone else's money to fund your dreams. You're actually making a business that works using the few resources that you have.

THE MINIMALIST LIFE

AN MB DOESN'T LEAD AN UNSUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

A minimalist doesn't need much to survive, and thus spends less than the average human. This means that a minimalist has time to work on achieving minimalist income.

His life costs less, so he doesn't need to be earning $60,000 a year in order to pay the bills and feed his over-inflated spending habits.

This gives you the financial space to work on your business and find success.

It's possible to start a minimalist business without being a minimalist, but it will take more time and will be harder.

I SUGGEST THAT YOU MINIMALIZE YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR LIFE.

Here are some other resources on minimalist living:

A Simple Guide to a Minimalist Life by Leo Babauta

Simplify by Joshua Becker

Doing with Less by Daniel Richard



DON'T MINIMALIZE YOUR BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE

Just because you're starting or reducing your business to a minimal level doesn't mean that you don't need to know a good deal about running a business.

Be sure to read as much as you possibly can about starting a business. Lock yourself in the library. Read a book a week. Whatever it takes to make everything about business make sense to you.

Here is a list of reading that can help minimalist business owners.

1. *The Four Hour Work Week* by Timothy Ferriss.

2. *Tribes* by Seth Godin.

3. *Rework* by 37Signals.

4. *Escape from Cubicle Nation* by Pam Slim.

5. *Trust Agents* by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith.

6. *The Unconventional Guide to Working for Yourself* by Chris Guillebeau.

If you read all of these books, and every other decent business book you can get your hands on, you'll have a much greater chance of success with your minimalist business.

THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY

For a long time in our society it was nearly impossible to communicate without having huge expenses involved. Now, the Internet has completely obliterated the cost of communication.

Free communication is the single most important development in the recent history of the world.

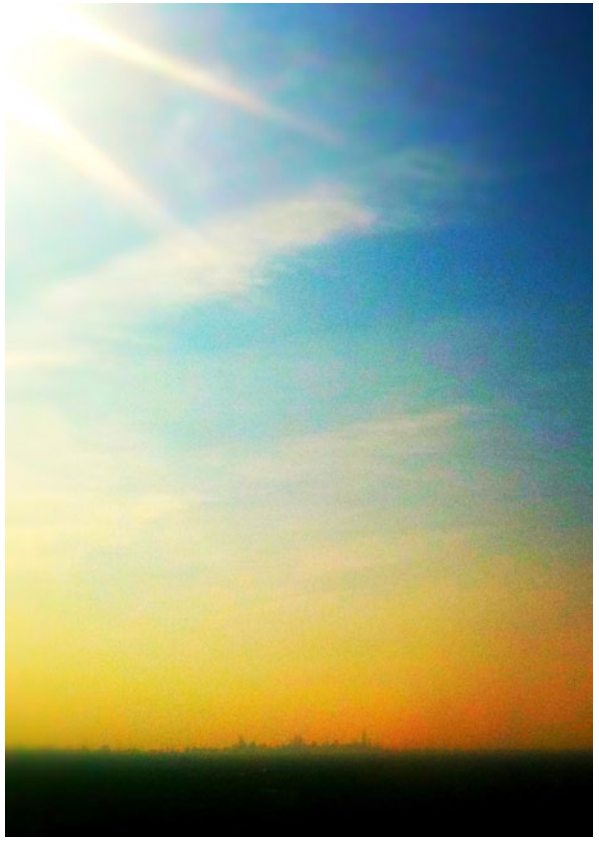
The fact that you can contact anyone anywhere in the world, for a price of nearly zero, is what enables a minimalist business to exist.

When you take advantage of the fact that you can also distribute almost anything digitally for a cost of nearly zero, you start to realize the full potential of this change.

For the first time in history, you don't need anyone to distribute your product for you. You can do it yourself, for free, and keep 50% to 100% (we'll go over where the other 50% could go later in this e-book) of the profits.

You don't need UPS to ship your product. You don't need China to make your product. You don't need a publishing house to give you permission to release your product. You don't need a store to carry your product.

This is the change we've all been waiting for. It enables anyone anywhere to create a minimalist business that supports their location-independent lifestyle.



THE POWER OF ONE

Most businesses involve the interaction of multiple people in order to get things done. There are teams, managers, collaboration, and this leads ultimately to bureaucracy.

The brilliant thing about a minimalist business is that you can avoid all of that. When you work for yourself, you report to no one. There's no one to tell you that your project isn't going to work. There's no one to seek approval from before you can get going on a launch. There's no team to convince that your idea is worth pursuing.

This means you're free to pursue basically any path that you wish. This is business freedom in a way that you've never experienced it.

This also means that there's no one you can hold responsible if you should fail. Every decision lies with you - you need to make the right ones.

The funny thing is, once you don't have to work with a team, it's much easier to make the right decisions.

A minimalist business works best with just one employee: you.

THE PROCESS VERSUS THE PRODUCT

It's easy to get caught up in the process of the work you're creating. The act of a photo shoot. The making of a magazine. The construction of an idea.

The meetings happen, so you think about the food. The product goes live, so all you can think about is the party at the end.

This thinking ignores the simple fact that there is no process without a product. You have to ship a product in order to make money.

Ultimately, the only thing that matters is the work of art that you're creating. Everything else is process, and the less of that you have the more you'll get done.

WHAT IF YOU ELIMINATE THE PROCESS AND CONCENTRATE ON THE ACTUAL WORK?

The answer is simple: you'll get more work done.

HOW TO SIMPLIFY A BUSINESS UNTIL IT COSTS NOTHING

TAKE A MOMENT AND THINK ABOUT THIS EXERCISE:



Look at your business expenses and remove the following:

1. IT costs
2. Software costs
3. Distribution costs
4. Employee costs
5. Office space rental or ownership
6. Technology costs
7. Maintenance costs
8. Upgrade costs
9. Customer service costs
10. Inventory costs

What are you left with?

Now take your cash flow and see how much you have. It's going to be a good deal larger than it was before you spent money on all of these things. Before, you might have simply been breaking even, now you have hordes of money and nothing to spend it on.

Do you know where this money goes? Into your paycheck.

A minimalist business has figured out this secret. An MB automates or eliminates costs that aren't contributing their worth back to the minimalist business.

IF YOUR OFFICE IS A COFFEE SHOP, YOUR HOME, OR THE WORLD, YOU SAVE A LOT OF MONEY.

If you hire an employee, they need to be bringing in their weight at least in cash flow, or they aren't worth bringing on. Let someone else hire these people, or find the right people to bring in their weight.

Use Outright.com to manage your business expenses and monitor your minimalist business cash flow instantaneously.

Eliminate or automate all tasks that you might need a secretary, a project manager, or other lower-level position for that doesn't require imagination. Robots can do these tasks as well as people can now.

Free up your workday for creative tasks instead of mundane repetitive ones.

Perhaps you have an existing business. If so, you can still apply this thinking. Every time you're thinking about a new hire, consider how you can eliminate needless tasks in order to free up your own time instead.

If an activity isn't contributing its weight in cash, and it isn't doing an important function, then you need to eliminate that act. This isn't about being nice, it's about running a business that is profitable enough that you can pay yourself enough to live and work from anywhere.

WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THIS EXERCISE

If you take away all of your costs and you're still not breaking even, you don't have a minimalist business.

This isn't about making a business for business sake. If an idea isn't working then you need to abandon it. An MB knows when he should quit a project that isn't returning a proper revenue vs. effort ratio.

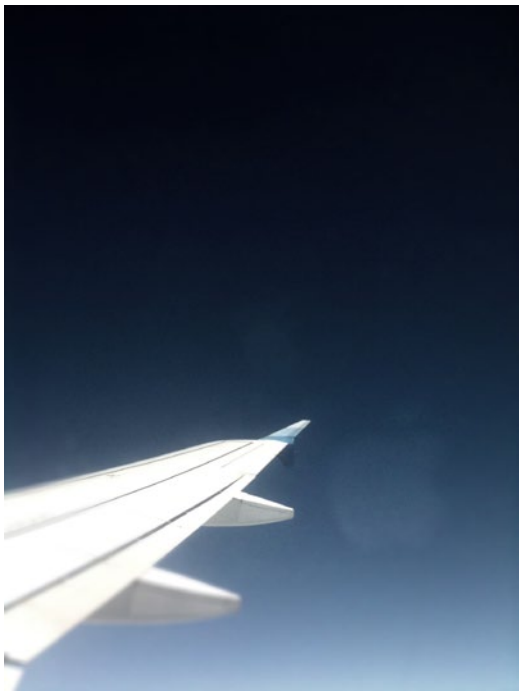
An ideal profit vs. revenue ratio is 80% profit to 20% effort. Eventually you want to bring that down to 10% effort, 5% etc. - down until you only need to check in once a week to see if you're still getting a paycheck.

IF YOU'RE PUTTING IN 200% EFFORT AND SEEING A 10% RETURN, IT ISN'T A BUSINESS YOU'RE RUNNING. YOU'RE RUNNING THE TITANIC.

LIVE ANYWHERE

HOW TO FIND THE FREEDOM TO RELOCATE TO ANY CITY

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE, IT'S TIME TO SEE THE WORLD. HERE'S HOW TO FIND PERSONAL LIBERTY.



> "Instead of wondering when your next vacation is, maybe you ought to set up a life you don't need to escape from." --Seth Godin

Many people stay in one location their whole lives.

This is the modern tragedy, as freedom is so easy to find if you only develop the focus to grasp it. It only takes a decision to relocate. And yet many people decide to opt-out of that decision making process by overburdening themselves with these two things:

1. Stuff that ties them to a location and makes it impossible to relocate by expanding cost.
2. Life-long commitments to "stable" jobs at the cost of their own freedom.

Luckily there are some simple solutions to these problems, which I've addressed extensively in *The Art of Being Minimalist*.

I'll go over the concepts briefly here. I hope that they'll help you find the willpower to overcome your situation and begin to explore the world.

1. STUFF JUST HOLDS YOU DOWN.

My aversion to physical things is no secret: I have a little over 50 things at the time of this writing. I can't understate the disservice you're doing to yourself and the planet by filling your life with junk. More than 100 things can make it exceedingly expensive for you to relocate. This leads to cutting your chances of success in half and upping your chance of ending up in the old-folks home before you've seen the world. Cut the crap - find freedom.

2. INCOME NEEDS TO BE LOCATION NON-SPECIFIC.

Working in an office or a factory is so 1990. There's a new method of making money now, and a brave few are finding success doing it. Invest a significant amount of time in learning how to work from anywhere. This will cut your ties with a physical space and allow you to become a true MB.

3. HOW TO OVERCOME THE INITIAL WORRIES.

You will be scared. It's only natural, having spent your entire life in Hodunkin (or Manhattan), to not be able to envision your possible future living somewhere else. Instead, you spend every waking moment fearing that you'll fail. Let me let you in on a secret: everywhere is just like where you are now. There will be cement under your feet, you can buy soap in the store, and people will help you in the rare chance that something actually goes wrong. Get over your fear by replacing it with action.

4. YOU HAVE TO MAKE THE JUMP EVENTUALLY.

The hardest step is the first one, you don't know if you'll fall on your face until you step out of the gate. Until you make the decision to move to any city, to attain personal liberty for yourself for the rest of your life, you will only be a dreamer. Cut the distance between yourself and your dreams by starting. You need to book a ticket and just go.

5. OVERCOME MEANINGLESS DISTRACTION.

There are one million unproductive ways to spend your time. Don't get caught up in meaningless pursuits, such as watching TV or checking email 35 times a day. Instead, stay true to your true priorities. If you want to achieve the freedom of moving to any city, you must first make the decision not to waste your time with meaningless distractions.

6. CUT TIES WITH LESS MOTIVATED HUMANS.

We humans are social creatures by nature. The problem is that we tend to congregate around people we're comfortable with. These can be non-performers and people who will belittle your ambitions. Successful people, and those who achieve a pure state of minimalist freedom, cut ties with the people who hold them down in order to make room for individuals who are more ambitious and challenge their assumptions about reality and their own existence.

7. DARE TO HAVE AMBITIONS FOR YOURSELF.

The difference between an over-performing individual with an intense connection to individual freedom is a decision. Liberty can be yours. It's within the grasp of everyone. You simply need to focus on what's important. Don't get distracted by the unnecessary mind-numbing routines of the ordinary. Instead, opt to change your future by living in new places. I like to change up my location, or travel to a new place for an extended period of time at least once every 2-4 months. Many do so more often than that. The secret is to actually start the habit. The support for this lifestyle will follow when you adopt the correct mindset.

THE LOCATION INDEPENDENT OFFICE

When you live and work from anywhere, it's important to have an office that can move with you.

Many people in the modern age believe that they need all sorts of equipment to make their business run. This is not true at all.

HERE'S A MINIMALIST BUSINESS EQUIPMENT LIST:

1. Laptop computer.

Yes. That's it. There's nothing else that you need.

I recommend a computer that's incredibly light, durable, and with good tech support, like a Macbook Pro or Air. But you can go the PC route if necessary.

At times I've run my minimalist business for extended periods entirely from my iPhone. As mobile computing power increases so will the ability to maintain and even create minimalist businesses on smaller, faster, and more mobile computers.



WHAT YOU DON'T NEED

You don't need a scanner/printer/fax/copier. You don't need a digital SLR with 14 lenses. You don't need a giant filing cabinet full of documents you haven't looked at since 1982. You certainly don't need a desk anymore.

None of that junk matters.

You don't even need to purchase software anymore. Almost every piece of software necessary to run a minimalist business is available in the cloud.

What matters is that you can move easily. And the easiest way to move easily is to not have tons of equipment.

If and when you have to do any sort of office task that requires equipment beyond what you have, chances are that there will be someone nearby who will gladly offer to loan you their scanner. If this isn't possible, in most locations in the world you can gain access to any piece of office equipment you might ever need at a FedEX Office store, or a similar place such as a cyber cafe. They're pretty prevalent across most of the developed world.

Lose the idea of having an office. Then, suddenly, you're free to move about as you please. Plus, you won't have to pay to rent.

LESS IS BEST

WHY YOUR LIFE OVERHEAD NEEDS TO REMAIN LOW



Starting a minimalist business isn't easy. One of the most important paths to success that I employed when I was creating my own business was to keep my life-overhead low.

Eliminate as many costs as you can in your own life, maybe even temporarily, while starting your minimalist business.

Think about it: if your life costs $5000 a month, that means you need to save at least $30,000 in order to last 6 months.

What if you reduced your life overhead so that it's less? I've found that a good number is $1500 a month (at times I've lived on less than $900 though.) Now, this might not be possible for everyone. People with children may need to up that number. However, the majority of us, when we eliminate the unnecessary, can be fine on less than $1500 a month.

This means you only need to save $9000 if you don't expect to see any income at all from your business for at least 6 months — and this is a worst case scenario. There's no reason why you can't start earning money in the first month.

I started to live off my minimalist business income after just 4 months.

The other huge advantage about limiting life-overhead is that your business doesn't need to make a lot in order for you to break even. It's a lot easier to create a minimalist business when your aim is to make $900 a month in four months. It's very difficult to create a minimalist business that brings in $5000 a month under that same timeframe.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT YOU CAN ELIMINATE TO SAVE HUGE CHUNKS OF MONEY.

1. Get rid of your car.
2. Rent or sell your expensive house and get a studio apartment.
3. Don't eat or drink out every night.
4. Video games, Cable, Movies, any entertainment that's outrageously expensive and absolutely unnecessary.
5. Shopping for clothes, furniture, lawn decorations, etc.

You don't need most of the things you've been taught to require. An MB opts-out of consumerism in order to focus on building a minimalist business.

You can always opt back in when you've achieved freedom.

Money has a way of scaring the crap out of people. If you don't spend your money on things you don't need, then you can avoid all of that by not needing buckets of cash to get started.

Once you're a minimalist business success story, go ahead and splurge! But until then, keep the overhead low.

A great resource on how to take control of your money is Adam Baker's (of Man Vs Debt) remarkable book *Unautomate Your Finances*.

6 BUSINESS COSTS YOU CAN ELIMINATE COMPLETELY

One of the top questions I get about running a minimalist business is on how you can eliminate your overhead.

Having a zero overhead business sounds good, in theory, but how can you get there?

There's no all encompassing answer to this question. Every business has different assumed costs. No one list is going to address your specific needs. At some point you have to use your own decision making powers.

That said, here is a list of seven costs that you may be able to eliminate as you're working towards a minimalist business.

1. YOUR OFFICE.

An MB doesn't need an office to do their work. Invest in a laptop (I realize this is a cost, but most people need a computer to live their lives in the modern world) and suddenly the world becomes your office. Many coffee shops, libraries, and other places have free Wifi that you can use for work. Many cellphones now have enough computing power to facilitate any random task that you have to do. I commonly work in my kitchen and go to coffee shops if I need to be alone and caffeinated. When you eliminate the office, you potentially save thousands of dollars a month. This will also allow you to work from anywhere.

2. DISTRIBUTION MEDIA.

I've dealt with this elsewhere in the book: don't buy media — you don't need it. Most files can be distributed over the Internet for a cost of free, or nearly that. Printing on paper is a huge waste of resources and can easily destroy most of your profit margins (read: books, magazines, etc.) Store files in the cloud using Google Docs instead of on DVDs or hard drives. Only a few kinds of files are so big that you cannot do this. But in the next few years even those will become cloud-native.

3. EMPLOYEES, CONSULTANTS, OUTSOURCING.

Having people do work for you is costly, both in time and money. You have to spend time telling people what to do, and also you have to pay a livable wage. Consider the work you're actually having these people do - can it be eliminated or automated? In most cases it can.

4. SOFTWARE.

Up until a few years ago, you had to pay a large amount of money for computer software to run your business. This is no longer the case. An MB uses quality and free cloud-based software solutions to make his business exist anywhere as well as cut away software purchase and upgrade costs.

5. TECHNOLOGY.

Gizmos and gadgets are mostly unnecessary for most businesses. You don't need to buy an all in one printer/scanner/coffeemaker unless you actually need one. An MB recognizes that most tech, except for the laptop computer is irrelevant to his business needs. Most photography can be done decently with a cellphone these days, so why buy an expensive SLR if you only need 'just in case.' Don't pour your budget into technology that you don't need.

6. TRANSPORTATION.

Once your minimalist business is separated from location, you no longer need to pay for daily transportation to get yourself to and from an office. Ditch the unlimited train ticket, sell your car, and you'll free up tons of money that you previously assumed was gone. Get a bike, move to a walkable city, and join a car sharing service like Zipcar for occasional use.

There are of course thousands of other expenses you can eliminate. The goal with a minimalist business is zero-overhead. Once you get to that point, all the money you make is profit.

HOW NOT TO OVER-MANAGE A MINIMALIST BUSINESS

The most successful people work best when they're not being managed.

If you've ever worked for a big business, chances are you've worked under someone, or knew someone in a department somewhere, who was hired simply to manage people. To tell them what to do. There is no person with this job description in a minimalist business.

AN MB DOESN'T MICROMANAGE HIMSELF.

If you combine this with a system of proper accountability for yourself, you will inevitably create a stronger minimalist business.

If you're not doing your job then you need to make sure that you are. Be quick to set proper expectations for what you're supposed to accomplish in any day, and then step back and let yourself complete these tasks.

YOU CAN APPLY THIS PHILOSOPHY TO YOURSELF AS WELL, ARE YOU MICROMANAGING EVERY ACTION?

Step back and see if you can figure out exactly what you're supposed to be accomplishing today and set up the infrastructure to make the requirements happen. Don't sit around all day forcing yourself to do assigned tasks that aren't important just because you've always done them.

HOW TO COMPLETE PROJECTS WITHOUT MICROMANAGING YOUR EMPLOYEES.

1. LIMIT TIME-INVESTMENT ON PROJECTS.

Work will inevitably stretch itself to fit within the time allotted to complete it. This is why so many people spend all day checking Facebook at their 9-5s. They could be working 10 hours a week, but instead they sit in their chairs like sheep and procrastinate. Don't be a waste of life. Limit the amount of time you have to finish a project. I like to set this time limit as small as I think is accomplishable. I produced my first e-book over a two week period of intense writing and compilation. This, arguably more challenging, e-book was produced over a one-month period of time. My workdays were limited to 3-hours max per day.

2. SET EXPECTATIONS FOR QUALITY.

Quality work will always overcome the mediocre. An MB sets the expectation of high-quality work for himself. Push the boundaries of what you believe you can accomplish. The return will pay dividends.

3. PROVIDE CLEAR AND SIMPLE GUIDELINES.

Do your best to outline the project to be completed from start to finish. Detail the actual elements that are required to be included and present a time-line for when they will be finished within a rough amount of time. For instance, while writing this e-book, I made it clear that the content needed to be completed and inserted into Adobe InDesign by May 8th. That was the ship date, it couldn't change.

4. IF EXPECTATIONS AREN'T REACHED, REEVALUATE WHETHER THE PROJECT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED.

If after the allotted time you are still struggling to complete the task, stop. Quickly reevaluate whether or not the task can actually be accomplished with the resources you have. If this is a creative or skills-related barrier, it could be that you cannot accomplish it with your available workforce. Assess whether or not bringing in skilled outside assistance can carry you over the hump, or if the project simply cannot be accomplished. Don't bang your head against a wall for a year. Kill projects before they become problems.

5. ASK QUESTIONS EARLY.

In a big business, eventually managers will come in at the last second of a project and say it's all wrong. This is the most expensive way to do a project, because it wastes endless hours of time and destroys all of the work that's been previously completed. Don't fall into this trap; ask questions of yourself early and define what success actually means for you.

6. AUTOMATE EVERYTHING THAT DOESN'T NEED TO BE DONE BY A HUMAN.

An MB doesn't ask a human to do a computer's job just for the sake of doing it. If you can automate a task with free software or a computer script, do it. Don't waste intelligent manpower (especially your own) when an application on a computer could do it instantaneously for free.

7. ELIMINATE TASKS THAT AREN'T REQUIRED.

Habits develop over time, and we tend to begin to accept tasks that we've been doing for ages as tasks that actually have to be done. The solution to this problem is to perform constant time-audits of task/profit ratios on everything that you and your team are doing. For instance: if social networking isn't yielding more than 10% of your traffic and sales, don't spend 80% of your time there. If customers are asking the same questions over and over again, create an easily accessible FAQ that addresses their concerns.

OPT-OUT OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

THE REAL WORLD INVOLVES PRODUCTION COSTS THAT DON'T SCALE. AVOID THESE COSTS.



An MB realizes that if he decides to bypass the physical world entirely then a whole new world of profitability opens up.

If I'd printed this e-book on paper, a good deal of the profits would have been eaten up by the production of the physical book.

This also would have killed trees, which I'm not a fan of either.

If I'd printed my last e-book on paper, I would have to find another way to support myself. This defeats the point.

Avoid this costly situation by opting out of the physical world entirely.

I may do a printed book eventually, but I'll probably wait until a publisher offers to cover the printing costs and distribution to book stores.

This isn't limited to just e-books. There are many different ways to make and sell digital products that benefit a host of people. Yet, I still know musicians who only sell from their merch table at shows and artists who only sell one printed canvas a month. There are a lot of possibilities for growth in these areas that people aren't tapping.

This is only possible because distribution of non-physical goods is almost free. By opting out of the physical world we enable ourselves to earn a living by achieving zero overhead.

HOME ISN'T A PHYSICAL LOCATION



BY COLIN WRIGHT OF EXILE LIFESTYLE
AUTHOR OF *NETWORKING AWESOMELY*

There's something immensely powerful about controlling your sense of 'home.'

If you are tied to one location by your stuff, your relationships or your sentimentality, you're at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to business (and life in general). But let's focus on the dollars and cents here.

Consider this: when you require a physical location to do business, you also require a set amount of money per month to pay for that space. You have upkeep costs, taxes and rent. Assuming you also want to do something with that space, you also have to pay to have it outfitted with desks, decor and very likely a chair or two.

Also consider this: if you have trouble keeping in touch with the people you care about regardless of where you happen to be in the world, you're heavily hindered when it comes to building new relationships and expanding the range of your influence and knowledge. Not making use of the incredible communication technologies we have at our disposal in the modern world is like trying to cross the Atlantic in a rowboat. It CAN be done, but it's unnecessarily difficult, especially when you look at all the alternatives that are available.

And you really should consider this, as well: if you're making business decisions based on sentimentality and emotional preference over relative merit and rationality, you're probably not doing as well or moving as fast as you could be. It's very common to feel the need to hold on to heirlooms or stay in your childhood house. If there are better options available and the only reason you're not seizing them is because you just feel you should, you're denying yourself a better future by clinging to the past.

The realization that home is where YOU are can be somewhat shocking, since we've been told otherwise since birth, but it's true.

If you're thrown naked into an unfamiliar country where everyone speaks a strange language that you can't quite make out, do you make a go at life, or do you sit down and wish you were back among the familiar? Is your home built out of trinkets and favorite fast food restaurants and friends you've had since kindergarten?

Wouldn't you rather the WORLD be your home?

Having the will to make it work regardless of where you find yourself is the mark of a powerful minimalist businessperson.

- Colin Wright

THE TOOLS

MINIMALIST BUSINESS BLOGGING

Let me be clear, because there is a lot of misinformation out there about what being a professional blogger means: BLOGGING IS A PLATFORM.

A platform is a method to convey information to potential customers, and blogging is one of the easiest ways of doing this. You don't need to be a professional blogger to run a minimalist business, but it can help to put a blog into use to support your minimalist business.

Every minimalist business needs a blog. Without one you'll have a hard time retaining customers, spreading information, and gaining recurring income from additional product launches.

A newsletter can also work instead of a blog, but the problem with a newsletter is that it isn't necessarily searchable via Google. So, having only a newsletter limits your potential to bring in new customers. An MB chooses a blog as a platform over a newsletter, but potentially adds a newsletter in order to convert more readers into customers.

Register a domain name with an inexpensive hosting company, and install blogging software. Find a nice template and just get started.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF A BLOG, FOR A MINIMALIST BUSINESS, ARE:

1. HELPING PEOPLE WITH FREE INFORMATION.



It's absolutely essential to offer free help to your customers on your blog. This will build your authority and it will enable people to find your product.

Freemium is a buzzword that's kind of lost it's meaning for most people, because it's used so often and without regard to how effective it is. Buzzword or not, it's the number one way to retain your customer base.

The stunning truth of the matter is that if you're blogging, 80% of the people who are reading will not buy your product and support you. However, these people are invaluable for what comes next: spreading information virally.

I've found that a good ratio is this: give 80% away free, and charge for the last 20%. This is why you're reading this e-book, because you're the portion of the audience that supports the work.

Offer a free component to your work, it's absolutely essential to give in order to be supported.

2. OFFER TOOLS TO GO VIRAL.

Your blog posts need to go viral easily. The best way I've found to do this is to add two or three buttons on any blog post that will enable people to share it easily.

Currently, the most effective buttons that I use are the Retweet button and the Facebook button.

Facebook is the number one destination of people on the Internet at this moment. It's essential to let your readers push stories to that outlet so that their friends can see it.

Twitter allows blog posts to go viral through 'retweets' easily. Configure the retweet button to call your twitter login (mine is @evbogue) so you can keep track of how far your message is spreading.

There are of course hundreds of other buttons. Depending on your business, which buttons you use will vary. I've found that it's important to concentrate on only a few, and really dominate these networks. I'm active on Twitter, so it's easier to take my posts viral there. If you're an avid Digg user, you might have an easier time making your posts go viral there.

Limit the number of social networks that you partake in to a few of the best.

Don't try to be everywhere, or you'll be effective nowhere.

3. CREATE A SCHEDULE FOR YOUR POSTS.

It's important to offer content at regular intervals on your minimalist business blog. Make a commitment to feature content that you've created at least twice a week for the first six months of your business.

Do more if you can, but focus on quality over quantity. The most important aspect of all of this is to help people as much as possible.

Don't apologize for missing a scheduled post by not missing a scheduled post —and if you do, don't apologize. Frequency matters (just don't be too frequent.)

4. MAKE IT EASY TO SUBSCRIBE TO YOUR BLOG.

Offer email and RSS subscriptions via Feedburner. The best way to get people to subscribe to your blog is to ask them to. Don't be annoying. But it can be helpful to put a line at the end of your posts like this:

"If this post helped you, consider opting to receive free updates via RSS or EMAIL."

If you don't ask, no one will follow you. So ask.

5. STUDY THE ART OF BLOGGING REGULARLY.

This isn't a blogging book, and I don't think you need to spend half of your life learning how to blog to be successful in the medium anymore.

Nevertheless, it can be helpful to read some more information on blogging. Be sure to read the most popular posts on these three blogging websites: Viperchill, Problogger, Copyblogger.

You can subscribe to them. But honestly if you study the most popular posts on these sites you'll know more than you need to know.

DON'T SPEND YEARS LEARNING HOW TO BLOG, JUST START BLOGGING.



HOW TO BE A TWITTER ROCKSTAR

Twitter is one of the most powerful developments in the history of communication.

You might not understand the implications of Twitter yet. Many people look at the medium and see a handful of people sending out 140 character about their cats. This is true, people do this. However, the power of Twitter does not lie in tweets about kittens.

THE POWER OF A MESSAGE OF LESS.

For a long time we communicated exclusively with email, but email has scaling issues. For instance: I had no trouble communicating with everyone I wanted to with email, until I wrote an e-book. Suddenly I started getting so much email that I could never deal with it all. I had to put up a contact form, and ask people not to contact me unless absolutely necessary.

Twitter makes it possible to communicate with a large group of people effectively because customers are forced to keep it brief. And you can sort through the incoming messages effectively in a short period of time.

A good way to use Twitter effectively is to install Tweetdeck, an application that displays direct messages, @ messages and messages from people who you follow.

THE GOLDEN RULES OF TWITTER

Many people don't use Twitter effectively. They follow fourteen-million people and can't keep up with all of the messages. I've established a few rules for myself in order to use Twitter more effectively. I hope you'll try these rules out yourself.

1. FOLLOW LESS THAN FOLLOW YOU.

Don't follow more people than follow you back. If you follow more people than are interested in you, it's the number one sign that the work you're doing isn't important.

2. FOLLOW LESS THAN 150 PEOPLE.

You can't possibly keep up with more than 150 active people on Twitter. Don't follow more than the above number. Doing so will allow you to develop closer relationships to the people whom you admire.

3. RETWEET OTHERS MORE THAN YOURSELF.

Don't spend all of your time on Twitter promoting your own stuff. Instead, spend most of your time promoting other people's stuff. Retweets are a great way to do this. If a tweet by someone you admire resonates with you, give it a retweet. This will build relationships.

4. DON'T FOLLOW PEOPLE WHO DON'T INTEREST YOU.

What's the point? If you don't care about what they're saying on Twitter, chances are the people who follow you won't care either.

5. DON'T FOLLOW PEOPLE WHO ARE FOLLOWING AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PEOPLE.

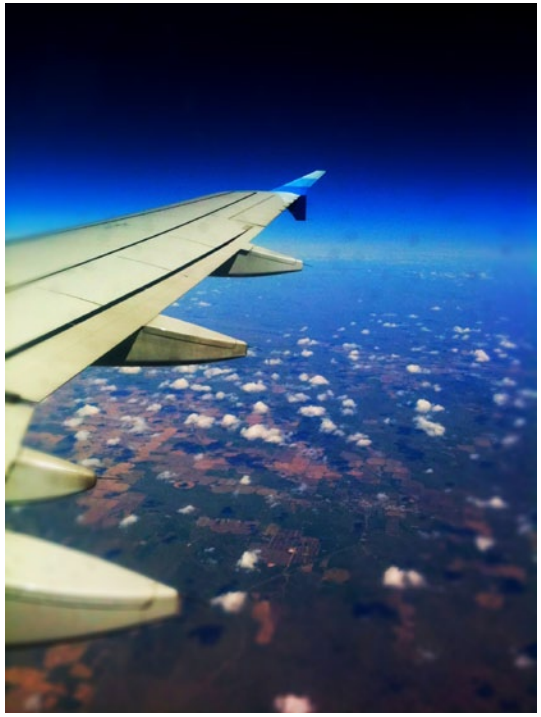
If someone is following 1,000,000 people on Twitter, there's a good chance they aren't interested in building relationship with anyone, which is the opposite of what Twitter is all about.

6. THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IS TO START.

Create a Twitter account and follow some people who are active in your field of interest. Retweet their stuff and start sending out your blog posts with shortened URLs. The best place to start is to actually start.

7. DON'T SPEND ALL DAY ON TWITTER.

Twitter is addictive. You can spend hours on it if you aren't careful. The best way to use Twitter is for less than 15 minutes a day. Log on, retweet 3 tweets by other people, answer a few questions, and send out something about what you're doing. That is all the Twitter time that is truly necessary.



CONNECT WITH YOUR TRIBE



BY TAMMY STROBEL OF ROWDY KITTENS
AUTHOR OF *SIMPLY CAR-FREE*

"Building community is a never-ending part of doing business." ~Gary Vaynerchuk

One of the most important things about running a business is cultivating a relationship with your tribe. Your tribe is your community. Without a strong community your business will fail. We all need friends, fans and followers to help us succeed.

Below are three community building principles that I've used to create a thriving online tribe.

1. MAKE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS.

Connect with your community and make it easy for your community to connect with one another. There are a variety of communication strategies you can use to make this happen. Begin by answering all of your emails, respond to all blog comments and talk with your community on a variety of social networks. Introduce your friends to other friends and build up inter-relationships among your followers. You are a member of this tribal community, not its dictator. Success doesn't happen in a vacuum, it happens in community.

2. BE TRANSPARENT AND AUTHENTIC.

This seems like a no brainer, but if you aren't transparent and authentic your community can tell. Being transparent means being honest about your plans and how you do business. Be authentic. We all have stories to tell and your community is thirsty for those stories. In my experience, authenticity is the driving force behind kick ass content. Be you, not someone else.

3. BE HELPFUL. BE KIND. CREATE CHANGE.

I don't think it's hard to foster community, especially if your goal is to contribute and make a difference in the world. You can make a difference and create meaningful change by being helpful, kind and passionate. Your definition of change is probably different from mine and that's okay.

For example, I want to create social change through simple living, by helping people live uncluttered, healthy, and authentic lives. It is possible to sell products based on a mission of change. The key is to produce helpful, awesome content, not crap that you churn out in one weekend. We all have to pay rent and buy food, but your tribe will not support you if you fail to be helpful, kind, or authentic.

Making real, lasting connections with people is part of living the good life. Building community is more than a business strategy, it's part of being human.

-Tammy Strobel

AFFILIATE MARKETING FOR MINIMALIST BUSINESS SUCCESS

One of the most amazing tools that an MB has at his disposal is affiliate marketing.

In the past, the only way to distribute a product was to get it onto shelves, or send it through the mail. In order to do that you needed a big company to facilitate your access to enough of these shelves to support yourself.

With digital products, everything has changed. Affiliate marketing makes this possible.

Because products are digital, there are no costs involved for unlimited duplication. This makes it possible for you to offer a large enough incentive, such as 50-75% commission to individuals who have the ability to market your product to more people than you could ever possibly imagine.

You essentially offer your community the opportunity to help support themselves by supporting you.



IT'S ALWAYS BETTER TO OFFER YOUR OWN PRODUCT

I know there are exceptions to this, there are rockstar affiliates who make their entire living by selling other people's stuff, but if you're the one offering a product to other affiliates you almost always have the ability to support yourself.

Think about it. If you're offering a digital recording teaching how to do X better, and you have 1000 readers that you've attracted via the freemium model of your blog, and you release a product with 50% commission, chances are some of these readers have media outlets of their own.

If even 100 of those people have the ability to advocate your product, you've created the ability to sell thousands of copies of your product instantly.

I believe that as time progresses, it will be hard to find someone who doesn't have their own media outlet. Why not have one yourself? You can make money in your sleep.

HOW TO SET UP AN AFFILIATE SYSTEM THROUGH YOUR BLOG IN 3 EASY STEPS.

1. Register with e-junkie as a seller, and upload your product.

2. Release your product on your blog.

3. Make it known publicly that your readers can make money from selling the product.

In my experience, some affiliates will sell 5-10 copies a month. Some won't sell at all (people who sign up with no media outlet.) Others will sell hundreds of copies a month. All of this adds up to produce a livable wage.

E-junkie handles all of the transactions, payments through Paypal, and affiliate registration for you. It's only $5 a month, and the first month is free. This means you can step back and let the show go on without any interaction.

This situation frees you up to do work that matters.

THE POWER OF THE DIGITAL PRODUCT

The MB recognizes that the most powerful product is digital.

THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE SIMPLE:

- Distribution is nearly free.
- There are unlimited copies.
- You can sell to anyone in the world instantenously.
- Thus, 100% of the profits go directly to you.

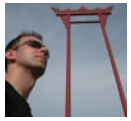
Now, a minimalist business doesn't have to rely on digital products. But the ones that do are far more likely to succeed.

A digital product can't be a failure. Inventory is generated on demand, start-up costs are incredibly low, and all of the profits go to the owner.

DIGITAL IS THE FUTURE, IGNORE IT AT YOUR OWN PERIL.



MINIMALIST SALES TESTING AND TRACKING



BY KAROL GAJDA OF
RIDICULOUSLY EXTRAORDINARY
AUTHOR OF *HOW TO LIVE ANYWHERE*

How would you like to know exactly how many sales came from a certain advertisement you placed or article you wrote?

WELCOME TO TESTING AND TRACKING.

No matter what kind of minimalist business you have, testing and tracking is an important aspect to understanding and growing your customer base.

If you track well you will know exactly where to focus your efforts. 20% of your efforts account for 80% of your results. If you know exactly where that 20% is coming from you can focus on increasing it.

Let's say you place 5 ads in 5 different places for $100 each ($500 total). All together those ads generate $1,000. Sweet, you've made $500 profit!

So now you just keep running those same 5 ads and keep banking that $500. Right?

What if there was an even better opportunity? What if one of your ads was generating $600 in revenue and the rest were just breaking even?

BUT WHICH AD MADE THE SALES? THIS IS THE AD YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON.

On the surface it seems easier to use the shotgun approach and keep running all of the ads. Leave it to somebody else to keep running those ads, you can do better.

With less than an hour of setup you can unlock the keys to a much more profitable business.

Best of all, it's completely free to implement a minimalist testing and tracking system.

ENTER GOOGLE WEBSITE OPTIMIZER.

Google's Website Optimizer is a robust, free tool that will handle almost any tracking you'd ever want to do.

Even better, they make it very easy for you to get started. Head over to the tutorial section and watch the introduction and tutorials.

Because I simply want you to get started tracking *something* I suggest an A/B split test. It's the 2nd video in the tutorial link above.

Here is what you should do: test only 1 element, the headline at the top of your page. Whatever you're using now will be A (the control) and the page with your new headline will be B (the experiment).

For tests to have statistical validity they should run for 100 actions. So if you're tracking sales keep the test going until you reach 100 sales tracked. If you're tracking newsletter subscribers keep the testing going until you have 100 new subscribers.

Once you know which version of the page has the best conversion rate create a new experiment page to try to beat the control. If you keep this up perpetually I guarantee that you will dramatically increase profits for your minimalist business.

-Karol Gajda

USE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

An MB does his best to adapt to new technologies that make life easier.

Check out this analogy: if you want to get from Portland OR to Chicago IL, how would you get there? Read these and decide which of them most failed online businesses take.

1. Horse and buggy: half a year travel time, incredibly expensive, chance of dying of dysentery.

2. Car: three days continuous driving, still costly, but not nearly as bad as the horse.

3. Empire Builder Express train: two days, cheapest, relaxing views of the mountains in Montana.

4. Airplane: six hours, airport security, views from high above the world.



The answer is 1. The horse and buggy. Most entrepreneurs think they need to reinvent the wheel on the Internet in order to make a living. The problem with this approach is it takes forever to make new wheels and to do so is extremely costly.

When you're spending half a year traveling across the country on horseback, you also won't be able to talk to many people in the process. A minimalist business creates a movement by harnessing a tribe of inspired individuals. You can't inspire people with crummy technology that you've just coded by yourself, because you ignored the fact that you can use Facebook.

QUALITY MARKETS ITSELF

One of the most common questions I receive is simple: "how can I run a minimalist business if I have to spend all day marketing my products?"

The answer is slightly more difficult for many people.

The thing is, if you create a quality product that actually helps people, the time you have to spend marketing it drops to nearly zero.

The only marketing I did for *The Art of Being Minimalist* was sending preview copies to a couple of influential bloggers. I probably needed to send out less than 35 free copies this year, that's it!

We're so accustomed to living in a world where we go to Target or Wal-Mart and buy crappy products for cheap, so we think cheap and bad is all there is.

The stunning truth is that there is plenty of room in the world for products that make a difference, change lives, and help create a better reality.

If you make something that isn't helpful, yes you will have to spend all day spamming people to trick enough of them to buy it.

If you take the opposite route and pour your soul into work that matters, you can let the work speak for itself and spend all day at the beach.

BE YOUR OWN MARKET

The easiest way to design a minimalist business product is to create a product that helps you achieve your own goals.



No one is as unique as we like to think. If you develop a product around your own interests, chances are there are 1,000-10,000 people in the world who are also looking for what you're looking for.

Take my first e-book as an example. *The Art of Being Minimalist* was written by me, for me. I was figuring out how to live with less than 100 things and how to live anywhere at the time I was writing it.

As it turned out, other people were interested in the topic as well, so I can now support myself from income that the e-book generates.

The next logical step for me was to write *Minimalist Business*. I'm insanely interested in streamlining work to take up less time, and answer the hundreds of reader questions that I've received about how I live this life.

If I'd written a book about Guinea Pigs, I wouldn't have had the knowledge or been able to sustain interest in the project long enough to finish. It also wouldn't have been as good, because I'm not particularly interested in Guinea Pigs.

I'm not saying you shouldn't write about Guinea Pigs, just that you need to write about what you're actually interested in. If your main passion in life is Guinea Pigs, you should be writing about them.

What product should you create? I can't answer that question! It's a very personal answer that will be different for everyone. The best way to start asking is to start creating and let the rest follow.

THE SIMPLEST TOOLS

So many entrepreneurs insist on investing in complicated, expensive, or cutting edge tools. Don't.

Newly invented tools usually complicate the work you're trying to do. New tools have bugs. New tools need more knowledge to operate. New tools are also more expensive. New tools break.

Instead, choose the simplest tools.

If you're a writer, use a plain text editor. If you're a photographer, use prime lens and a simple, inexpensive camera body. If you're a leader, use the easiest communication method to reach out to the people who you can help.

The simplest tool is usually the quickest way to get work done. Simple tools have no learning curve, don't break, and aren't a constant experiment.

Yes, this means that you won't be on the cutting edge. But it also means that you'll be able to get your work done.

Work that is done is work that is paying for your lifestyle.

LET THE KIDS HELP YOU

We've spent the last couple of million years or so relying on the elder generations to teach us everything we need to know. "Don't eat the purple mushrooms! This is how you make fire."

However, older people just don't get the Internet (as well as the kids) yet. Yes, there are exceptions, of course! ... but if you want to reach the cutting edge of minimalist business chances are you need some 20 year olds on your team.

Elder generations grew up in an analog world. They called their friends in high school on the phone. They wrote things on paper (weird!). Their first job involved commuting to a real building.

Kids these days text each other a thousand times a day, they don't watch TV, and they crowdsource their homework over Facebook.

When an older person needs an answer, their first instinct is to go to the library.

A young person whips out their iPhone and types the question into Twitter or Google. If Google doesn't know, someone in their digital tribe will.

Don't assume that the world still works like it did in 1982. It doesn't. Everyone has the power to gatejump their way to unrealistic success via their own online channel. This levels the playing field. Who knows the most about this new court? The kids, because they grew up playing in it.

THE POWER OF THE NICHE

I've met many entrepreneurs who mistakenly believe their product needs to appeal to a wide audience.

Because of this assumption, they file off all of the products edges, so it doesn't offend anyone. They create something that is so bland and mediocre that you'd expect to buy it at a department store.

AN MB KNOWS THAT A PRODUCT THAT APPEALS TO EVERYONE ISN'T A PRODUCT WORTH SELLING.

Because of the Internet, you can access infinite customers. This means, however, that obscure your product seems, chances are there is plenty of potential in your market.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does this interest me enough that I'd buy this?
2. Who am I selling this to? Picture their face, stereotype them as best you can.

If your product is going to sell, it has to offend a segment of the population. It also has to have admirers who will go out of their way to become staunch advocates on your behalf.

Only a very niche product can do that.

Avoid the mass of bland mediocrity - go niche.



A MINIMALIST BUSINESS IS LOW-STRESS

Because you aren't micromanaging the operation, as you don't need to micromanage computers, you're free to stop worrying.

An interesting thing starts at this moment. You realize that you have stress-free spare time.

You'll be able to sit out on the porch on a Monday afternoon, read a book, and enjoy a beer without needing to check your email.

This is a great feeling.

It frees you to start concentrating on what is actually important to you. Maybe this is building your business profitability. Perhaps it's learning how to sink deeper into pigeon pose while doing Yoga.

You will be able to decide, because you won't be running around like your business cut your head off.

This kind of buinsess is a joy, not an obligation.

OFFER NO CUSTOMIZATION

Let's get this straight before we go any further: your goal as an MB is complete automation, so you can receive passive income. This way you spend most of your day doing what interests you, instead of micromanaging your clients.

One of the most important ways to achieve this is to not offer costumization on your products.

OFFER ONE OR TWO OPTIONS, AUTOMATE DELIVERY, AND PUBLISH.

I commonly get requests for physical copies of my books. I cannot fill these orders; it's simply not advantageous for me to publish them physically. This would eat 80% of my profits in production, and I'd also have to figure out how to publish a printed book (which is a seperate product.) So I tell these people 'no'.

Your product shouldn't need a new version to work for each client.

Reduce the number of features to as few as possible.

Reach the broadest section of your tiny niche.

Automate and sell to the people who are happy. You can't please the ones who aren't. Some customers will never be happy.

Making a perfect product for everyone who wants one will lead to an imperfect business model for you. This will doom your business from the start.



DON'T MESS WITH MIDDLEMEN

In the past we had to deal with middlemen and gatekeepers in order to sell anything.

If you had a product, you needed a physical store to sell it in. If you wrote something, you needed a physical magazine to publish it.

Now, none of that matters. You can find a way to get your product or service to your client for a fraction of the previous cost.

This means you can and should ignore middlemen all together. Middlemen are anyone who wants to take a cut of your profits in order to give your business a supposed advantage.

JUST IGNORE THESE PEOPLE, YOU DON'T NEED THEM ANYMORE.

Instead, use available free technologies to bypass everyone and go straight to your customers.

In the bottom-up media society that we live in, this is the easiest and least expensive path to success.

THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE

People will do anything they can to sabotage the creation process that is needed to make great work that matters enough to support a minimalist business.

One of the easiest ways to avoid finishing is to complicate the process so much that you can never finish. Take a look back on projects that you've had to complete. How many of them didn't get finished because you make the process too complicated to even imagine finishing?

If you don't finish, you haven't created anything. You're just screwing around.

An MB can't afford to avoid finishing the creation of great work. He can't stop halfway through a project and give up.

A HALF-DONE PROJECT WON'T SUPPORT YOUR LOCATION INDEPENDENT LIFE

The solution to this problem is to take the most direct route from start to finish on a project. Don't get caught up in roundabout ways of doing things. Just do them.

> If you're writing an e-book, give it a title and start writing it.
>
> If you're recording a helpful podcast, turn on the recorder and start talking.
>
> If you're designing an iPhone app, sit down and code it until you have a working prototype.

Set a date to ship, and don't miss that date. If you don't ship, you fail. Many people fail by making the process so complicated that they never had any hope of succeeding.



FOCUS ON TIME MANAGEMENT

THE STUNNING TRUTH ABOUT FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT

9 WAYS TO FOCUS ON YOUR PRIORITIES

It occurred to me yesterday, as I was doing the laundry (slowly, without rush, because I didn't have to be anywhere), why minimalism (and minimalist business) is becoming so popular:

MINIMALISM IS THE ULTIMATE LIFEHACK.

For those who aren't familiar with the term: lifehackers find little ways to make their lives more productive. The idea of lifehacking has spawned thousands of blogs, sites, books. Lifehacker is one of the most popular lifehacking blogs. *Getting Things Done* is one of the more famous lifehacking books.

Being minimalist trumps all of the little stuff. Minimalists don't have to figure out how to do more stuff quickly because they have no interest in doing more stuff.

The average person has lots of things to do every day. This leads to stress, pain, anger, and frustration because they can't possibly get it all done. Then they go shopping to make themselves feel better.

A MINIMALIST BUSINESS FOCUSES ON THE IMPORTANT.

A minimalist says: I'm going to do three (or even one) things today. I'm going to focus on them completely, and I'm going to do them well.

You don't need a personal organizer, personal assistant, super-productivity system, or whatever to do three things well in a day.

The magical thing that happens, when you concentrate on very few projects per day: you start to make great work.

Once you get to that point, you can unsubscribe to all those little lifehacking sites, with their little tips. You can throw out your personal planner. These things just aren't necessary anymore.

You can stop spending hours looking for ways to be more productive, because you're simply not interested in "being productive" anymore.

When minimalism is applied correctly, you actually have all of this leftover time. For instance, all of my work is done fairly early most days, so I spend the rest of the day reading books. I have so much time to read books, that I'm finishing way more than my original goal to read one book a week.

All of the books lead to big new ideas, which positively effect my writing. I can contribute more value to you, the reader, which in turn makes more people interested in reading me.



HERE ARE 9 WAYS YOU CAN FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT

1. IDENTIFY THE FOUR AREAS OF YOUR LIFE THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU.

Simply write them down. It can be powerful to know what is most important to you, because then you can begin to focus on only the essential.

My four priories are: Writing, Yoga, Cooking, and Reading.

I find it helpful to only do one of these things professionally at a time: right now I'm only a professional writer, and nothing else. I used to have photography as one of my most important things, but I became less interested in it over time. So, I replaced it with cooking, which dominates my thoughts whenever I'm not writing. What does that mean? I'm not sure yet, but it might mean I'm not interested so much in doing photography anymore. What do you do that doesn't interest you anymore, but you keep doing because you thought it was your identity?

2. LEARN TO SAY NO TO REQUESTS.

Once you've identified the essential, you have to start saying no to things that come your way which don't coincide with your interests. It can be easy to say yes to a lot of projects that are all over the place. We all want to be helpful to as many people as we can, but inevitably we get involved in projects that we aren't any good at. This just frustrates people and wastes a lot of time.

3. START TO ELIMINATE THINGS YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT.

Stop doing things you're doing just out of obligation. Abandon the busy work. Stop going to that book club that you dread going to. There are a million obligations that we get ourselves into over the years. These obligations keep piling on top of one another until you have no time for yourself anymore. Gradually stop working on projects you don't care about. Tell people you quit the book club. Eventually you will have time for yourself again.



4. GIVE YOURSELF HUGE BLOCKS OF TIME TO WORK ON ONE PROJECT.

Give yourself five hours to work on one project, and do nothing else. Spend all of your time concentrating on the work involved in this project. Make mistakes, and then make breakthroughs. Most of all, make progress. When you feel your attention wandering, slow down, and continue working on what is important to you, until it's done.

5. TURN OFF DISTRACTIONS.

Nothing is worse than trying to get work done with the TV on in the background. You might think that it's helping you work: it's not helping you. Seriously, these distractions sabotage everything that you're trying to accomplish. Turn off your phone, power down Twitter, destroy your TV, and eat your lunch before you sit down to focus on the important.

6. DON'T COMMENT ON THINGS THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN.

We all have opinions, but we need to consider whether we're most useful to people if that's all we're giving. It's so easy to offer an unsolicited critical opinion on the work of someone else, especially in this age of Internet anonymity. What you're saying might hurt people, and it might not have any grounding in reality anyway. When you're a critic your own work can also suffer from your own negativity. So, next time you're tempted to tell someone that what they're doing is wrong, maybe consider first: are you willing to help them do it right?

7. MAKE TIME FOR IMPORTANT THINGS.

Many people spend less than 2 hours a week on their important work, and the rest of the time they're distracted or at a job they don't enjoy working at. You have to make time to work on what you've determined is important to you. If you want to be a writer, you have to write every single day for at least a few hours (if not more.) If you want to be a photographer, you have to shoot every single day for at least a few hours (if not more.) You can't expect to get good at anything if you're a weekend warrior.

8. TELL PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR PRIORITIES.

Make it clear to everyone you know what your priorities are. Tell your best friends, your significant other, your kids. Start a blog and write every single day about how your priorities are being accomplished. By telling people, you can hold yourself responsible. You can also compare notes, if your girlfriend thinks your priorities are beer, x-box, belching and sleeping, and you think your priorities are painting, productivity, cleaning, and thinking... well, you might be doing something wrong. Live and breathe your priorities, and they will become what you are.

9. LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.

You have to study the subject of your priorities regularly. If you're a creator, read as much as you can about creativity. If you're a cook, read as much as you can about cooking. Subscribe to blogs that share common interests with you. Read real books! Books are amazing creatures full of ideas; they will cause your mind to grow. Investigate whether there are classes you can take in your area, or online, which will help you learn more about what is important to you. You will never stop learning, so keep consuming information that will help you. I promise you, it is the most important element.

WHY TIME DOESN'T EQUAL MONEY

There is a common assumption made by almost everyone in the working world that time equals money.

This assumption is flawed.

The reality is that time definitely doesn't equal money. In fact, the more time you spend on a project, the more you're simply wasting time.

Instead of making the big decisions that need to be made to move to the next level with our work, we're checking Facebook, ticking tasks off a list of things we shouldn't be doing anyway, and finding dozens of other ways to procrastinate.

It's time to acknowledge that hours spent doesn't equal results.

Results come from one thing, and one thing only: making work that matters. I don't care if this takes you one hour of your day, or twelve hours a day. If you're not creating work that matters, you aren't moving forward towards a successful minimalist business.



WHY WE THINK TIME EQUALS MONEY.

This idea is a throwback to when we all worked in factories. We had a certain number of set tasks to complete, widgets to push out, and we knew that it would take around 8-10 hours a day to complete the assigned tasks.

The world we work in now is much different from that. The people who are making the most money aren't widget makers —actually, people working the factory line never really had a chance to make any sort of money anyway, but that's beside the point.

A number of remarkable people, such as Seth Godin, Timothy Ferriss, and Daniel H. Pink have recently begun the difficult task of asking us to unlearn the association between time and money.

THE BIG CONSPIRACY TO KEEP YOU BUSY DOING NOTHING ALL DAY

Think about itow many times have you stayed at your job until after 7 pm just keeping busy, because you know your boss will think you're a better employee?

What if instead you went home at 5pm and spent time with your family?

What if instead you worked for just one hour a week, but with that time you make the difference that brought in thousands or even millions of dollars?

What if you eliminated every stupid repetitive task from your day?

What if you just stopped checking email and Twitter for half of your day, just to see what happens?

The point is that 8 hours of work per day does not make a successful business. Time can be spent in bad ways, and not all time spent is spent equally.

A successful MB has re-thought his relationship with time into a world where important work matters over time spent doing it.

THE NO MANIFESTO

A minimalist business goes through two stages.

1. The building stage.
2. The freedom stage.

During the growth phase, it's important to stay focused on the important. You need to dedicate all of your time to making a minimalist business that works.

During the freedom phase, you're going to have a lot of free time. If you do enough right, you'll have enough passive income coming in that you can work 4-10 hours a week to maintain a very decent level of income.

During both of these phases, if you're creating quality work that helps people, you're going to have a lot of people who are seeking your attention.

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORD THAT YOU CAN TELL THESE PEOPLE IS NO.

No. You don't have time to answer a stupid question that they could have Googled.

No. You don't have time to get involved in someone's overly ambitious project with no commercial value.

No. [Insert random thing that comes up that you don't want to do.]



You worked hard to build this business that will give you freedom. You'll undermine that by taking on tons of ordinary obligations that you don't care about.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO WORK ON?

1. HELP AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

Start answering frequently asked questions on your blog. This way you have the possibility of helping thousands of people, instead of just one.

2. HELP PEOPLE WHO MATTER.

Weigh your response to questions based on the perceived authority of the person who's asking the question. As much as we'd like to think, not all people are equal. Some are simply jumping around looking for the next meaningless question to ask, others are legitimately interested in the topic. Don't spend 25 hours a week fixing little problems for little people (address common problems on your blog as I said above, and ignore emails that seek to answer questions that have already been answered.) Instead, focus your attention on helping people who have the authority and clout to help you out in return.

3. CREATE PRODUCTS TO FIX COMMON QUESTIONS.

If you're getting a lot of the same questions from the same kinds of people, this is a business opportunity. If you're receiving dozens of emails from people interested in how you created your work, consider crafting a document that you can sell to these people in order to educate them more effectively while also compensating yourself.

4. BATCH QUESTION/ANSWER TIME INTO SHORT PERIODS OF TIME ONCE PER WEEK.

Grow all question emails into a label in Gmail and set aside an hour on a Tuesday to fix as many of these problems in a post on your blog as possible. This way you aren't allowing the Q&A time to break into your work and relaxation periods.

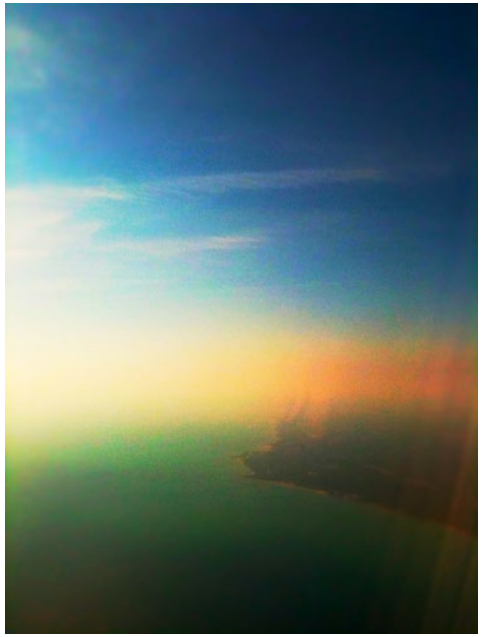
5. ONLY WORK ON PROJECTS THAT YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT.

When you're approached to work on a project, commonly you will be asked to do it for free. Ask yourself honestly if you're actually passionate about getting involved in the project. For most projects this answer has to be no. I'd rather have 80% spare time than waste time working on projects that aren't important. Even if these projects pay a small sum of money, it's usually not a good trade for your time investment to work on them.

Freedom is not working on other people's lame projects. Freedom is doing what you're interested in doing. Be sure to be aware of the difference.

Here's a quick template email that you can use to turn down projects as necessary.

> Dear X,
>
> Thank so much for considering me for your project X. It means a lot that you consider my skills to match the work you need to be completed.
>
> Unfortunately I have to turn you down this time. I'm honestly swamped working on my own projects at this moment in time, and to take on another would just add strain to my already busy life.
>
> If you can offer X compensation for X hours of work, I may be able to reconsider.
>
> Thanks again for thinking of me,
> [Insert name here.]



HOW TO BE FAIRLY COMPENSATED FOR BORING WORK THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO.

When you receive requests from people to do work that you aren't interested in doing, it's important to establish a price point at which you will be available to them.

When you do this, it seprates out the people who mean business from the ones who are just screwing around.

Commonly I'll receive requests for minimalist business consulting from people who are just getting started and don't have resources. This is partially why I've created this e-book, to help these people. The problem is, I only have X-number of hours a week that I have available for consulting.

It's just not in my best interest to charge these people $15 an hour, and it's not in your best interest either. You have to set your price point.

For instance, a full day of author and human business expert Chris Brogan's time is $22,000.

While this is an extreme example, it goes to show what a minimalist business owner can charge when they are doing work that matters.

I can't reveal my per-project rate here, because it's constantly fluctuating and I don't want to set improper expectations for future clients. But needless to say, it can be quite high for certain consulting projects.

HERE ARE SOME CRITERIA THAT YOU SHOULD USE TO DETERMINE IF A PROJECT IS WORTH PURSUING

1. LAMENESS OF PROJECT RATIO.

If the project will make you want to kill yourself if you have to spend time doing it, that will inflate the fee you charge the most. It's not worth doing work you hate. So make people spend a lot for you to do these types of tasks. If someone wants you to design the cover font for a TPS report, you need to set the expectation that this will cost them more.

2. HOURS OF TIME INVOLVED.

Do NOT charge by the hour. You have no idea how long it will take you to do something. Also, people will devalue the work if it takes you less time to do it. Offer all of your services at a set project-specific rate. Do not do anything under an hourly rate.

3. FACE-TO-FACE TIME.

Many older business folks expect you to meet with them and talk about mundane details of lame projects. Don't agree to meet people in person. This will both undermine your ability to be location independent, and it will also lead to time wasted. If face-to-face time is involved, charge more.

You've probably guessed this already, but the object of all of this is to lead to you not working on projects at all. And if someone does accept your offer, you will be paid more than fairly for the hours or days of your life that you will waste doing work that you don't enjoy doing.

If you aren't being compensated at an acceptable level for work that you hate doing, you shouldn't be doing that work at all. End of story.

WORK WHEN YOU'RE PRODUCTIVE

If you're like me, you have certain times of the day when you just churn out quality work with very little effort.

For me, this is usually about 2 hours after taking a yoga class in the morning. At this time I go to a coffee shop, sit down, and spew out work fifteen minutes after the caffeine kicks in.

For you, it might be 9am or 3am after walking the dog. This time varies for everyone.

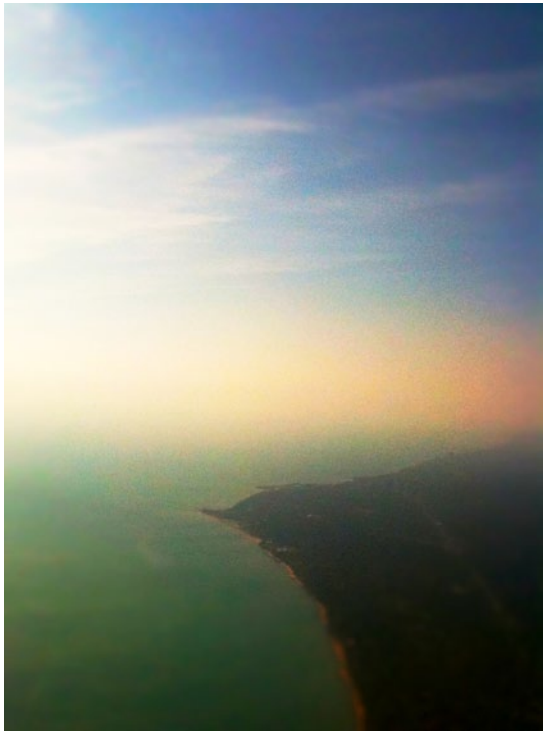
Twyla Tharp likes to talk about the 'creative habit.' This is basically forming your schedule around the creative time that works for you.

For me, this involves yoga and then coffee, and only then does the work start happening.

Most people don't approach work like this. They don't take the time to feel for the moments when work comes naturally. Instead, they force themselves to churn out stuff from 9-5 with no regard to what time is actually suitable for production of great ideas. When you force yourself to make great work at inappropriate times of day, you don't make great work at any time of day. You just make yourself tired.

Take an honest look at your schedule and note the times when you're most likely to churn out great work. That's the time you should be working. Not at 9am in the morning, unless 9am is when the work comes best.

This is the secret of how an MB gets away with working two hours a day and earning enough to live and work from anywhere.



INEVITABLE SUCCESS: THE POWER OF PROPHECY

Here's a theory that is going to get me into trouble, because it's incredibly true.

I THINK YOU NEED TO FAKE SUCCESS.

Only a few people know this, but before I was a professional writer with my own minimalist business, I trained as a dancer for a long time.

One of the most important lessons I learned in dance school was to fake it.

There are a lot of intricate moves you have to do as a dancer. Your legs are doing one thing, your body is doing another, your hands are all over the place. You mess up most of the time, especially for the first couple of years that you're training.

When most people mess up (especially beginning dancers) they stop doing what they're doing. They just drop everything, put their hands on their face and cry "I've failed."

If you stop everything you're doing on stage, everyone notices that you failed.

Instead, you can choose to not make a big deal about the fact that you screwed up a couple of minor times. You can just skip over those steps you forgot. You'll get them next time anyway. You can keep going with the same momentum you had oblivious to the fact that you made mistakes.

A couple of people will notice that you forgot that one step. The rest won't. 95% of the people will only look at the face of your business, and they can't even see what your legs are doing.

Even when you're failing repeatedly, keep your head high and pretend that you're not. No one cares about your failures anyway.

This brings me to the second part of this story:

THE POWER SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

No one is successful in the beginning.

Everyone starts off with a little bit of work that isn't getting much attention. The problem is that no one cares about people who don't have a proven success record. It's all about the stories of success.

Success is one of the most powerful amplifiers of any business operation.

I'll probably get even more flack for suggesting this, but I think it's one of the most important strategies to put into play. I've employed this strategy repeatedly to great success.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU'RE ALREADY SUCCESSFUL

Most people spend their entire lives trying to live up to a benchmark that is one step beyond what they're able to achieve. Don't live like this. Instead, take the opposite approach.

Tell everyone that you've blown your own benchmark out of the water.

Create a product around how you got your first true fan, and sell it for $10 for a day. Maybe you'll sell ten copies, cool!

Then, write a blog post about how your $100 in a day success story came into practice.

The next thing you'll know, you'll be having $1000 a day success stories.

A story about tiny success is a big story to the people who aren't successful at all in the area you're trying to be successful in. The first few steps of success are also one of the least represented areas of interest to most people. We hear every day about how a huge software company built an empire, but we don't hear about how you sold your first consulting session.

Present every moment of every day as a success story, and you'll start to see that every moment really is.

THE FINAL ELEMENT TO EVERY SUCCESS STORY

The stunning truth about success is it breeds more success. People latch onto people who are doing well, they subscribe, they give their attention. Media outlets write about success stories, bloggers interview success stories, people buy stuff from people who are success stories.

All of this attention makes success a lot easier to achieve.

If you refuse to portray yourself as a failure, and instead make the decision (and it is a decision) to offer yourself up as a perpetual success story in every interaction, success becomes inevitable.

This isn't to say that you should lie, that you should cheat, that you should deceive people into believing that you're something you're not.

Instead you should celebrate your achievements, however small they may be. Getting out of bed in the morning can be an achievement. Not sitting in front of the TV every night can be an achievement.

Quitting your day job and living on $500 a month can be an achievement. You just have to embrace the idea that small successes are still successes, and should be broadcast as such.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING NO BACKUP PLAN

"Turning down the safe advice ("be careful, take your time," etc.) makes some people uncomfortable. When you proceed full-on with no backup, you might encounter questions or supposedly unassailable examples of why backup plans are necessary.

You'll hear something like "Airplane pilots always have a Plan B," as if it's an open-and-shut case that you're wrong to chart a course without considering the contingencies. And when you are presented with such logic, you are expected to say: "Oh, you're right! It really is better to play it safe. Gosh."

But hold on a minute. Personally, I want my pilot to safely land the damn plane. Assuming that's Plan A, I'm happy to stick with it. Anything else doesn't sound like a good plan to me."

- Chris Guillebeau

I NEVER HAVE A BACKUP PLAN.

I don't think you should either.

Backup plans are always easier than the original plan, and this makes them so much more enticing when you put in the effort to create them.

- You could have started to live and work from anywhere, but it was easier to get a retail job.
- You could have become a rockstar, but it was easier to become an accompanist.
- You could have started your own coffee shop, but it was easier just to keep working at Starbucks.

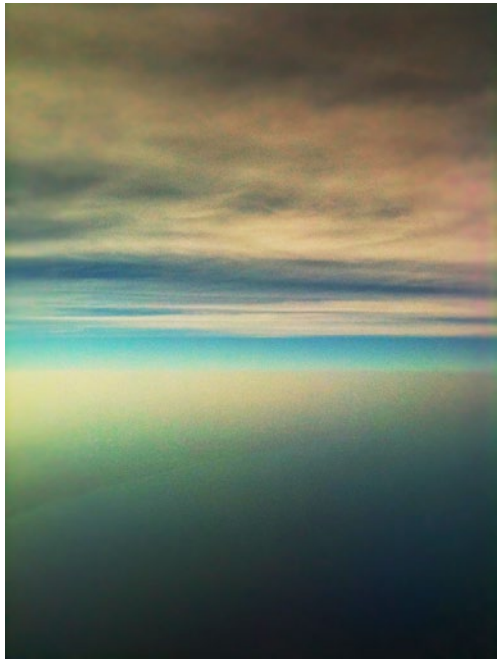
You could have reduced your possessions to 50-things, but it was easier to keep driving the minivan.

Successful people don't have a plan B, because they create a plan A that will realistically happen. That doesn't mean that you're not going to have to work hard. This also means that you can't give up without a fight.

Don't sell yourself short by always preparing for the worst. Making plans for failure generally leads to failure.

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO MINIMALIST BUSINESS TIMEJACKING

HOW TO MANIPULATE YOUR USE OF TIME TO FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT.



The idea that time is your most valuable commodity is not new, but it is often overlooked. I've done a lot of research on the importance of focusing your attention in the last year.

There are a number of very successful minimalist business people, such as Timothy Ferriss, Seth Godin, and Leo Babauta who use their time very effectively in order to accomplish greatness.

I call this emerging science Timejacking.

AN MB UNDERSTANDS THAT ALL USAGE OF TIME IS NOT EQUAL.

An MB doesn't exist within the accepted constraints of time as other people in the world do. These people don't let the unimportant eat up their time.

When an important project needs to get done, Timejacking is one of the most important principles to put into play. In this chapter I'll go over the basic principles of time-control that a Timejacker puts into play to run a more successful minimalist business.

MANY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO SPEND THEIR TIME INEFFECTIVELY:

- Watching TV
- Paying off bills they shouldn't have acquired
- Working at low-paying jobs
- Multitasking
- Checking email every 35.5 seconds
- Reading information that doesn't matter out of obligation

I could go on forever about the ways you can ineffectively spend time, but that wouldn't be an effective use of my time.

THE TIMEJACKING MANIFESTO:

- I will value my time to the highest potential.
- I will not engage in activities that do not contribute value to my life.
- I will focus my attention on creating great work that changes the world.

A TIMEJACKING CASE-STUDY:

When I was living in Portland at the end of 2009, there came a moment in time when I didn't have any money at all. I had moved there with $3000, and around November 1st I realized that I had reached bottom. I had very little income coming in at that time, and none of it was passive.

Then I walked by a Starbucks, and they had a help-wanted sign up in the window.

For a brief moment, perhaps 17.7 seconds, I considered taking that job. (I'm confident they would have hired me, because I'm badass.) It probably could have been paid fairly well for what those jobs pay, around $11 an hour I imagine. I could have made just enough money working part time to pay rent and buy food in Portland. I would have been 'set' by Portland standards.

IF I HAD TAKEN THIS ACTION, IT WOULD HAVE ENDED MY WRITING CAREER BEFORE IT BEGAN.

By putting that safety net in place, I would not have had the incentive to start growing my minimalist business online.

Anyway, I don't mean to say this to put down people who are working for $11 an hour. For me, it just doesn't make sense. Making $11 might be a safe way to live, you can certainly pay the electric bill. However, trading time for a tiny amount of money isn't a way to find artistic success or develop passive income.

THE RATIONALIZATION FOR ME WAS SIMPLE:

If I spent the next two months working on creating what is essentially, a digital work of art, it will pay me indefinitely. The truth is that my minimalist business product made far more money in the first month since launch, than I ever would have made working at Starbucks for the last four months.

I had Timejacked my way to success, and I want to help you find the skills to do that as well.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES I'VE LAID OUT THE SIMPLE PRINCIPLES THAT AN MB PUTS INTO PLAY IN ORDER TO TIMEJACK HIS WAY TO SUCCESS.



MINIMALIST BUSINESS EMAIL

Internet communication is one of the biggest problems manifested in our era. Everyone feels they need to be on the Internet all day long answering stupid requests and keeping in touch. The problem is, when you're on email all day, you never get anything done. If you sit at your computer all day, hitting the refresh button on your Gmail, you will never get anything important done.

Stop checking your email, please! I know, this is one of the biggest crimes that I commit as well. I've wasted countless years of my life checking email, and months ago I made the decision to stop. I value my time too much to waste it on the endless time-vortex that is email.

An MB doesn't check email fourteen times a day, it's a waste of life to do that. He checks it once and is done with it.

MINIMALIST BUSINESS EMAIL BASICS:

Do not check email first thing in the morning.

This can ruin your whole day, because you might get an email criticizing you, or requesting a massive amount of information. Suddenly, it's all you can think about.

You know what I'm talking about, right? It's so easy for email to take control of your life.

CHECK EMAIL TWICE A DAY.

Set two times per day that you check email. The first time should be around noon. I'm doing 2pm today, because I woke up at 10am on this particular day, and I need at least 4 hours to write at least 4000 words of content. The second time is around an hour before the end of your work day. Anywhere from 4pm-6pm, depending on how long you work.

If you have a boss, which I know many of you still do (you won't for long if you start to apply these techniques), explain that you will see a huge productivity bump if you start to adopt these techniques.

Offer to do a trial period, where you check email twice a day for one week. Present evidence to your boss that your productivity has skyrocketed. If it hasn't actually boosted your productivity, be sure to prepare enough material in advance so that you can successfully demonstrate that it has.

A Timejacking MB isn't afraid to fake the evidence. It might take up to 4 weeks for you to see the results of this experiment, so it's important to have enough time to see actual results.

COMPOSE AN AUTO-RESPONSE TO TRAIN THE PEOPLE WHO EMAIL YOU.

Write a very nice formal message explaining to the people who email you that you've started a Timejacking experiment. You're free to copy and paste this one if you need.

Dear friend,

In order to produce the best possible results in my work, I've adopted a policy of only checking email once per day at 12pm EST. Email is a huge time-suck and I've discovered that by not spending all day checking it, I become a much more effective individual. If this is an emergency, please contact me at my phone number 555-555-1212. I hope you understand.

Thank you for your time,
[Yourname here]

MOVE TO CHECKING EMAIL ONCE A DAY.

Once you've established the barrier of only checking email twice a day, move as quickly as possible to a schedule of checking email only once per day. This will instantly double your ability to create work that matters. Choose the middle of the day option, because it will give you time to respond to email that requires action without spilling over into your off-time.

Once you've moved your minimalist business over to a Timejacking schedule for email, you'll be able to focus on the important, which is creating a product that will run your business for you.

Simple right? And yet you'll be shaking from withdrawal for the next two weeks. It's okay, your email will be there at noon when you check it.

MINIMALIST BUSINESS SOCIAL MEDIA.

An MB doesn't actively use Facebook and LinkedIn, but he should have an automated presence on these services. Because of the nature of minimalist business, it is absolutely essential that you have as many outlets as possible for people to find the work that you're doing. However, this doesn't mean that you spend endless hours poking around on Facebook.



HOW TO AUTOMATE SOCIAL MEDIA:

1. Turn off all notifications except incoming personal messages from real people.

2. Make the Wall on Facebook 1-way. People often leave messages on your wall, and you don't want to have to spend time policing that location. My wall is one way, and only displays my blog posts and other relevant information about what I'm doing. This way, anyone who visits my Facebook page is almost guaranteed to read my blog, instead of interacting with me on Facebook.

3. Program LinkedIn to pull in your Twitter feed and your blog feed. This will funnel people into interacting with you at your blog (your home base) and your Twitter, which limits their ability to write you five paragraph long emails that don't say anything.

4. Delete any profiles that you have to work very hard to find value from. There are a million social networking sites out there. If you're not seeing significant returns from them then you need to delete your profile. For instance, I used to be on a photographer forum/social network called Lightstalkers. I recently deleted my profile because it wasn't contributing any value to my life. Stick to the powerful social networking sites that give you results.

VALUING TIME IN A MINIMALIST BUSINESS

An MB doesn't do outside work unless they're being paid at the absolute highest rate. This might sound like laziness, but it's not.

A Timejacking MB isn't using their off time to watch TV or eat chips, instead they use the time when they're not working to train, learn, and grow their strengths.

For instance: I value my time around $100 an hour. This means I can 'work' around 10 hours a week and make at least $1000. This is more than enough to cover all of my expenses for that week. I plan to grow this amount until my time is worth at least $500 an hour. This way I can earn around $5000 a week for 10 hours of work.

In the above mentioned Starbucks story, no matter how hard you work, you can never reach the potential of earning $5000 a week. Pushing the frappuccino button just doesn't scale into high-impact income.

An MB is focused intently on creating recurring, high-impact income volume, and in order to achieve that you have to make some sacrifices. One of the best ways is to not work for less than you're worth.

MINIMALIST BUSINESS MEETINGS

Once you interact with more people than yourself, you introduce the concept of bureaucracy. This is why many bigger organizations have a hard time maneuvering and growing, because you need to sit a committee down on a Friday night for four hours in order to endlessly debate whether or not to order a new Snickers bar.

Simply avoid interacting with other people when decisions are being made. There's an easy way to solve this problem:

AN MB MAKES DECISIONS BY HIMSELF.

Take initiative and make important decisions for yourself.

The reason for this is one of a Timejacking MB's biggest strengths. If you introduce an idea to another person, they will almost always have some reason to argue about how it can be done better, or how they think it will fail.

For most average decisions, you can reasonably assume that you can make the logical decision yourself, and get the minor decision done and out of the way. This way you can move on to the next decision. For important decisions, or ones that might potentially lose a lot of money, you may need to interact with other individuals if you're working in an organization or on your own.

Knowing the difference between important decisions and squabbling over stupid decisions (especially with yourself) is one of the most important elements of any successful Timejacking MB. Act on decisions that have simple answers without asking for an opinion.

A MINIMALIST BUSINESS ELIMINATES UNNECESSARY TASKS.

Many people simply do things because someone told them to. Don't accept the status-quo. If you can eliminate or automate a task you must make the decision to do so.

If you're still updating a spreadsheet that lists all of your minimalist business expenses manually, you must stop doing this and outsource it to an automated financial program.

I don't care if you really enjoy the task of reading all of your receipts for coffee last week and typing them into Excel. Doing this is effectively killing hours of your time. Use an account at Mint.com for your personal finances, and Outright.com for your business expenses. These services automatically keep track of cash flow and budgets for you, and you can see your exact net worth in a matter of seconds.

(Unless you're intentially *Unautomating Your Finances* Adam Baker-style and need to record everything in order to be conscious of your spending)

This can apply to any number of tasks. Do an audit of your time and see where you're wasting it. Then destroy those time wasting elements. I did this with email, and it's helping my ability to focus on the important immensely.

AN MB FOCUSES ON HIS STRENGTHS.

A Timejacking MB acknowledges that he cannot be good at everything.

Many people spend their entire lives trying to be as balanced as possible. We're encouraged in schools to get high math scores, even though 80% of us will never have to do algebra again after high school. Why are we wasting all of this time learning math, when our cellphones can do it for us?

PEOPLE WHO ARE GOOD AT EVERYTHING AREN'T GREAT AT ANYTHING.

Focus on becoming the absolute best at your good abilities and stop focusing on fixing your problems.

We all have problems, and I know we can be very insecure about them, but it's okay. There are other people who are better at these things.

If you're bad at giving haircuts, don't try to fix your hair-cutting ability. Instead, find someone who can cut your hair for you. There are a million other ways that people focus on fixing problems instead of focusing on becoming the best at their strengths.

All of this is wasted time. You could pay someone to do the little things, or not do them at all.



A MINIMALIST BUSINESS USES EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Everyone thinks they need to reinvent the wheel. But the truth is that making that decision can keep you in Starbucks-land for a very long time.

Be aware of the applications and services that are available to you, and use them to Timejack effectively. One way that I do this in my minimalist business is by using e-junkie to handle all of my transactions. My digital goods are transmitted, and payments are received instantaneously with no interaction from me.

An MB simply checks his automated cash flow once a week to make sure that everything is on track, and returns to living his life in a way that he sees fit.

The old way to do this would be to rent a space in the real world, hire someone to run your cash register, and have them manually handle all transactions. This is costly and ineffective in the modern world. A Timejacker doesn't do brick and mortar unless absolutely necessary.

HOW (NOT) TO CONTACT A MINIMALIST BUSINESS

Once a minimalist business attains a certain level of success, it's common that people will want to contact the MB in charge and ask mundane questions of little importance.

This is what people do - they see something that works and they want to figure it out. This is natural behavior.

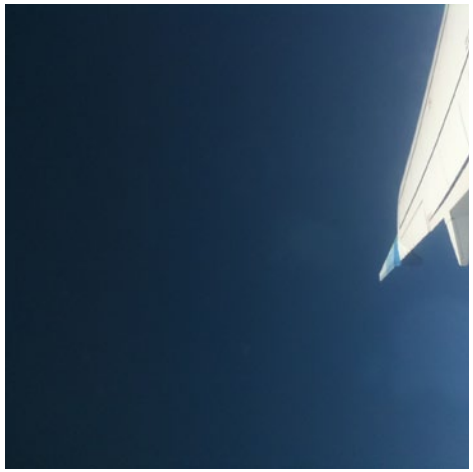
In order to cut down on the amount of email an MB receives, it's important to limit the messages that you receive. Make an FAQ to answer any recurring questions.

Add a contact form to your blog and product pages and provide explicit instructions as to when to contact you, and when not to.

Do not answer calls from unknown phone or Skype numbers. Let them go to voicemail and then check to see if they're important.

If you make it more difficult to reach you, then only the people who really need to contact you will. This way you can get more important work done, and spend less time answering mundane questions.

MINIMALIST INFORMATION CONSUMPTION



The majority of the information available, especially on the Internet, is valueless. Do not consume this information for the sake of feeling like you're reading something. You're not reading anything.

An MB realizes that he isn't reading anything of value, so he shuts most of it off.

CHANCES ARE YOU DON'T REMEMBER WHAT YOU READ THE LAST TIME YOU WERE SURFING BLOGS.

I only subscribe to 15 blogs, and these are the blogs that contain information that is incredibly valuable to me. And I'm a blogger!

An MB unsubscribes to as much information as possible. He does not follow people on social networks just because they follow him. Focus your digital attention on only the sources that create worth for you.

HOW TO STOP READING NEWSPAPERS (THEY'LL BE DEAD IN TWO YEARS ANYWAY)

I recently stopped reading newspapers entirely. I used to have a sizable New York Times addiction because I felt like I needed to read that information.

I did a month-long experiment in order to see if the information in the New York Times was really contributing to my life. I simply stopped reading it. After a week, I no longer missed reading the endless flow of useless information that comes out of the Times.

Instead, I dedicate this time to reading books because the level of information contributed is significantly higher in value quality.

I found that when important things happened, like the quakes in Haiti and Chile, my Twitter friends did their best to notify me. If something happens that actually effects me personally, I imagine I'll be able to walk out my front door and ask a bystander what's going on, and they will tell me.

When the New York Times puts up their pay wall, they will see just how little society values the information that they contribute. Which is to say, not very much at all.

What information are you consuming that doesn't contribute value to your life? Turn it off.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART: AN MB ONLY WORKS WHEN HE WANTS TO

A Timejacking MB doesn't work for the sake of working. He focuses his attention on activities that are incredibly important.

If you find yourself sitting at your computer, and no ideas are coming to you, stop sitting at your computer! Go read a book. Go outside and sit in the park. Go to a yoga class or to the gym and exercise your body. Cook yourself a healthy lunch.

There are a million things you could be doing besides sitting in front of your computer with a glazed over look on your face waiting for ideas to come. In fact, I'll go as far as to say that the ideas won't come in when you're in front of the computer.

I wrote this entire section in my brain as I walked down west side of Prospect Park. I stopped at the bookstore and purused the stacks. I got a cup of coffee and watched people do what people do.

I decided that Timejacking was the most important element of success as I was NOT sitting in front of a computer. The next day, I simply sat down and wrote nearly 3500 words in an hour. Because this part of the e-book is so valuable, it will no doubt return an incredibly high value to my business.

If I had spent yesterday staring blankly at a computer screen, I never would have written this. Take this to your own life though; how often do you sit at a computer screen just waiting for ideas to come?

Go out into the world and experience what it is to be alive.

AN MB DOESN'T DO THINGS HE HATES DOING

Don't do things out of obligation. If you're sitting at your desk right now, just waiting for the clock to strike 5pm, then stop, get up, go outside. The best decision you could ever make is to stop doing anything that you hate doing - especially for a paycheck as small as $11 an hour. If you hate your job, you should be working towards finding a way to leave your job, instead of just being a zombie.

A MINIMALIST BUSINESS IS FOCUSED ON THE IMPORTANT.

A timejacking MB recognizes exactly what activities are important. Almost all of my income comes from writing professionally at this moment, so that is one of the most important activities to me.

Take a moment and determine exactly what is important to you. I like to pick four areas of my life which are most important. Right now I'm focused on writing, cooking, yoga, and reading.

Make a resolution to only focus on your areas of interest on any given day. Many people choose to spend their days focusing on many different things. Like they spend five minutes tinkering with an art project, and then they spend five minutes shopping for shoes, and then they spend five minutes thinking about philosophy. This leads to a day worth of little useless activities.

By contrast, a timejacking MB focuses only on the important, and harnesses his strengths in order to become incredibly successful. This way they can set up their minimalist business and spend the rest of the afternoon enjoying the summer sun.

WHY YOU DON'T NEED A JOB ANYMORE

The longer I'm free from the system, the day job, the mundane trek from the train to the city to the desk, and back again, the more I realize that wasn't very necessary in the first place.

We've been trained by the system, society, the employers, to believe we need to make more money than we do.

They tell us to do this so we can buy more than we need.

When you opt for a minimalist life, you suddenly don't need to be making $70k a year anymore.

You can be fine doing two hours of important work a day, if you choose to do work that matters.

THE IMPORTANT WORK PROBLEM

Doing important work is hard for us because we've been trained not to do important work from the start.

Instead, we do as we're told. School teaches, above all, instruct compliance. And what happens when you become compliant? You become a slave to whoever will give you a plan that you can follow. You have to do as you're told, or you don't know what to do.

So you:

- Buy stuff, because we told you to.
- Work 60 hours a week, because we told you to.
- Drive everywhere, because we told you to.
- Eat products made out of high-fructose corn syrup, because we told you to.
- Buy a house that will put you into debt for the rest of your adult life, because we told you to.

When you stop doing as you're told, you stop needing as much as you thought.

But there's a bigger problem that I see in the thousands of emails that I receive from readers. Most of you don't know how to do anything important.

This society is structured in such a way that you can spend 60 hours a week doing nothing, and get paid for it. Nothing is anything that isn't important. Checking Facebook, managing other people who need to be told what to do, selling bad products to people who don't need them, doing mundane work in order to pay for your car.

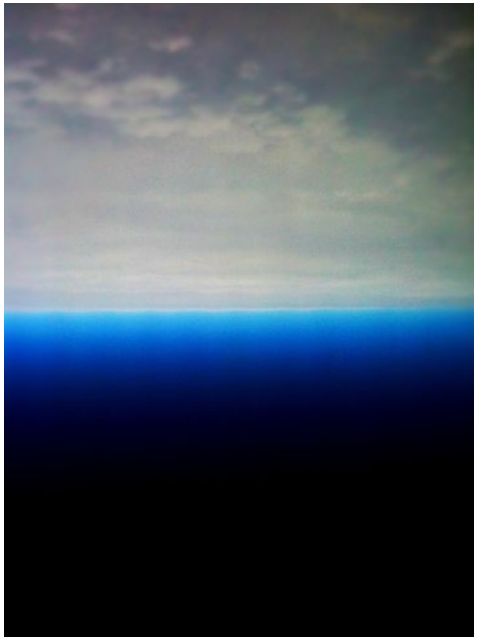
The crime is that 95% of Americans are currently doing this kind of work. And the painful truth is that the need for this mundane, stupid work is disappearing. Why? Because it no longer has value. You can outsource or hand mundane work to the robots, and there goes your job.

The future is reducing your needs, and figuring out what your important work is, then figuring out how to make it support your limited lifestyle.

IDEAS

IN SEARCH OF GOOD IDEAS

Creativity ebbs and flows. Sometimes you'll spend months making amazing work, followed by months of days when the thoughts simply stop coming.



I don't fully understand where the ideas come from. I know I've had times in my life when the ideas were not wanted (mainly when I was working for a big business) and times when ideas came as naturally as breathing.

One person emailed me recently asking simply: what do I write about? What is my idea? I told him that it's up to him to decide, but I hope this article can help bring the ideas into closer focus.

I believe that ideas come from a zero state of mind where you've relaxed enough to be able to let them form. Ideas are fragile, the best ones break easily.

The transition between idea and reality is the moment when you need to be softest. You have to grant yourself the willingness to generate an idea which might be bad, and make it physical via a creative action.

A number of very successful writers such as Seth Godin, Steven Pressfield, and Elizabeth Gilbert talk about catching the daemon. The daemon is that which grants us the ideas. Your job is to create a body which is receptive to the daemon's intentions for you.

I'm not the best person to define what your daemon looks like when it comes. You might think the idea of contacting little creative angels is silly (sometimes I do! Usually on the days when I can't write!). But I think it's an effective way of channeling ideas into your work while separating yourself from the dangers of ego.

I can usually get into closer touch with the source of all creativity when I do the following things.

These ideas might not work for you, or perhaps they'll blow your creativity out of the water. Who knows! I only hope I can help.

Here are a few things I think about when searching for the good ideas:

NO IDEA IS TOO SMALL

Many people wander around under the mistaken impression that big ideas are the only ones that matter. This means that they scrap many ideas that don't fit under the 'big' category. I've found that the opposite is true - the smaller an idea is the more potential it has for greatness. Write about the back of a quarter. Write about a blade of grass. These are metaphors, but some of the most ineffective blog posts that I read are simply trying to be more than they can ever be. Small ideas are more effective and less scary. You can't measure the entirety of known existence in one idea, and yet everyone still tries.

AVOID INTELLECTUALIZATION

This is school's fault. Chances are if you've had any sort of class in anything, your teacher wanted you to intellectualize your idea until you wanted to burn the thought that you ever came up with an idea in the first place. Intellectualizing is taking the idea and making sure it fits against every single possible solution before you let the idea come into existence. Intellectualizing an idea makes it so incredibly hard to finish it. I think you'd do good not to intellectualize anything —some of the most blocked people I know are intellectualizers. Don't think, just make art.

ZERO STATE OF MIND

The blank slate is a powerful thing for a reason. Ideas don't get crushed by pre-conceptions when they're generated in an environment of zero. Reaching a zero state of mind is different for everyone. It's also incredibly difficult for most people because you can't make a blank mind happen - you have to let it happen. Some ways that I bring about a zero state: walking, yoga, not checking email, and having no expectations.

BUYING THINGS DOESN'T MAKE IDEAS HAPPEN

We sometimes fall into this mindset that consumerism will help us be artists. If I just buy the right paintbrush I'll be able to make this work of art. The truth is that the most basic tools will be far more effective than a shopping cart full of expensive paints. Don't spend your life collecting the supplies you think you need to make art, make art with what you have already. Start with the pencil, the paper, the canvas, the simplest beginnings.

HAVING BIG PLANS FOR YOUR IDEAS WILL SUFFOCATE THEM

The easiest way for me to stop ideas from happening is to have big intentions for them. The minute I start to contemplate that thousands of people are reading this e-book, the ideas vanish! The solution to this is to write for one person. If you want your idea to change the face of the world, chances are that will be very difficult to make your idea happen. Try having the goal of helping a handful of people instead of aiming for world peace or some other epic goal. Helping five people live better lives is a lot less scary than the idea of reshaping the entire planet.

YOUR EDIT BRAIN AND THE SOUL OF THE WRITING

You cannot be a creative and an editor at the same moment in time. The fragile nature of idea creation runs opposite to attempts at perfecting language. When you're making work, you have to assume that it won't be perfect. Make an initial draft that is a pure stream of consciousness from start to finish. Once you're done, take a break, then come back with an editor's mind. An editor's mind isn't nearly as fragile as a beginner's mind, summoning the ability to make a sentence perfect is easy compared to making a sentence with meaning. Don't mix the two mind states, your brain doesn't work that way.

DON'T LISTEN TO EVERYONE, YOU CAN'T ANYWAY

We all know people that run their ideas by a committee of friends before they actually put them into practice. These people seldom get to the creation stage, as someone will inevitably find a flaw in the plan and tell them it's impossible. The best way to not find yourself going constantly back to the drawing board is to not ask people for their opinions. Make work, ask yourself whether you like it, publish.

TRAVEL AND CREATIVITY ARE INHERENTLY LINKED

I'm becoming addicted to new locales. I want to be constantly moving, seeing new places, meeting new people. A beginner's mind comes easiest when you're on the road because everything is a new and unexpected experience. You're already in a zero state of mind when you have no idea where you're going. Trust that you'll end up where you want to be going, in life and with the idea.

MINIMALISM AND CREATIVITY ARE INHERENTLY LINKED

When you surround yourself with junk, it's a constant reminder of what you've done before. If you haven't had the idea that you're making art until this moment, then no amount of collected stuff will make your idea better. I make my best work when I clear away the stuff, the preconceptions, the ideas of what I was going to become.

THERE IS NO ORIGINAL

One of the most common emails I receive from readers is about originality. They want to create work, but they don't feel that they can really contribute anything new to the conversation.

Let me let you in on a secret: there is nothing new to contribute to the conversation.

We spend our entire lives waiting for someone to acknowledge our idea as being a brand spanking new idea that no one has ever heard before. Very few people dream up original ideas that blow open the space-time continuum.

The other problem with original ideas is that they tend to be convoluted and unhelpful. You're trying so hard to create a new idea that you end up making up an unoriginal idea that is so complicated that no one can understand what you're trying to say.

Here's the answer: don't try to be an original. Everything you make will be derivative, and the best you can try to do is to not break any copyright laws. You can't copy and paste, that's illegal. But you can re-iterate ideas in new and interesting ways — this is the gift that we all have.

Your business idea needs to be unoriginal enough that you can actually have an idea. If it's too original, you won't be able make ideas at all.

FINALLY

SELF-PUBLISHING ON THE SUBWAY SYSTEM

Here's a story, before we finish:

One day, when I was a teenager, I was taking the brown line EL train into downtown Chicago and I was approached by a scruffy man in his 50s with a manuscript that he'd printed off his computer and evidently photocopied many times.

He sat down next to me and insisted that I read his self-published book.

I did. It was 60 or so pages of inspirational quotes from his own life. It didn't really interest me because I was a teenager in a rock band.

He asked advice as to what he should do. I'm not sure what I told him at the time, but this was the 90s, so I guarantee you it wasn't "Start a minimalist business."

There was no way for this man to distribute his book effectively and at no cost in 1998. He literally had to take the train and flag down innocent teenagers in order to get anyone to read it.

I don't know if this man succeeded, but I can also tell you that he wasn't making enough to live off of by printing a manuscript off his computer ($2-5 per print) and taking the subway to sell it ($1.50 in 1998).



SUBWAY GUY PROBABLY GAVE UP AND GOT A DAY JOB.

This isn't the case anymore. The Internet has completely changed the creator/consumer dynamic. Distribution is now free. Production is now free.

I've been approached a number of times to have my work published by real book publishers. There is absolutely no incentive for me to want to do this, unless they make it worth my while (read: a large sum of cash). You don't have to cater to the gatekeepers in order to survive anymore.

The Internet enables you to keep up to 100% of the profits from any work that you distribute. No middleman can counter an offer like that.

This is the difference between then and now.

If you're making work that matters and pushing that work to the web with zero-overhead, then you cannot not succeed when you put in the time.

A minimalist business is within reach, you just have to start pursuing this path to success.

For more insanely useful information about starting a minimalist business, visit:

http://www.farbeyondthestars.com/